**Flanders Vaccine together with Visegrad countries paving the way towards collaborative research on vaccines and immunotherapeutics**

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On 20-21 October 2016, the [Flanders Vaccine](http://flandersvaccine.be/) network organised its first edition of 'Immunity for Health' conference with participation of Visegrad countries in Ghent. The event was carried out in close cooperation with the embassies of Visegrad countries: Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia. Flanders Vaccine, a platform under the Flanders Bio association, brings together more than 300 representatives from research institutes and universities (incl. the prestigious VIB – Vlaams Instituut voor Biotechnologie), as well as large, small and medium-sized companies with focus on life sciences, specifically on vaccines development and delivery of biostatistics (gsk - GlaxoSmithKline, Janssen and Pfizer to name the best well known of them). The overarching goal of the organisation is to enable network building for the interested parties, incentivise their collaboration and stimulate innovation.

As the event´s title 'Towards a strategic research agenda for PPPs on the development of vaccines and immunotherapeutics' suggests, setting the agenda for vaccines-related R&D is among the highest priorities of the innovation platform and the vision is to do so not only by the cooperation between academia and industry in Flanders, but also by strengthening international partnerships.
For this reason, a delegation from Visegrad countries was given the opportunity to provide an insight into their immunology, vaccinology and infectious diseases research. Among the representatives of the Czech R&D landscape, Markus Dettenhofer, executive director of the Central European Institute of Technology ([CEITEC](https://www.ceitec.eu/)), outlined the main features of life sciences research and development in the research institutions and innovative companies in the Visegrad countries and highlighted the progress of immunity research at CEITEC. His overview revealed the numerous opportunities for potential cooperation. The presentation of Martin Faldyna, deputy director of the Veterinary Research Institute ([VRI](https://www.vri.cz/en/)) followed with an introduction into the activities of the animal health research centre, underlying the principle of “one health”, duly emphasised during the conference. He also mentioned the VRI animal facilities with unique equipment and biological safety level 3 and showcased examples of applied results.

The B2B event further included an elevator pitch session. Among the active participants, Petr Bažant, manager of [CzechBio](http://www.czechbio.org/), association of biotech actors in the Czech Republic, set out the profile of the organisation which comprises more than 30 entities (private companies, academic institutions and technical university) and confirmed that the Czech Republic can be a very relevant partner in biotechnology sector.

The event enabled a fruitful discussion among stakeholders on a range of challenges such as the prevention of infectious diseases, use of antibiotics and the rising antimicrobial resistance or the selection of animal models for preclinical and clinical research, and laid the ground for future collaboration.

[Photo 1](http://www.czelo.cz/files/loga-obrazky/P1010117.jpg) [Photo 2](http://www.czelo.cz/files/loga-obrazky/P1010170_1.jpg%22%20%5Ct%20%22_blank) [Photo3](http://www.czelo.cz/files/loga-obrazky/P1010233.jpg)