

## **Amakem receives 1.28M€ government funding for COPD drug development program**

### **Localized Drug Action platform addresses side effects**

Diepenbeek (Belgium), November 15, 2010 – Amakem announces today that it has been awarded 1.28M€ by the Flemish government agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT) to support its Rho kinase (ROCK) inhibitor-based drug development program for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

Amakem was founded early this year by Dirk Leysen (CSO) and Olivier Defert (director external R&D), both former Devgen researchers. Jack Elands (CEO), who joined shortly thereafter, comments: “COPD is a serious disease for which no cure exists. So-called kinase inhibitors hold great promise, but many have failed in clinical trials because of their limited therapeutic window. To address this fundamental problem with such kinase based drugs we developed our ‘Localized Drug Action’ platform.”

Amakem focuses on making drugs safer by limiting or avoiding systemic exposure, thereby reducing side effects caused in non target organs.

Dirk Leysen adds: “Although Rho kinase or ROCK is a key player in inflammation, it has so far not been an easy drug target as known ROCK inhibitors cause unwanted side effects due to activity in other organs. We developed the Localized Drug Action based ROCK inhibitors to tackle both inflammation as well as bronchoconstriction in COPD without causing cardiovascular or other side effects. In this way we offer an alternative and safe approach to render kinase targets drugable.”

“This government grant enables Amakem to advance its COPD program more rapidly, but it also acknowledges the quality of our COPD program”, says Jack Elands. He adds that “our kinase inhibitors have the potential to really deal with inflammation in COPD and thereby become a breakthrough therapy to stop disease progression”.

### **About Amakem NV**

Amakem NV is a biopharmaceutical company developing safe and effective kinase inhibitors using its "Localized Drug Action" platform for the treatment of diseases, such as COPD, glaucoma and inflammatory bowel disease. The company focuses on the development of promising and innovative near clinical or clinical small molecule drugs.

Early 2010 Amakem closed a seed financing round of 1.5M€ led by LRM with further participation from Vinnof (the innovation fund of PMV), Life Sciences Research Partners and a contribution in kind of assets, intellectual property and know-how of Devgen’s former pharma division. Amakem is located in the life sciences incubator “BioVille” on the campus of the University of Hasselt in Belgium.



## **About COPD**

COPD is a complex respiratory disease that is preventable, but not curable. It is characterized by a slow, progressive development of airflow limitation associated with a persistent inflammatory response. COPD encompasses a variety of pathologies including chronic bronchitis and emphysema, both contributing to the decline in lung function. In developed countries, cigarette smoking is by far the commonest cause of COPD accounting for over 95% of cases.

For more information, please contact

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