

Francois Cornu – President Eurofins Biomnis & Gautier Decock – Managing Director Eurofins BPT France and Belgium



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Francois Cornu, president of Eurofins Biomnis, and

Gautier Decock, managing director of Eurofins BioPharma Product Testing in France and Belgium, come together to shed light on the company's unique decentralized business model which incorporates CRO and diagnostic testing services. They go on to discuss the rationale behind this

strategy and how Eurofins has gone on to become a leading player in both of these business activities.

Please begin by introducing yourselves and the unique roles you both play within Eurofins's double-sided business model?

Francois Cornu (FC): I am Francois, a pharmacist with a specialty in biological testing and the president of Eurofins Biomnis, a second-generation testing laboratory.

Gautier Decock (GD): My name is Gautier, a chemist by education with a PhD in analytical chemistry. I have been working for ten years as a service provider for the life sciences industry. I joined Eurofins seven years ago and am the managing director of Eurofins BioPharma Product Testing in France and Belgium.

How important are life sciences to the group today?

FC: Clinical diagnostics is an important segment for Eurofins and today represents around 20 per cent of our business activity by revenues. Our growth in this area will be a key driver for Eurofins in the upcoming years. The market size of bioanalysis is huge, and the needs of patients are continuously increasing. The main driver of this sector is technology – the main gaps today are overcome by accessing genetic signals. The genetic message is linked to the comprehension of diseases that traditional medicine cannot touch.

GD: Eurofins's life sciences activities are very significant and over the past 15 years, we have developed our footprint in this space. Eurofins likes to see its contribution to life sciences in two directions – either working on products for testing or the analysis of samples like blood or plasma which are more correlated to clinical diagnosis.

How do you detail the value offerings of Eurofins in these two business activities?

GD: Speaking on the products, we follow the global development cycles of medicine because we are involved in the discovery, pre-clinical development, testing, and even entering the CDMO space. Therefore, we truly cover the entire process of pharmaceuticals from the first steps down to market access and approval. What is unique about Eurofins is that we are a very decentralized organization focused on innovation and serving our customers. We invest heavily into our technology and systems to best accelerate our clients's projects – Eurofins understands that time to market is critical, no matter the size of the organization.

Developing our global systems has allowed us to integrate our services and meet the needs of clients around the world. More than 60 employees are dedicated to further developing our software for the BioPharma Product Testing group. Embracing digital trends within our operations is not only a core priority of Eurofins but in the sector today it is what is expected within the environment.

Eurofins has been growing rapidly in the CDMO space through frequent acquisition activities. What is the rationale behind this strategy?

GD: Looking at drug development, you try to select the candidates which are the most promising and work towards proving their effectiveness – hence discovery and pre-clinical studies. In this process, we noticed something was missing – going from a drug substance to a finalized product. Therefore, we entered into this space to offer clients like small biotechs the opportunity to have a partner who can work with them to bring a fully realized product to the market rather than being left and having to find a new collaborator after the development stage. We have made several acquisitions in France, Canada and India to boost our capabilities while leveraging a global strategy.

How does genetic diagnosis fit into Eurofins’s strategy?

FC: Acquisitions made in Europe are very important to this strategy as the new laboratories give us added capabilities to meet the genetics needs of prenatal diagnosis. Very soon it will be reimbursed in France and this method will offer huge advantages to diagnostic players. Eurofins Genomics offers testing services in clinical diagnostics, oncology, and simple blood sampling. This will allow for the use of specific treatments adapted to the personalized signature of a tumour.

Infectious disease is an important topic of conversation within French health. What role can Eurofins’s diagnostic services play in this niche testing market?

FC: Yes, infectious disease is a specific issue in France – there is a significant population of patients that avoid vaccines. For example, less than 20 per cent of young girls are vaccinated against HPV, the virus that is involved in cervical cancer. With today’s PCR Multiplex approach, diagnostic labs can give doctors answers quickly while addressing multiple disease groups in a matter of hours with the same test. However, France continues to be behind in this area and is one of the European countries with the highest antibiotic usage.

How is France positioned within the global operations of Eurofins?

FC: France is an important market for Eurofins due to the company’s historic footprint in the country. In terms of headcount, France is Eurofins’s second-largest market globally. France is a very advanced ecosystem that has a strong grip on innovation which allows us to be able to offer our full range of services in both diagnostic and biopharmaceutical activities.

What is your assessment of the precision diagnostic environment of France?

FC: Two years ago, Rhesus D genotyping, to avoid maternal alloimmunization was not reimbursed and Eurofins Biomnis carried out approximately 200 tests per year. Now that the test is completely reimbursed, we carried out tens of thousands of tests last year.

This is a good example of just how much room for growth there is in this area. Eurofins offers the largest portfolio in clinical genetic testing. Unfortunately, most of those tests are not reimbursed yet, and patients do not want to pay out of pocket.

What have your impressions been on the Macron administration and their stance on enhancing the diagnostic environment of France?

FC: There are big expectations to break the unfair competition with public hospitals but concrete measures are yet to be taken. The services in the public hospital are funded by the government which creates an unbalanced environment in the offering of analytical services. We are hoping for the Macron administration to take initiatives to change this and create an even playing field between the public and private sectors by expanding the coverage of diagnostic services within the reimbursement scheme.

How is Eurofins positioned within the global CRO space?

GD: Over the past eight years, Eurofins BioPharma Product Testing has really become the leader in the market globally. Today we have over 6,000 employees in this field with a presence in more than 45 countries. Eurofins has a very unique positioning with a comprehensive offering. Our service model allows us to be a harmonized organization which can provide customers with A to Z solutions, especially between the US and Europe. If a customer wants to develop globally Eurofins is well established to join our partners in this journey.

What concluding message would you like to deliver on behalf of Eurofins and France?

FC: The clinical diagnostics landscape is shifting in French laboratories, transforming into widespread networks. Many of these players have tried establishing a specialized unit like Eurofins, but they all gave up in the end. We offer the largest and best portfolio to physicians and we hope to see that one day soon public health insurance will better value what our diagnostic testing services and unique capabilities can bring to patients and the healthcare system as a whole.

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