

Galapagos

growing in the midst of constant change

Founded in 1999, Galapagos is a mid-size biotechnology company specialised in the discovery and development of small molecule therapies with novel modes-of-action. Combining internal discovery programmes with service activities for major pharmaceutical firms, the company has evolved to take target discovery through to late-stage clinical products. We talked with Galapagos Founder and CEO Onno van de Stolpe about Galapagos and the biotech field in Belgium.

What are Galapagos' main challenges these next couple of years?

Onno van de Stolpe: "Today, the leading pharmaceuticals are forming alliances with – and outsourcing to – companies like Galapagos for highly innovative research. This is a win-win for both Pharma and Biotech. On top of activities for Pharma, we are also investing heavily in our internal programmes, drawing the necessary funds from our alliances and our service division. Deepening our capabilities while striving to remain profitable is a large challenge. A second challenge is managing our alliances: the pharma industry is in such a state of flux right now that firms are changing their strategy overnight, which of course impacts the nature of our alliances with them."

What about entrepreneurship, innovation and R&D in Belgium?

"I think these things are in reasonably good shape – actually, considering its size, Belgium is doing very well. Galapagos has operations in Belgium, England, the Netherlands and France – and I can say that I like the consistent approach that we have here in Belgium with regard to stimulating R&D in the form of grants (I'm thinking of the IWT grants, for example). This stability is very important, especially when you're developing a long-term plan for a research organisation. And when you look at Belgium's high biotech standing in Europe, you see that this approach is paying off."

Why has it been good for Galapagos to participate in the Fast50 programme?

"Galapagos' strategy has remained consistent since 1999: to build a leading European biotech firm by leveraging the company's unique technology platform for novel modes-of-action. It's gratifying to see the execution of our strategy result in the powerhouse that Galapagos is today and to be recognised for the rapid revenue growth that came with that."

Any advice for starting entrepreneurs?

"As an entrepreneur, you have to believe in what you're doing. So, what I want to say is: stay true to your vision when seeking venture capital support. VCs will try to fit you into a box that meets their objectives – and their aim, of course, is fast action, they're not building a company. So, definitely go after the means to realise your idea, your technology – VCs have a clear part to play in financing a start-up – but don't change your strategy because a VC wants you to focus on this or that product. Go straight for your ultimate goal."



"Stay true to your vision when seeking venture capital support. Believe in what you are doing and go straight for your ultimate goal."

Onno van de Stolpe, CEO Galapagos