



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Zika Virus: Top EU-Groups Join Forces in Quest for Vaccine**

Themis Measles Vector Technology Central to Action Plan

**Vienna, 13 December 2016 – Leading European research groups pool their expertise for the fast development of an effective and affordable vaccine against the Zika virus. Supported with very substantial funding by the EU, the ZIKAVAX consortium consists of Themis, the European Vaccine Initiative, Institut Pasteur and the Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives. Pivotal to the joint development initiative is Themis' proprietary technology platform based on a well-established measles vaccine vector.**

A safe, effective and affordable vaccine for the prevention of Zika virus infections is the aim of the newly established ZIKAVAX consortium. To this end, the consortium received 5 M EUR funding from the EU's Horizon 2020 program which supports combating this emerging infectious disease that rapidly spreads to previously unaffected regions of the world. Partners in the consortium are the nonprofit product development partnership European Vaccine Initiative (ZIKAVAX coordinator), the world renowned Institut Pasteur in Paris, the successful vaccine developer Themis from Vienna, Austria and the Commissariat à l'énergie atomique et aux énergies alternatives (CEA), a french public government-funded research organization.

At the heart of the joint effort will be the Themaxyn® platform of Themis, a vector technology with a preclinical and clinical track record of adaptability and effectiveness for the development of vaccines. This successful technology uses a standard measles virus vaccine as a vector, developed at Institut Pasteur in Paris. It has proven its excellent safety profile and clear advantages in terms of a validated, low-cost production process in hundreds of millions of people globally who have received measles vaccinations. Dr. Erich Tauber, CEO and co-founder of Themis comments: "The recently phase 1 clinical trial results of our lead product, a Chikungunya vaccine, which is now tested in a phase 2 trial, have proven the

suitability of the vector for other indications and we will now pursue the adaptation of the technology for developing a Zika vaccine. The exceptional expertise combined in ZIKAVAX will guarantee quick progress and we are happy to be part of this consortium."

"Developing an effective Zika vaccine has become a global health priority for preventing the further spread of the virus. We are convinced that the use of the measles vaccine delivery platform, one of the safest and most efficacious vaccines available to date, will allow for a rapid and cost-effective development of a Zika vaccine", says Dr. Odile Leroy, Executive Director of the European Vaccine Initiative and coordinator of the ZIKAVAX project.

The work of the ZIKAVAX consortium will compliment Themis' internal Zika R&D project, with the common goal of developing a Zika vaccine rapidly. Themis has tested a number of candidate vaccines in animal models, initiated a toxicity study and established GMP manufacturing with the goal to start phase 1 trials early next year. This expertise and progress is very welcome by the consortium and has additionally been acknowledged by the United Kingdom's innovation agency, Innovate UK, with a 1 M GBP grant to Themis for the development of a Zika vaccine.

**Quick Facts about ZIKAVAX:**

Start Date: 1 October 2016

End Date: 30 September 2020

Coordinator: Odile LEROY, European Vaccine Initiative

Project Funding: EU H2020

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**About Themis (December 2016):**

Themis develops prophylactic vaccines from the preclinical to the early clinical phase, focusing on emerging tropical infectious diseases, with initial vaccine candidates currently being developed against Chikungunya and Zika. The company's highly innovative and fully patent-protected measles virus vaccine vector technology platform, licensed from the internationally respected Institut Pasteur in Paris, forms the basis for all current vaccine candidates of the Vienna-based company.

[www.themisbio.com](http://www.themisbio.com)

**About the vaccine technology (December 2016):**

The scientific basis for Themis' measles vector Themaxyn® platform has been developed at the Institut Pasteur in Paris and is licensed to Themis. It relies on the use of the standard measles vaccine as a vaccination vector.

Genes coding for selected antigens from the chikungunya virus have been inserted into the genome of this well-established vaccine. The measles-chikungunya vaccine delivers the chikungunya antigens directly to macrophages and dendritic cells – the most potent and effective antigen-presenting cells, thereby triggering a specific immune response to chikungunya virus. This results in a powerful, antigen-focused immune response, which is most likely to confer long-term immunity as does the measles vaccine.

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