



**Contact: Dr. László Üрге  
Chief Executive Officer**

**Adrienn Bollók  
Marketing Manager**

**+36-1-214-2306**



## **The impact of biotechnology on human healthcare and the Hungarian contribution to this effort**

Biotechnology is fulfilling the promise to improve the quality of human life by providing better and more effective drugs and, more importantly, making them available to millions of patients worldwide. This is the conclusion of the BiImpact study, a scientific study of the impact of biotechnology on human healthcare and life expectancy, which has just been published. The French Biotech Association and the French Pharmaceutical Association, in collaboration with their European partners Europabio and European Association of Bioindustries, supported this study.

The conclusions of this study are published at a time when the demand for improved, safer therapeutics is growing all over the world. In spite of massive investments by pharmaceutical companies over the past decade, the generation of new therapeutic agents remains a formidable task. It has been estimated, for example, that more than 10 years of work and \$800 million are required to bring a new drug to the market.

The rise of biotechnology, however, has provided the drug discovery industry with some powerful new tools and Hungarian biotechnology is proudly taking an active part in this endeavor. ComGenex, the leading biotech company in Hungary has a decade-long track record of collaboration with the drug discovery industry by providing innovative technologies for the early stage identification of chemical molecules with therapeutic properties. ComGenex' scientists have teamed up with several pharmaceutical companies worldwide to provide them with chemical, biological and information tools to accelerate the drug discovery process.

"ComGenex is a dynamic biotechnology company providing high value creation discovery services and this has already made an impact on drug discovery", stated Laszlo Urge, Chief Executive Officer of ComGenex.

A complex drug discovery collaboration was set up in 2002 between ComGenex and Echelon, an American company actively involved in cancer research. ComGenex has designed for Echelon a subsidiary of Aeterna Zentaris proprietary molecules and provided drug discovery expertise to characterize promising cancer targets. Using its novel screening technology, Echelon identified from ComGenex' chemical structures a number of unique molecules that have shown efficacy in animal models of ovarian cancer.

ComGenex has recently agreed to transfer its intellectual property rights to the promising anti-cancer compounds to Echelon, which will further continue the development through to the clinical stages.

The collaboration between ComGenex and Echelon, now a subsidiary of Aeterna Zentaris, is just an example of the benefit of biotechnology to drug discovery research. Although many life-threatening disease are still without a cure, already 300 million patients worldwide are being treated with biotechnology products. Furthermore, 190 biotechnology products are already marketed and more then 400 products are currently under development,

thereby confirm the social impact of biotechnology. Particularly when considering that, according to the BioImpact report, 80% of biologic drugs indications are in pathologies with unmet medical needs.

Biotechnology can thus make an impact on human healthcare by offering new and more efficient and safer therapeutic agents for diseases, which are either poorly treated or not treated at all. Moreover, biotechnology enables those large-scale production techniques, which are the pre-requisite for extensive medical coverage.

Dr. Ferenc Darvas, President of ComGenex, commented, "As an active member of the Hungarian biotech community we are extremely proud to contribute to the advancement of human healthcare. The success our drug discovery collaboration is closely dependent on the synergy between a solid pharmaceutical industry and a dynamic, forward looking biotechnology sector, as the successful partnership between ComGenex and Echelon/Zentaris has clearly demonstrated"

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