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## **University of Southampton to lead multi-million euro project that will help improve competitiveness of SMEs in the Chemical industry**

The EU funded Interreg France (Channel) England (FCE) programme has today (04 September) announced that it will contribute 3.9 million euros to an economic development project, led by the University of Southampton, which aims to use the latest technology and developments in the chemical industry to help improve competitiveness of SMEs based in the South of England and the North of France.

The project, known as LabFact, will unite world-class research centres in the Channel area to support and train SMEs on clean and environmentally friendly ways to manufacture fine chemicals via a series of development courses and consultation services.

These training sessions will allow smaller companies in the industry to learn cutting-edge production techniques which will in-turn help unlock new, low cost and low waste manufacturing opportunities.

The project will also develop and make available 1000 new 'chemical scaffolds' (molecules that can be easily modified). They play an important role in providing pharmaceutical, agrochemical and biotech industries with a rapid means to develop new products such as next generation medicines and agrochemicals.

By developing and supporting the implementation of this new chemical technology the project will help improve the attractiveness and competitiveness of companies based in the Channel area<sup>2</sup>, cutting the current trend which has seen more and more jobs in the industry moved to Asia where employment costs are less.

The chemical sector is hugely important to both the French and UK economy, representing a combined turnover of 119 billion euros<sup>6</sup>.

*"News of the award has been greeted with huge excitement by the LabFact team" said Professor David Harrowven, from the University of Southampton. "The France (Channel) England region has some world-class universities with a culture of collaboration and entrepreneurship that is the envy of many. LabFact seeks to harness these qualities in research, teaching and technology development to assist industry in the region for our mutual benefit."*

The project budget will total 5.7 million euros, with 69% funded by the Interreg FCE programme, representing a European Regional Development Fund budget of 3.9 million euros. Seven partners from the UK and France will be involved in the project.

**-Ends-**

## For further information, please contact:

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## Notes to Editors

1. The INTERREG VA France (Channel) England Programme is a European Territorial Cooperation programme that aims to fund high quality cooperation projects in the Channel border region between France and England, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy. These projects aim to find common solutions to common problems which exist in both countries. The Managing Authority is Norfolk County Council
2. The Programme operates within a clearly defined eligible area, covering the South and East Coasts of England from Cornwall to Norfolk, and the North Coast of France from Finistère to Pas-de-Calais. The full programme area can be found [here](#).
3. Project Partners
  - *Lead Partner - University of Southampton* (UK)
  - University of Sussex (UK)
  - Pareon Chemicals (UK)
  - Université de Caen Normandie (France)
  - Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Ingénieurs de Caen (France)
  - Université de Rouen (France)
  - CRNS - Délégation Régionale Normandie (France)
4. More information about the Programme can be found at <https://interreg5a-fce.eu/>.
5. Data from The European Chemical Industry Council for the year 2015.