

## Insubria becomes the “Biotech Valley”

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From Pavia to Lugano, passing through Como and Varese. This is the route covered by the **Ticino Axis**, the life technology and science district that was promoted about a year ago by **CrESIT**, one of the most active research centres of **Insubria University**. In only a few months, the project has put some fifty organisations on line, including companies, research centres, universities, institutions and hospitals connected by common factors, such as a **high level of innovation and interest in biotechnologies**.

A group of success stories that continues to expand, that, today, thanks to **an important agreement signed in the “Ville Ponti”, in Varese**, has opened the doors to a strategic partner like **Tecnopolo, in Lugano**. By signing the agreement, the president of Tecnopolo, **Marco Baggiolini**, has undertaken to promote the growth of the district and to collaborate with other bodies involved in scientific, technological and professional research. "It is an important agreement, which allows creating a **bridge between Lombard companies and the biomedical district** of the Canton Ticino, which represents excellence in Europe," explains Professor **Alberto Onetti**, CrESIT's Director, and the promoter of many initiatives in the district. But what is Tecnopolo in Lugano, and why should an Italian company turn to a foreign organisation to increase its business? Baggiolini provided the answer, offering a summary of the work that goes on in the centre and of the advantages, particularly for innovative companies such as those that apply biotechnologies in the health, pharmaceutical and biomedical fields: "Our building has available an area of approximately 1500 m<sup>2</sup>, and our experts give business advice to anyone that has just started out, and support to help companies develop. At present, **there are about a dozen companies housed in Tecnopolo**.

The organisations admitted are selected by a committee of highly qualified and specialised operators, stemming from a variety of fields, from economics to scientific research. The guiding mission is to support innovative companies that operate in the biotechnology sector, and to prevent them from “stumbling” along the way because of difficulties in doing business. This danger is not unfamiliar to companies operating in highly scientific fields. “They often lose sight of the market,” continues

Baggiolini, “and concentrate too much on research.” For example, to help to deal with financial aspects, the centre brings together successful companies and possible backers who, in most cases, are venture capital funds from America and the Middle East.” Tecnopolo is situated a short distance from the University of Lugano, with whom it has started cooperating, at the Swiss Centre for Scientific Computing, and it is in touch with the biopark in Zurich. In its first year of activity, it gathered international funding to the tune of SF30 million, creating more than 40 high level jobs.

Redazione VareseNews  
redazione@varesenews.it