# FAMHP's activities in innovation & clinical research support at national and European level:

# Perspectives from the FAMHP's Innovation office & scientific-regulatory advice unit

**Singapore CRI meeting (10.04.2024)**

famhp
federal agency for medicines and health products

**Christophe Lahorte**
**Head of Innovation office & Scientific Advice Unit**

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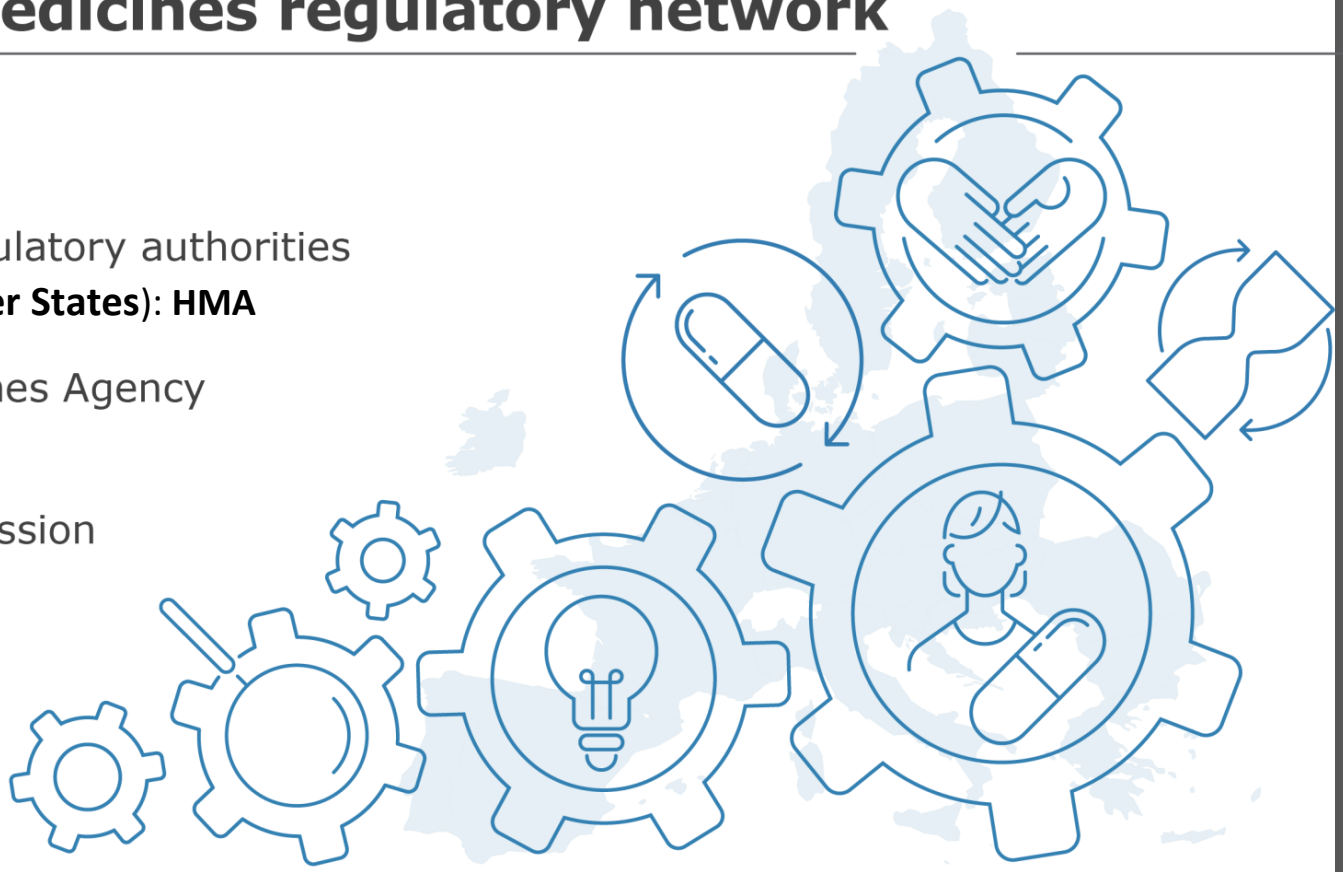
# Introduction to the EMRN context:

## The European medicines regulatory network

- ~50 national regulatory authorities (**27 Member States**): **HMA**
- European Medicines Agency
- European Commission



An overview of EMA development support to innovative medicines and technologies

# Introduction to the EMRN context:

## Translation of EU Strategies into tangible outcomes



**Regulatory Science and Innovation Task Force**




Slides provided with courtesy of EMA

# EU Innovation Offices network (EU-IN): as part of the EU Regulatory Network (EMRN):

- EMA (ITF) + HMA + National innovation offices/contact points (NCA's)
- Founded: 2016

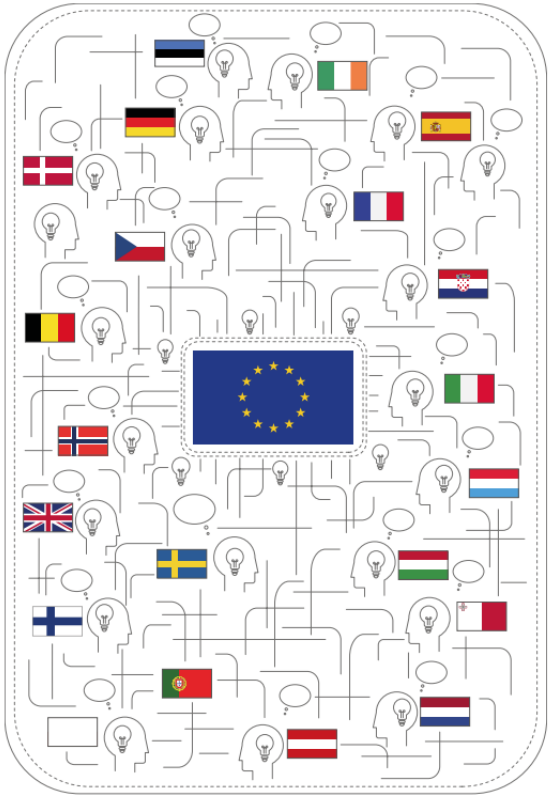
- **Aim:**

➢ share information & knowledge

➢ undertake common initiatives related to innovative drug development support

➢ initiate early dialogue with developers

➢ create regulatory awareness



**Overall Mission:**

Support the EU Regulatory Network strategy in facilitating the development of innovative medicines and technologies for drug development across Europe by addressing gaps in early regulatory support to innovation

# EU Innovation Offices network (EU-IN): as part of the EU Regulatory Network (EMRN):


https://www.hma.eu/about-hma/working-groups/eu-innovation-network-eu-in.html

# Belgian perspective: Evolving mission of the FAMHP


: health is to ensure
**uman +**
s, IVDs and blood,
..

**licines Regulatory**

**Network (EMRN):**

**Facilitating the translation of innovative scientific advances into medicinal products meeting adequate standards and accelerate patients' a**
**unmet medical needs**
**s.**

based on the law of 20.07.2006 (B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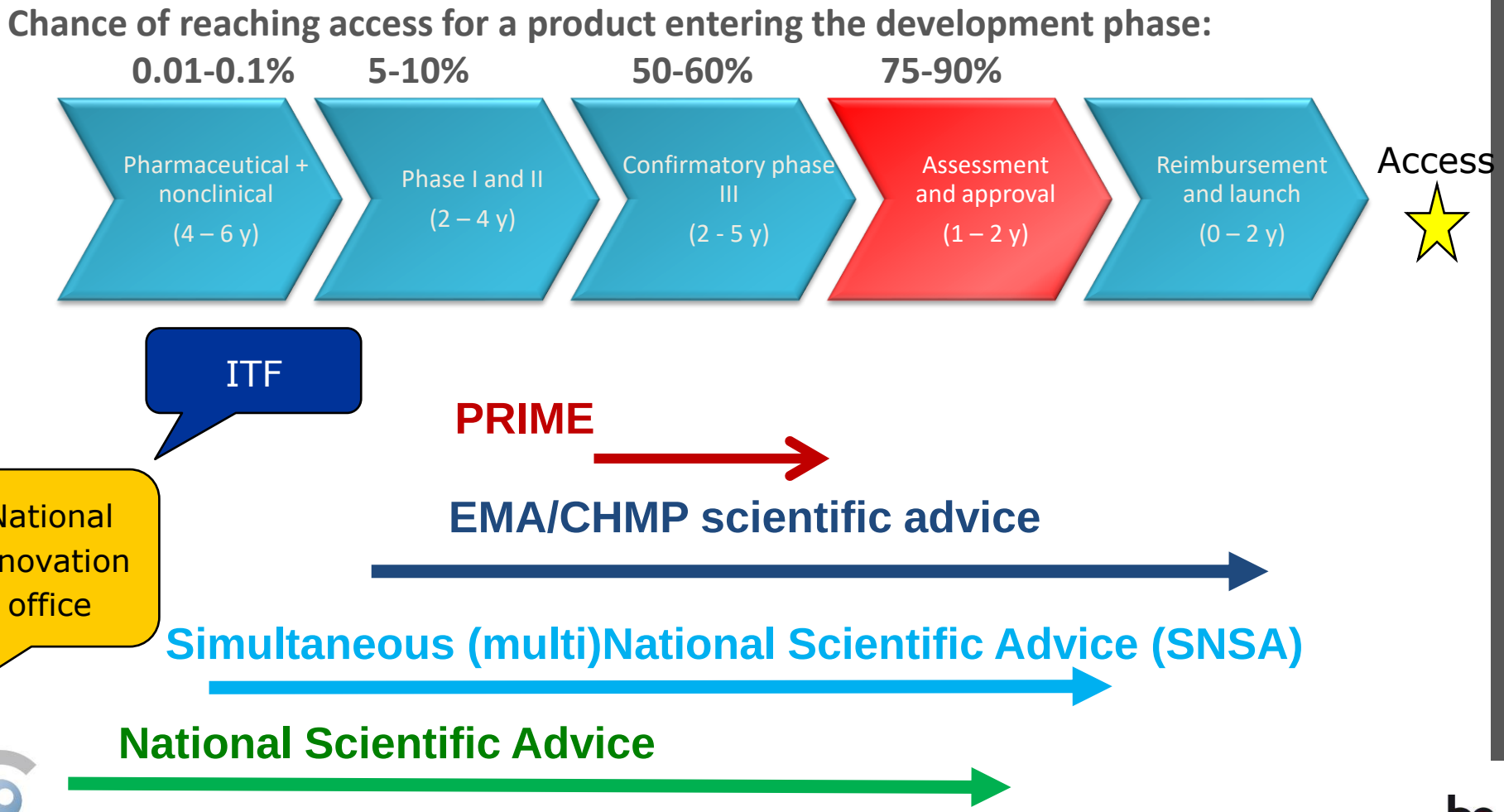
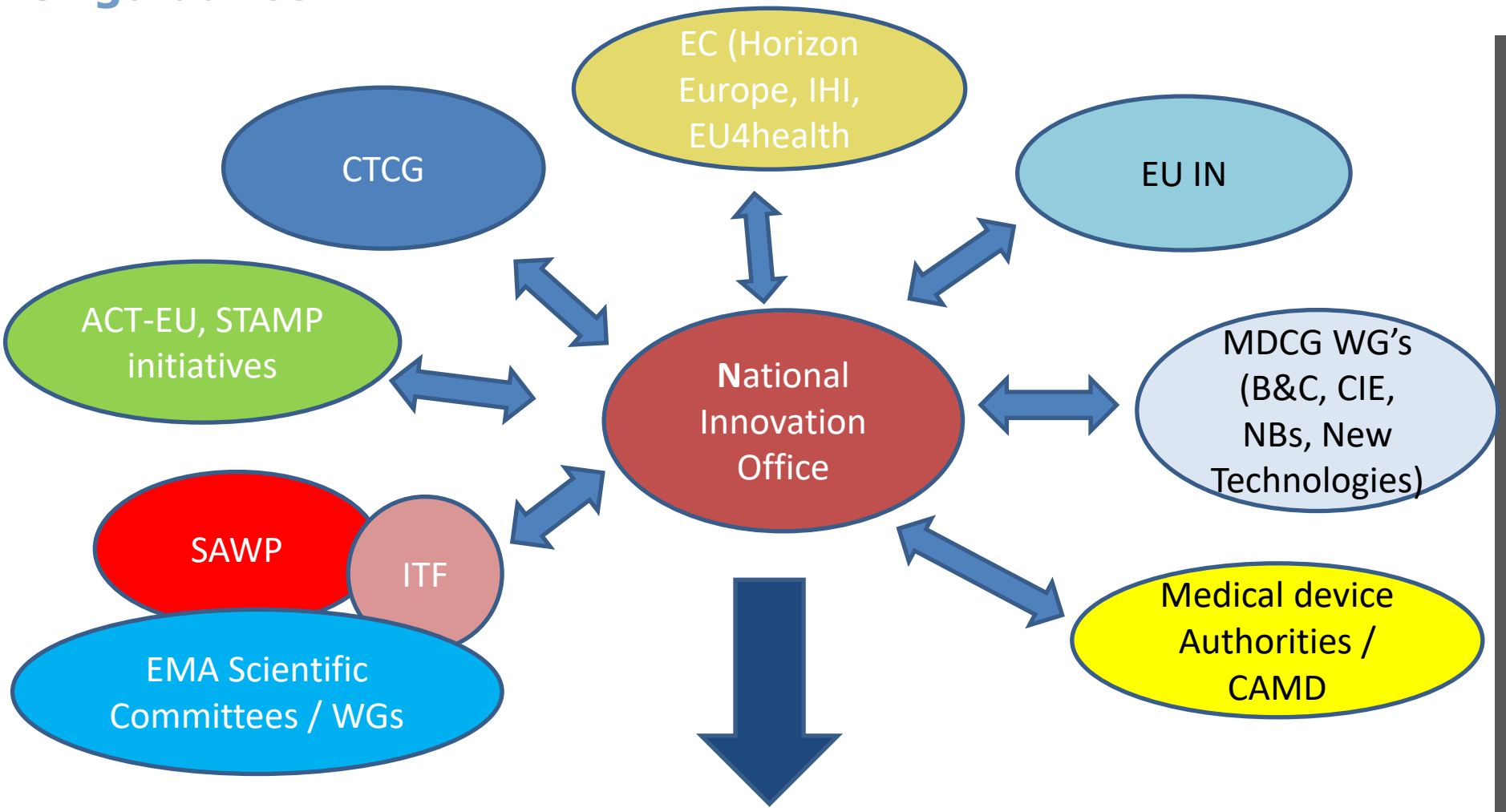
# National Innovation Offices as starting point

## Creating high impact from early development onwards !



# EU Activities: Need for info/knowledge exchange between various groups associated with scientific-regulatory advice or guidance



# Incentives for establishing a national Innovation Office @ FAMHP in 2017:

- **Strategic importance:**

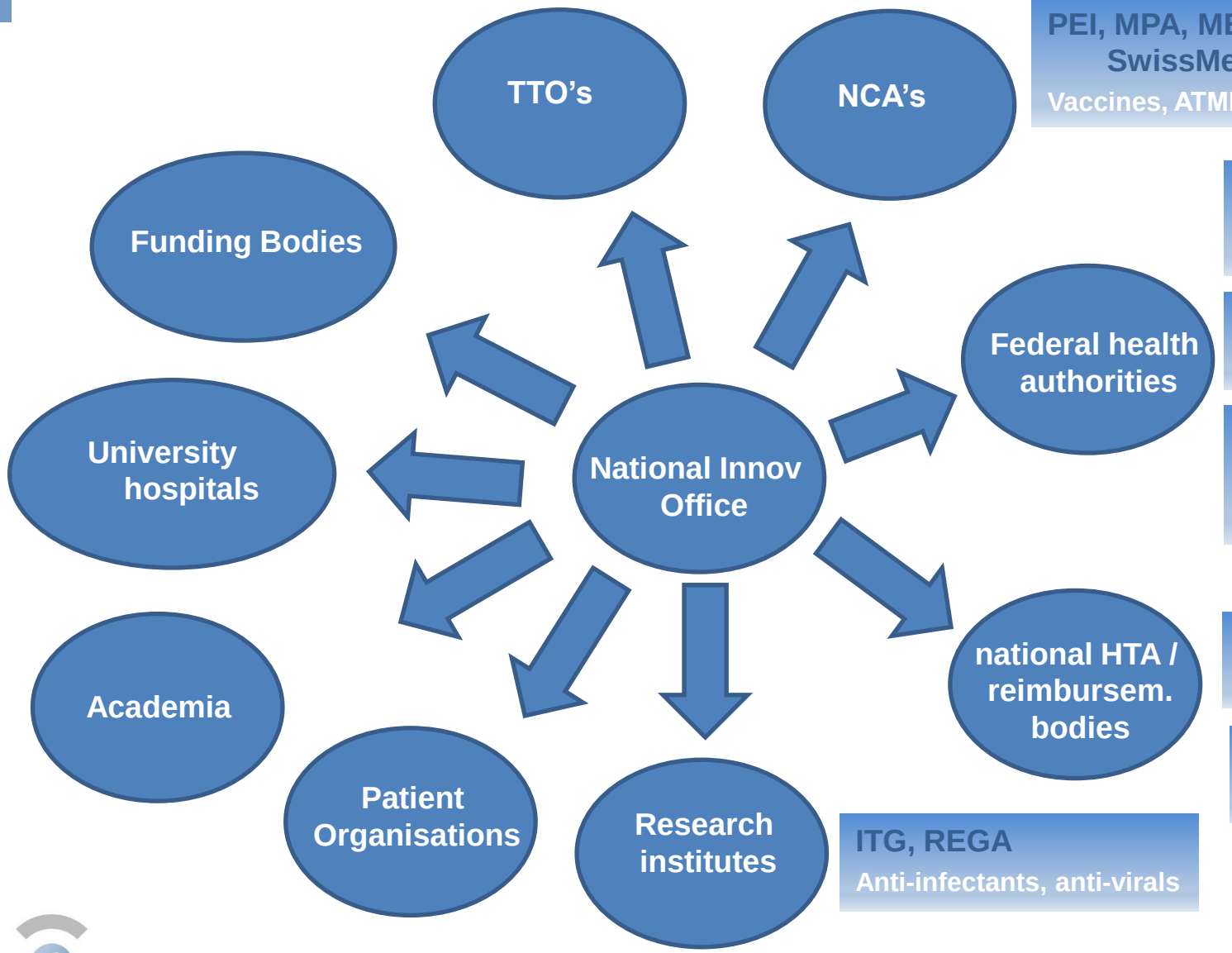
  → **Key facilitator / accelerator for:**

  - **Translation of basic science → clinical research**
  - **Access to innovative drug & healthcare products to patients (eg. via clinical trials)**
  - **Maintaining an attractive Belgian ecosystem for clinical research & attrackting new (pre)clinical research**

  → **1st contact point for local Innovators to access FAMHP's scientific & technical / regulatory expertise eg. in early development stage**

  → **key interface with EMRN & other EU/national bodies !**

# National Interaction mechanisms:




**PEI, MPA, MEB, MHRA, SwissMedic**
Vaccines, ATMP's, borderline products

**Sciensano**
vaccines, ATMP's GMO's

**FANC**
Radiopharm.

**FOD Volksgezondheid**
GLP, COVID19

**RIZIV-INAMI**
Joint sci-HTA advice

**KCE**
Drug repurposing

**ITG, REGA**
Anti-infectants, anti-virals

FAMHP's expert Database: 800 experts included

# National Innovation office: key incentives for industry, academia, spin-offs

- Predictive timelines
- “One-stop-shop” solutions

  → Integrated & diversified advice pathways
- Access to FAMHP’s high-quality multi-disciplinary scientific-regulatory expertise
- Flexible services & thinking out-of- the-box
- Proactive & iterative guidance through product lifecycle
- Tailor-made support mechanisms targeting specific needs of innovators
- Easily accessible
- Early dialogue & communication towards innovators
- Focus on creating long-term partnerships with stakeholders

→ Increased success rate and access of new innovative products & treatments to HCP’s & patients

# FAMHP's National Innovation office: Key activities

## 3 Main pillars of core activities & services:

- **Scientific & technical/regulatory advice (STA & SNSA // SAWP support):**
  - optimising current procedures (eg. patient involvement; joint scientific-HTA advice)
  - scope expansion to: Medical devices, IVDs (eg. CoDx), borderline & Drug-Device/IVDs combo products, Blood, cells & tissues
  - developing new services: eg. accelerated STA, Simultaneous National SA (SNSA)
  - SAWP (Human/Vet) support

- **Specific support to SME's, start-ups and academic research centers / hospitals:** eg. project info meetings (PIMs), 75% STA fee reduction, repurposing drug products

- **General innovation support & knowledge management:**
  - General regulatory/technical support & guidance (FAQ's)
  - EU activities (eg. EU Innovation Network, HMA, MDCG, CTCG, ACT-EU,...)
  - EU projects (« STARS » Horizon 2020, EU4Health, …)
  - Horizon scanning
  - Portfolio meetings (Business pipeline)
  - Zero fee for clinical-trial related STA and SNSA requests (if CTA < 2 years)

# National innovation office: core activities

## I.1 Scientific & Technical / Regulatory Advice

1. **Zero fee** for **clinical trial-related STA requests submitted in BE under CTR:**
   - Implemented may 2019
   - CTR pilot submission: < 2 years after STA

2. **Patient involvement in STA procedures:**
   - Pilot project ongoing since Q4 2018:
   - Focus on patient experts (clinical, study design & conduct, …)

3. **Accelerated STA procedures:**
   - Addressing emergency situations, major public health threats: **COVID-19**
   - Implemented March 2020 + legislative initiative

4. **STA (staggered) scope expansion to:**
   - NB consultation procedures (MDR / IVDR)
   - Medical devices, IVDs (eg. CoDx), borderline & Drug-Device/IVDs combo products, Blood, cells & tissues (cfr. SoHo regulation)

# National Scientific-Technical Advice (STA): procedural aspects

- voluntary procedure
- specific questions (eg. 70-80 % CTA related)
- expert responses are prepared & discussed internally
- Formal outcome :
  - written advice: max. 30 days (Type I STA)
  - scientific advice meeting & written advice report
    max. 70 days + 14 days (Type II & IIIa, IIIb STA)
- Non-legally binding opinion
- Prospective in nature - focusing on development strategies rather than pre-evaluation of data to support a future filing (eg. CTA)
- Throughout development life cycle

**STA = Valuable tool for de-risking, accelerating drug development & enhancing outcomes (eg. CTA, MAA) or innovative drug products !**

# Introduction to national STA: Type of questions

- **Scientific:**
  - Quality (eg. Pharm dev., product character., release testing,..)
  - non-clinical (eg. Safety, toxicol., starting dose, …)
  - clinical (incl./excl. criteria, endpoints, target population, PRO's,…)
  - Study design & conduct, statistical aspects
  - Clinical development plan
  - Benefit /Risk balance
  - Unmet medical need (rare / life-threatening diseases)
  - Swith Rx to OTC status
  - Pharmacovig issues (Risk Managm. Plans, PAES/PASS, …)
  - GMO's: biosafety, containment aspects

- **Technical – regulatory - procedural:**
  - GMP, GCP, GLP, …
  - Regulatory / procedural aspects, CTR, …
  - Guidelines
  - Regulatory filing strategy (eg. CTA, SAWP, PIP, PRIME, MAA, CHMP re-examination, WHO pre-qualification,...)

# Introduction to national STA: Type of questions

- **Other Questions:**
  - Complex CT designs (eg. Adaptive, basket trials) & Decentralised CT's
  - New (platform)technologies (eg. gene editing)
  - New innovative concepts and manufacturing technologies (eg. on-site formulation, 3D-printed DP's)
  - Technological issues (eg. e-labelling, m-health)
  - Broad advice:
    1. Specific issues affecting multiple products or indications could be treated as single broad advice requests (eg. quality changes, platform clinical trials)
    2. Non product- / indication-related questions (genotox. Testing, 3R's

How to submit: **sta-wta@fagg-afmps.be**

Pre-STA submission support & guidance possible !

https://www.famhp.be/en/human_use/medicines/medicines/scientific_technical_advice

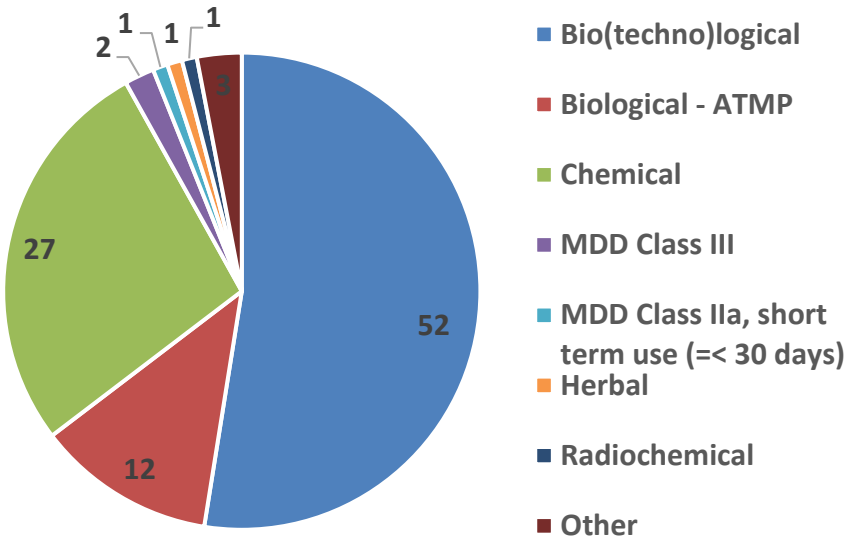
# National Regulatory Advice:

- voluntary procedure
- Main scope:
  Regulatory status of borderline & combination products (eg. combined ATMP's) + referred to CAT/EMA when needed
- Formal outcome:
  - written advice: max. 30 days (Type I STA)
    OR (i,e, for highy complex products):
  - advice meeting & written advice report
    max. 70 days + 14 days (Type II & IIIa, IIIb STA)
- Non-legally binding opinion

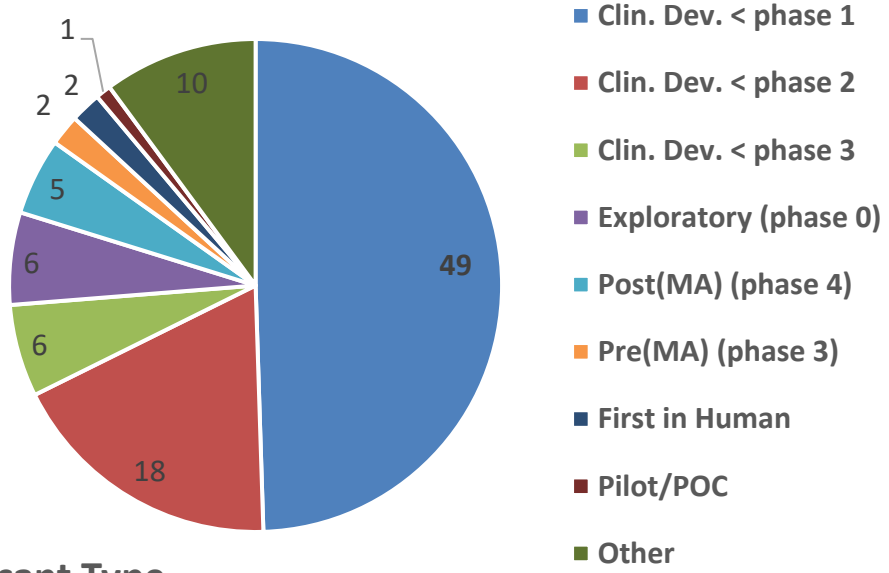
**RA = Valuable tool for early identifying the correct product development pathway & guidelines to follow !**

# Experiences with national STA: (2021 – 2022)

## Product Type

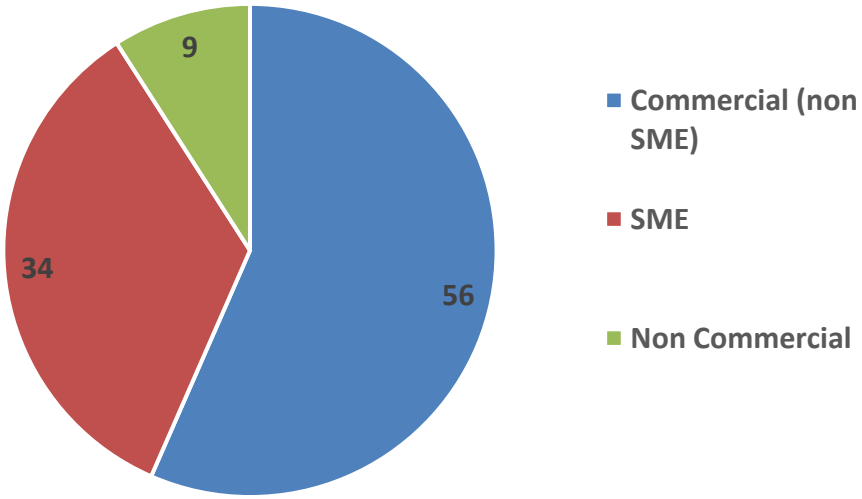



## Development Phase




**Total: 99 STA requests**

## Applicant Type



# SME & academia-related (STA) challenges

1. **Lack of kowledge & experience**
   - Fear to approach regulators & disclose sci data
   - Lack in awareness of sci / regulatory requirements
   - Innov. support & formal STA procedures not well-known OR wrong perception !
   - added value not well-known: TIME / COST vs BENEFIT !
   - incentives lacking (eg. for academia)
   - Difficulties in identifying & formulating critical STA questions & at appropriate time point
   - Lack in awareness of FAMHP activities (BE-EU level) & expertise

2. **Lack of resources:**
   - STA fees = often a financial hurdle (cfr. Pre-Grant sci advice)
   - Lack in resources for proper STA file preparation

3. **Different needs from academia / SME's vs stakeholder expectations:**
   - eg. commercial product development - scientifc publications - IP protection - project funding - regulatory compliance !

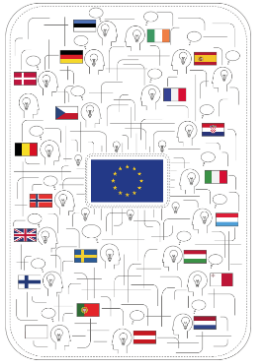
# National innovation office: core activities

## I.2 EU IN Pilot project on Simultaneous National SA (SNSA):

- > 3 NCA's / SNSA pilot possible to enhance multi-national CT's (CTCG observer possible)
- prior to applying for funding grants to support non-commercial CT's
- to inform the early-stage development of innovative products for which clinical trials are planned (eg. phase I / II CT's)
- enhanced convergence in sci opinions from NCA's
- enhanced efficiency / time gain for applicant
- earlier identification of criticalities requiring EU advice / guidance !
- 90 Days pilot procedure based on common elements from national STA procedures

**https://www.famhp.be/en/human_use/medicines/medicines/scientific_technical_advice/regulation**

# EU IN Pilot project on Simultaneous National SA (SNSA):



- Vision and mission
- Structure
- Working Groups
  - Benchmarking of European Medicines Agencies
  - EU Network Pharmacovigilance Oversight Group
  - European Surveillance Strategy Working Group
  - EU Network Training Centre (EU-NTC) - former OTSG
  - **EU-Innovation Network (EU-IN)**
  - HMA/EMA Joint Big Data Steering Group
  - HMA/EMA Joint Task Force on Availability of authorised medicines for human and veterinary use (TF AAM)
  - HMA/EMA Joint Audit

**EU-INNOVATION NETWORK (EU-IN)**

- **EU-IN Introduction and Overview** +
- **Strengthening Training of Academia in Regulatory Science (STARS)** +
- **Involvement of competent authorities in externally funded projects** +
- **Simultaneous National Scientific Advice (SNSA)**
- **Horizon Scanning** +
- **EU-IN Members and Representatives** +
- **Contact** -

**Contact Point**

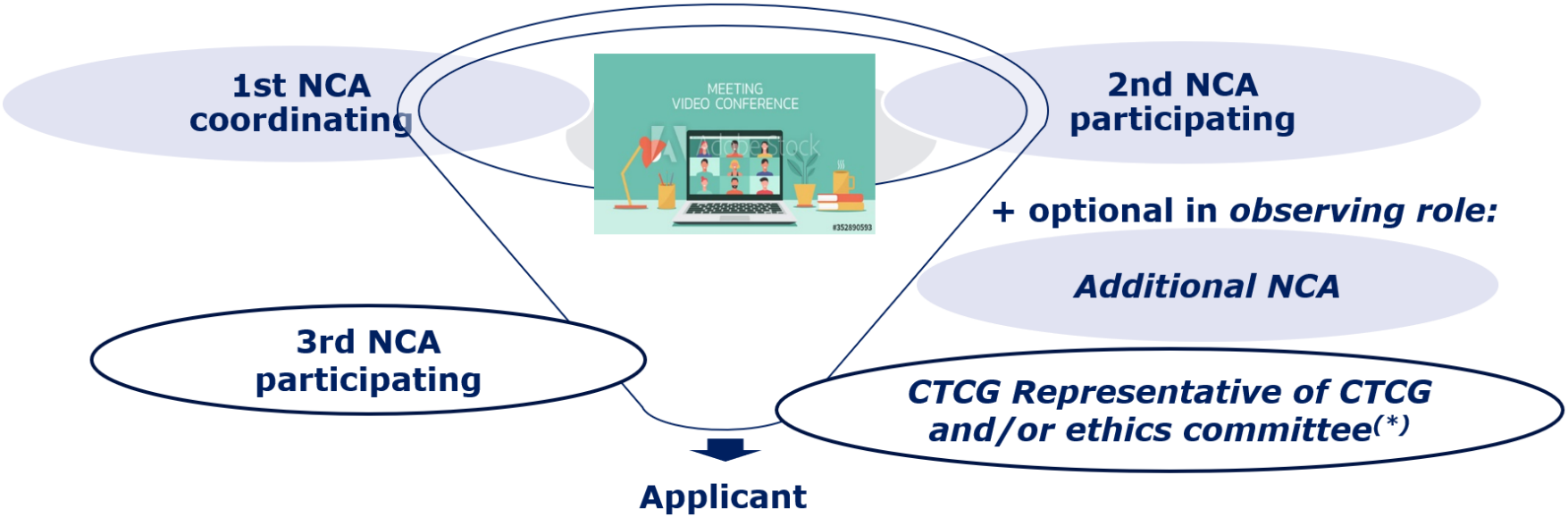
Secretariat
e-mail: EU-INSecretariat@ema.europa.eu

## SNSA WG:

- **Founded: Q1 2019**
- **Co-chairs: FAMHP + PEI**
- **Monthly meetings + annual F2F meeting**
- **Collaborations & interactions:**
  - **Other EU-IN WG's**
  - **CTCG (pre-CTA advice)**
  - **SAWP**
  - **ACT-EU Initiative: PA7 on Scientific advice (+ PA5, PA2)**
  - **HMA**
  - **Annual INNO meetings: (EU-IN, CTCG, SAWP, EUnetHTA)**
  - **Industry (eg. EFPIA, EUCOPE,..)**

https://www.hma.eu/about-hma/working-groups/eu-innovation-network-eu-in.html

# Simultaneous National Scientific Advice (SNSA):




## Key benefits:

- > 3 NCA's / SNSA request possible to facilitate multi-national CT's
- enhanced convergence in sci opinions
- seamless transition from national to EU level
- consider before applying for EU funding grants !

How to submit: **SNSA@pei.de**

FAMHP: https://www.famhp.be/en/human_use/medicines/medicines/scientific_technical_advice/regulation
HMA: https://www.hma.eu/about-hma/working-groups/eu-innovation-network-eu-in.html

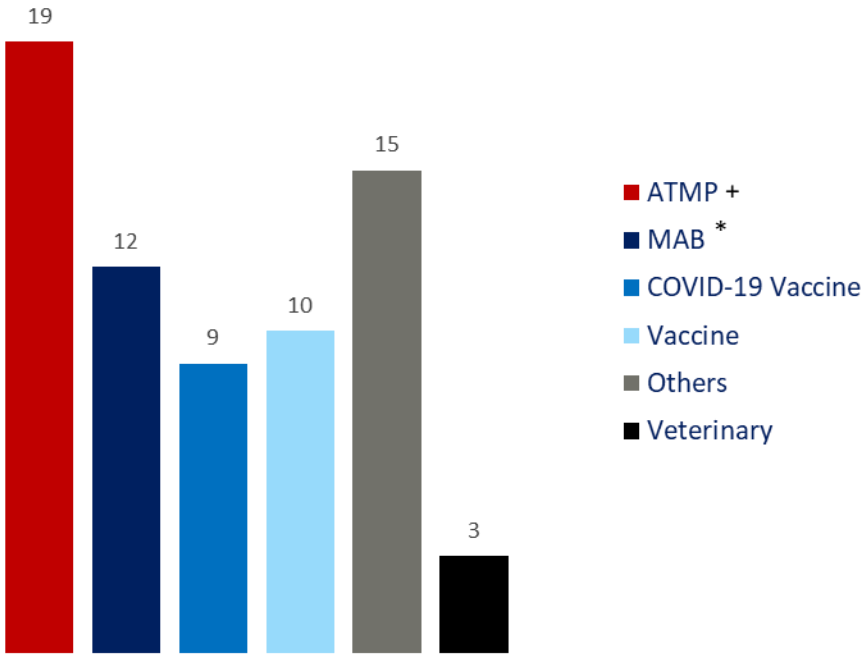


(*) on voluntary basis, subject to case-by-case agreement

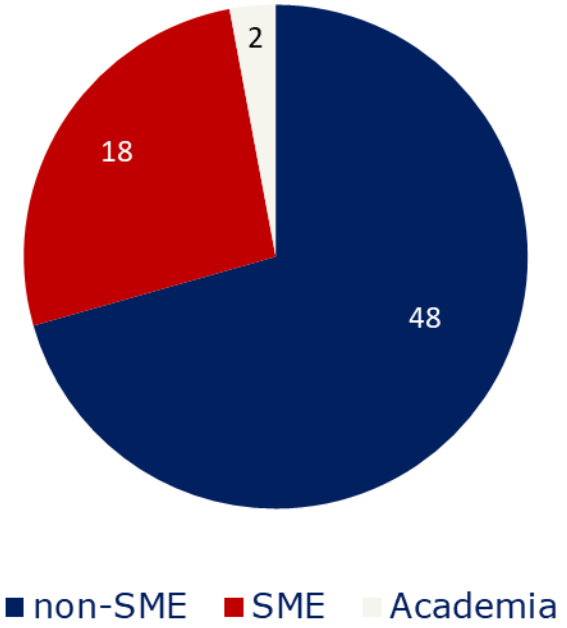
# Simultaneous National Scientific Advice (SNSA):

**Total up to date: 68 SNSA procedures (Oct 2023)**

## Medicinal Products



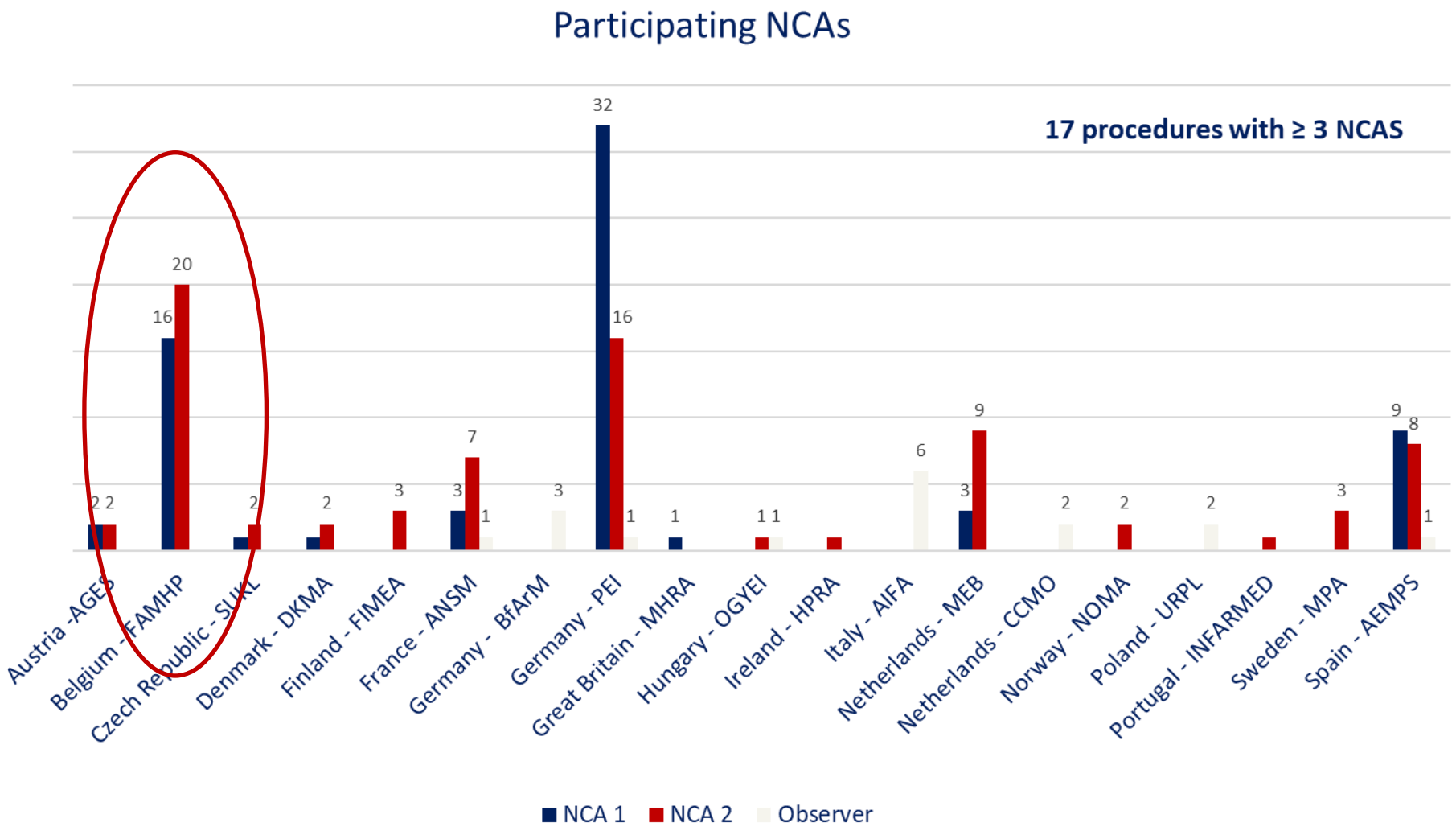

## Applicants




- Focus of advice: mainly (early) clinical stage
- 17 procedures with ≥ 3 NCA's

# SNSA: NCA participation and applicants

**Total number received: 68 procedures (Oct 2023)**



# National innovation office: core activities

## I.3 EU Scientific Advice & Scientif. Advice Working Party (SAWP-H)

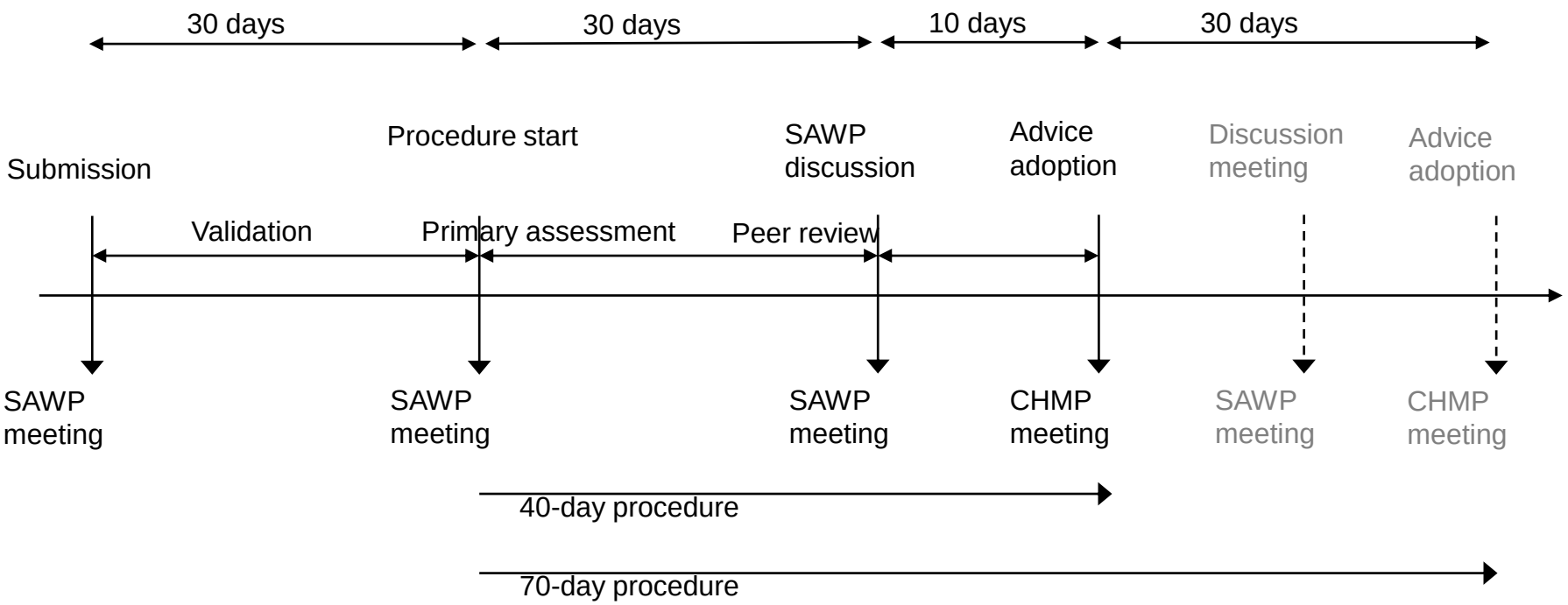
- **Standing working party of the Committee for Medicinal Products for Human Use (CHMP)** with the sole remit of providing scientific advice
- **Meets on a monthly basis** 11 times per year (no meeting in early August)
- Consists of **72 members and alternates nominated based on expertise needs** including representatives from EMA committees

  BE: 2 members + 2 alternates (FAMHP)
- For each scientific advice or protocol assistance request, **two members are appointed as co-ordinators** and at least one member is appointed as peer reviewer
- Requests are **additionally referred to other committees, working parties, operational expert groups** and working groups for peer review input

- Fee incentives for paediatric(-only) developments, protocol assistance, SMEs, ATMPs and PRIME products
- Fee waivers for orphan products from academic applicants and on the clinical development of products addressing public health emergencies

# Scientific Advice Working Party (SAWP-H)

## The scientific advice procedure




**BUT:** scientific advice framework has been evolving:

- It offers qualification of novel methodologies, parallel advice with FDA and HTA, advice for public health emergencies (**ETF**);
- Under development: advice for medical devices & drug-device combinations, SAWP-CTCG pilots

# National innovation office: core activities in Belgium

## II. Specific support to SME's, start-ups and academic research centers / hospitals

**1. Project Infomeetings (PIM) with NIO: ITF-like**

eg. early stage project presentation of higly innovative drug / health products & technologies (prior to formal STA !)

= early dialogue tool prior to formal STA procedures

= key facilitator for Applicant in identifying regulatory hurdles / critical issues for R&D project & planning, need for seeking formal STA **(eg. Pre-Grant stage)**

→ More efficient & timely use of STA procedures, tailor-made advice, iterative guidance, increased success rate

How to submit: **innovationoffice@fagg-afmps.be**

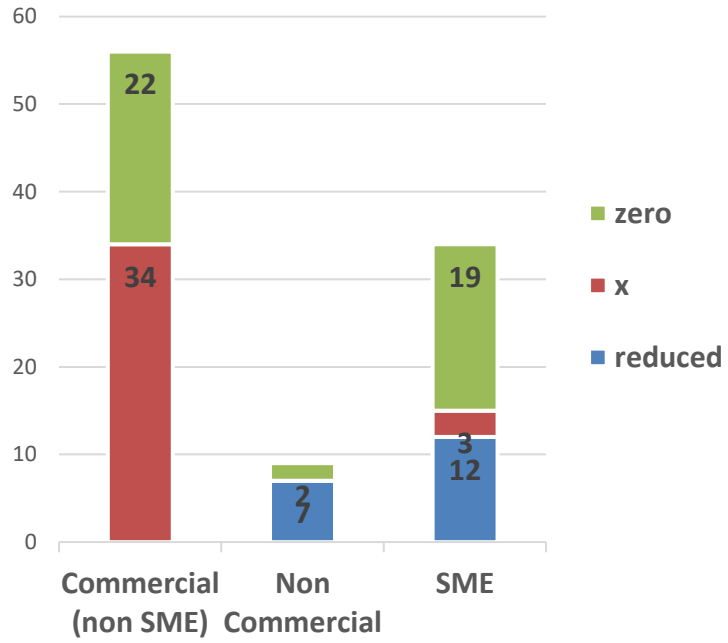
https://www.famhp.be/en/innovationoffice/meeting_with_famhp_experts/project_info_meetings

# National innovation office: core activities in Belgium

## II. Specific support to SME's, start-ups and academic research centers / hospitals

### 2. Reduced STA fee concept for SME's & Academia

- 75% fee reduction for STA type I, II & III requests
- Implemented May 2019 (based on EU SME definition)
- key facilitator for SME's & academia to seek formal STA




### 3. Drug Repurposing: STAMP / RePoG initiative

- NIO and EU IN involved in 1e assessment of pilot applications
- KCE funded trials, REMEDI4All and REPO4EU projects

# National innovation office: core activities in Belgium

## III. General Innovation Support & Knowledge management

**1. Coordination of Portefolio (business pipeline) meetings:**

eg. company presentation, overview of R&D pipeline, emerging technologies, key scientific - regulatory challenges,…

**2. Ad hoc meetings on specific scientific-regulatory topics:**

eg. Biomarkers, Biosimilars, new R&D & technological developments, platform technologies, …

= early dialogue tool prior to formal procedures

= key facilitator for identifying broader regulatory hurdles / gaps, upcoming innovations, challenges for EMRN,…

→ tailor-made advice, iterative guidance increased success rate

How to submit: **innovationoffice@fagg-afmps.be**

https://www.famhp.be/en/innovationoffice/meeting_with_famhp_experts/portfolio_meetings

# National innovation office: 2022 statistics

**136** European scientific advice requests (SAWP-H)

**4** European scientific advice requests (SAWP-V)

**220** FAQ's (eg. regulatory queries, info requests)

**6** Patient pilots (national STA)

**6** Project Info meetings with SME's & academia

**5** Portfolio Meetings

## EU Consultation procedures

- 1 NB consultation for DDCP (MDR)
- 25 TSE consultations for devices manufactured with animal tissue

# National innovation office: other core activities @ national level

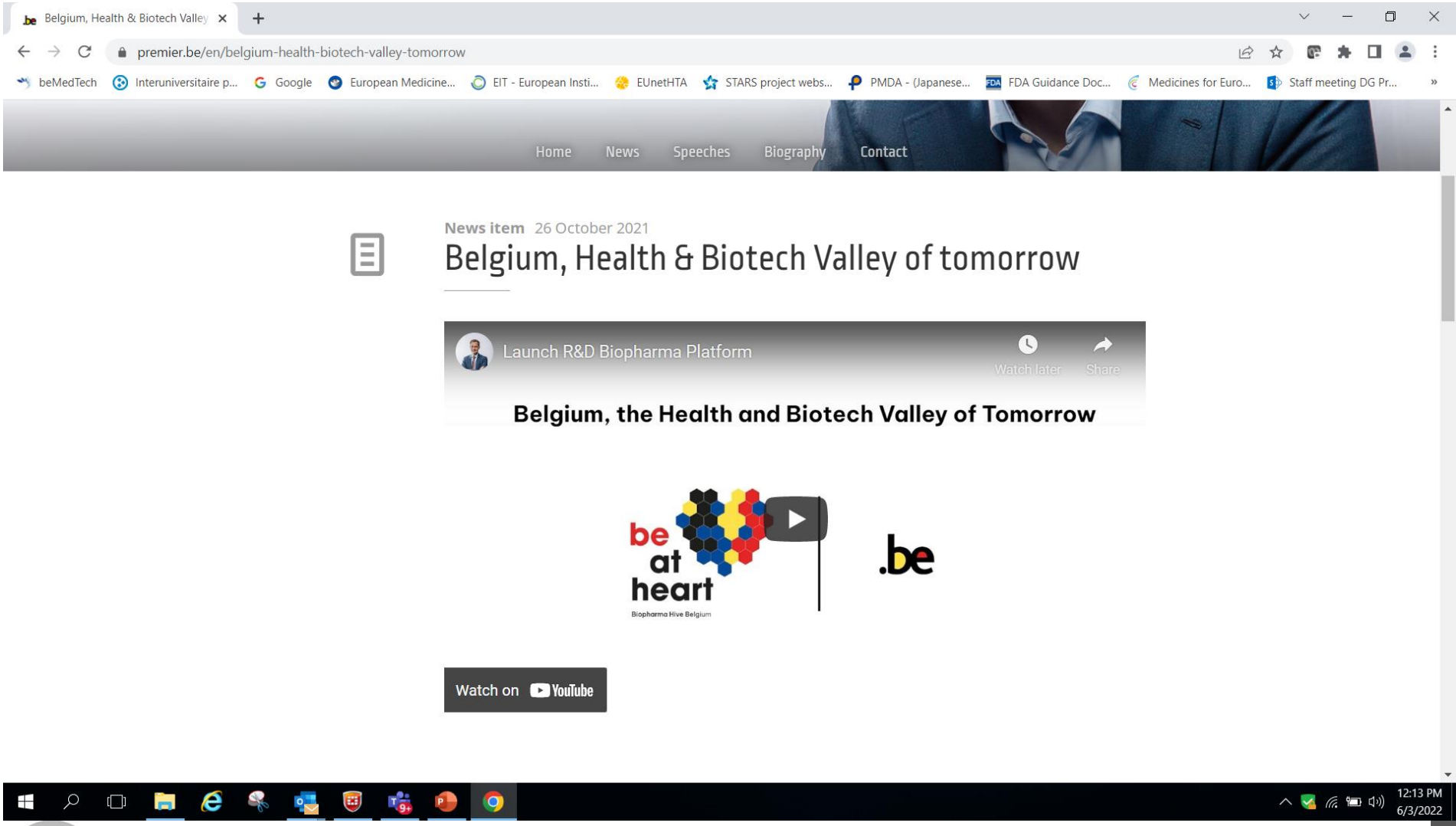
3. **Communication & reach out to local (national) innovators & stakeholders:**
   eg. dedicated webpage, participation to life science events,..

4. **Participation to Guidelines & FU of legislative proposals**
   eg. Belgian regulatory guidance on the use GMO's in clinical trials

5. **Projects:**
   - revision of the FAMHP's commission on borderline products
   - revision of the FAMHP's expertise Database
   - R&D Biopharma platform

6. **Contribution to Political initiatives: eg.**
   - Pharma Future Pacts 1 & 2
   - MedTech Futre Pacts 1 & 2
   - "Belgium, Health & Biotech Valley of tomorrow" Initiative of Prime Minister De Croo (Oct 2021)
   - EU presidency 2024

# National innovation office: core activities @ national level




https://www.premier.be/en/belgium-health-biotech-valley-tomorrow

# National innovation office: core activities @ EU level

## III. General Innovation Support & Knowledge management

- **FAMHP active partner in the EU IN / EMRN:**
  - Horizon Scanning WG
  - Simultaneous national Scientific advice (SNSA) WG + ACT-EU AP7
  - Drug Repurposing (RePoG – EU IN) & STAMP
  - STARS H2020 project: 2019 - 06/2022
  - active follow-up of other EU initiatives & platforms (eg. CTCG, HMA, INNO, ICMRA,…)
- **EU4Health JA on capacity building (IncreaseNET): WP8 "Innovation"**
- **MDCG WG on Borderline & Classification issues (incl. Helsinki consultation procedures)**
- **MDCG WG on New Technologies**

# National innovation office: core activities @ EU level

## III. General Innovation Support & Knowledge management

- **Proactive follow up of:**
  - **New EU Regulations: MDR, IVDR, CTR, SoHo, EU pharma legislation revision, AI Act, etc.**
  - **New concepts and methodologies:**
    **eg. Regulatory Sandboxes, Regulatory science**
  - **New Guidelines: Pharma, Medtech, etc.**
  - **New Research & Innovation initiatives & policies at EU / international level:**
    **eg. ACT-EU, EIC, EIT Health, ICMRA, ..**
  - **Scientific innovations & emerging technologies**
    **(eg. 3D/4D printing, gene editing, decentralised CTs , AI/ML, DTx, point-of-care manufacturing, 3R's,…)**
  - **Regulatory (science) needs / gaps**

# Innovation Task Force (ITF) - participation

Multidisciplinary platform

for preparatory dialogue and orientation on

**innovative methods, technologies and medicines**

- Support **innovative** drug development
- **Early informal** dialogue with opinion leaders (can be requested at any stage of develop.)
- 1,5-hour discussion – Free of charge
- Brainstorming "style" on innovation in areas without existing guidance
- First step to engage is submit completed 3-page template

## What topics can be discussed during ITF meetings?

**Scientific topics:** e.g. pre-clinical development, manufacturing, quality aspects…

**Regulatory topics:** e.g."There is no guidance on this type of novel product. How can we proceed?"

**Legal topics:** e.g.,"Is my product a medicinal product?" → which evidence generation requirements !

# Innovation Task Force (ITF)

## Which types of developments are discussed during ITF meetings?

### Emerging therapies

- Gene therapies
- Cell therapies
- Targeted therapies
- Engineered tissues
- Nanotechnology used in medicines

- 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement)
- New delivery routes
- New delivery systems

### Emerging Technologies

- Digital technologies
- Clinical Trial methodology
- *Omics* data
- Novel manufacturing
- Platform technologies
- Associated medical devices

**Bi-directional interface** with:

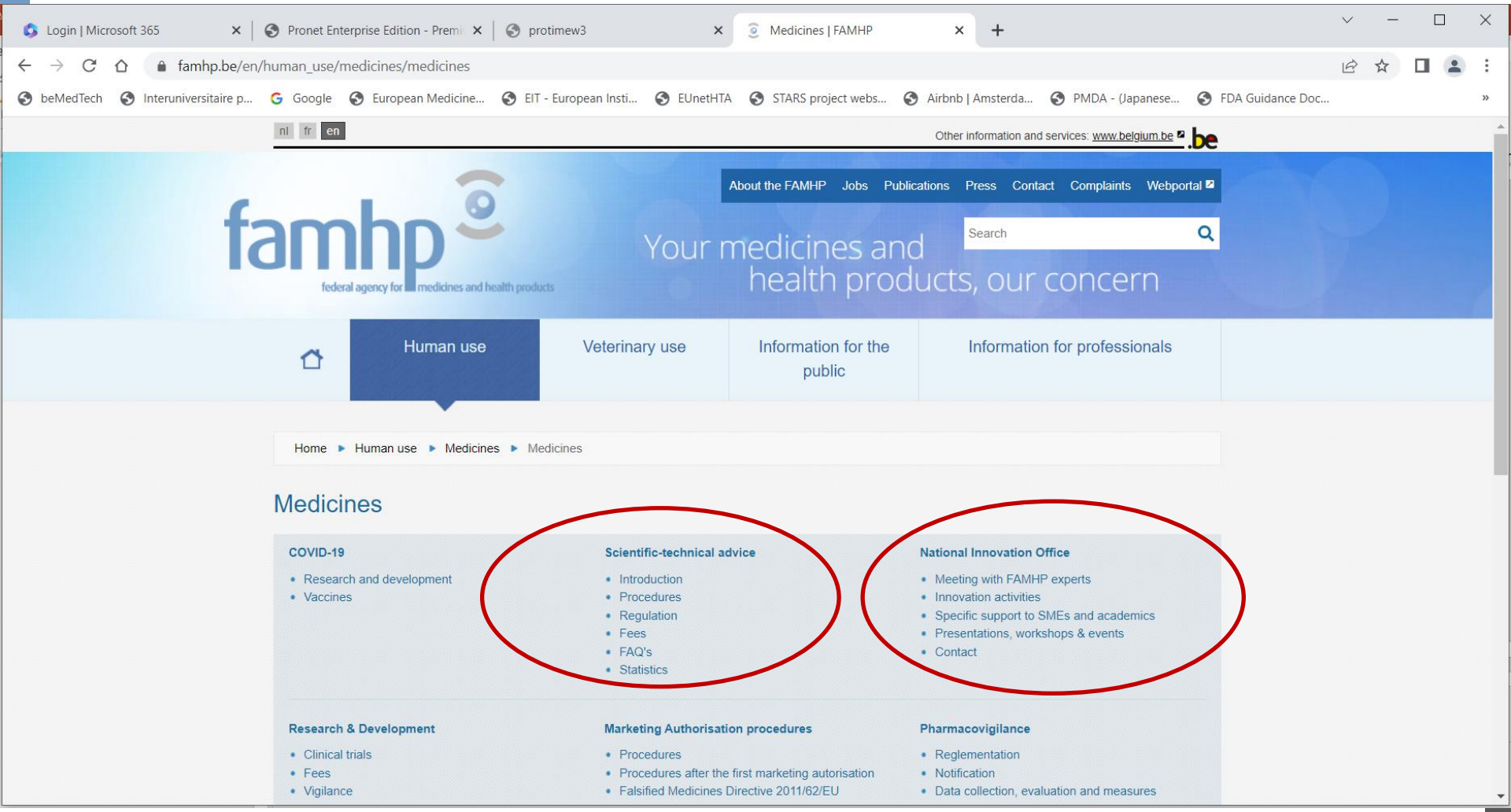
- NCA's: expertise sharing & development (NCA experts and EU reps)
- National Innovation Offices: for innov. office support & guidance OR formal scientif-regul. advice

https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/human-regulatory/research-development/innovation-medicines

# Take home messages & challenges

- Role of Regulators as key enablers for facilitating R&I & early access to patients has significantly increased in EMRN context
- NIO's as 1st contact point can help access & navigate academia & industry through the complex EU regulatory system & refer from national to EU level @ appropriate time point !
- engaging early & iteratively during (pre)clin. development lifecycle with Regulators is key ! = move to DYNAMIC partnership
- Globalised product & technology development >< different regulatory requirements across different regions
- Increasing speed & complexity in pharma & medtech product developm., integrated technologies / technol. platforms & digitalisation in healthcare require: eg.
  - more proactive, agile & multi-disciplinary way of working
  - more data(analytical) driven R&I
  - more proactive stakeholder engagement & strategic partnerships (eg. with academia, research infrastructures,..)
  - enhanced network strategies
  - Regulatory science & horizon scanning

# FAMHP webpage: where to find us?




**Check our website regularly to keep informed !**

# Contact

**Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products – FAMHP**

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