



## **CasInvent Pharma Raises €1.3 Million from KHAN-I and i&i Biotech Fund to Support the Development of New Casein Kinase 1 Inhibitors for the Treatment of Leukemias and Solid Tumors**

Prague, Czech Republic, September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2022. CasInvent Pharma, an early-stage drug discovery company developing small-molecule compounds with anticancer properties, has raised a follow-up investment round of €1.3 million provided by KHAN Technology Transfer Fund I (KHAN-I) and i&i Biotech Fund (i&i Bio). With this funding, CasInvent Pharma will be strengthening its portfolio of casein kinase inhibitors and progressing its lead compound to the development candidate status.

The company CasInvent Pharma is developing proprietary, highly selective inhibitors of enzymes belonging to the casein kinase 1 (CK1) family, which play an important role in several disease-related processes, including the migration of leukemia cells into lymphoid organs. The small-molecule inhibitors are designed to target individual isoforms of CK1 and thereby selectively eradicate leukemic cells. The CasInvent inhibitors have shown promising effects on hard-to-treat leukemias, suggesting their potential use in diseases that currently have limited treatment options. Overall, approximately 500,000 new cases and more than 300,000 deaths due to leukemia were recorded worldwide in 2020.

CasInvent Pharma will also explore the potential of its CK1 inhibitors for the treatment of other cancers, such as solid tumors. *“We are confident that through the support of our investors, we will be able to advance our compounds faster into the clinic and to demonstrate the therapeutic anticancer effects of CK1 inhibition in patients. This step will render CasInvent attractive for larger pharma companies, as it will enable them to expand their portfolio with new compounds useful in single-agent as well as combination therapies,”* says Vojtěch Helikar, CEO of CasInvent Pharma. *“CK1 inhibition provides a novel mechanism of action in different cancer indications, which needs to be exploited in the clinic. We believe that our compounds have the potential to offer novel alternatives of cancer treatment for patients with a high unmet medical need,”* adds Alexander Scheer, CSO of CasInvent Pharma.

### **High quality of the research team and the strong support**

The company CasInvent Pharma was established in 2020 as a spin-off of Masaryk University (MU) in cooperation with the investment partner i&i Prague. *“The investment of €1.3 million further confirms the quality of the scientific project that was created and developed for several years at Masaryk University. The establishment of the spin-off company CasInvent Pharma was thus a logical step to advance, and ultimately commercialize, these efforts. I am very pleased that the Technology Transfer Office of MU was part of such an important achievement,”* says Radoslav Trautmann, Head of Technology Transfer Department, Masaryk University.

*"We are looking forward to our first investment in a Czech start-up and our first co-investment with the recently launched i&i Biotech Fund. From the beginning, we were impressed by the high quality of CasInvent's research team and the strong support from Masaryk University and the biotech incubator i&i Prague to make this investment possible. With our deep experience in preclinical development of small molecules, we will be able to make valuable contributions to the design and achievement of the key R&D milestones. We look forward to working with Vojtěch, Alexander and the R&D team,"* comment Michael Krebs and Peter Nussbaumer, managing partners of KHAN-I.

CasInvent Pharma is i&i Bio's most recent investment announced this year. It marks yet another successful cooperation with the biotech incubator i&i Prague, one of the main investors of i&i Bio. *"We are excited to welcome another promising Czech project to our portfolio. The ability of this spin-off to convince renowned international investors confirms its ambition to be successful on a global scale. It is great to be part of this journey. We are also pleased to use our investment to support research that could help treat serious diseases such as leukemia in the future,"* says Ivan Vohlmuth, one of the partners of i&i Bio.

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#### **About i&i Bio**

i&i Bio is a Luxembourg-based venture capital firm that invests in innovative European Life Sciences companies focused on drug discoveries, medical devices, diagnostics, and digital health. The Fund was created thanks to the cooperation of the biotech incubator i&i Prague and the European Investment Fund (see below). With over €45M under management, i&i Bio plans to invest in about 20 early-stage companies. i&i Bio is led by an experienced team of professionals with backgrounds in private equity, healthcare and venture capital supporting entrepreneurs on their journey to global success. Thanks to the close cooperation with the fund's sponsor, the biotech academic incubator i&i Prague, i&i Bio is supporting and advancing transformative Central European technology companies. For more information visit [www.inibio.eu](http://www.inibio.eu)

#### **About European Investment Fund**

i&i bio is supported by an investment from the EIF, with the support of:

- InnovFin Equity, with the financial backing of the European Union under Horizon 2020 Financial Instruments and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) set up under the Investment Plan for Europe. The purpose of EFSI is to help support financing and implementing productive investments in the European Union and to ensure increased access to financing; and
- the Pan-European Guarantee Fund (EGF), implemented by the EIF with the financial support of the Participating Member States. The objective of EGF is to respond to the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic by ensuring that companies in the Participating Member States have sufficient short-term liquidity available to weather the crisis and are able to continue their growth and development in the medium to long-term.



### **About KHAN-I**

KHAN Technology Transfer Fund I GmbH & Co KG (KHAN-I) is an early-stage life sciences venture fund with € 70 million under management. Our mission is to create value through cooperative drug development partnerships with academic innovators in Europe. KHAN-I focuses on first-in-class therapies for attractive markets with a high unmet medical need. The fund is managed by Khanu Management GmbH, an experienced team of professionals with proven track records in early-stage drug development, academic spin-offs as well as pharma licensing and partnering.

KHAN-I received an investment from the European Investment Fund (EIF) with support of InnovFin Equity, with the financial backing of the European Union under Horizon 2020 Financial Instruments and the European Fund for Strategic Investments (“EFSI”) under the Investment Plan for Europe. KHAN-I is also supported by Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH (AWS with funds provided by the Austrian Federal Ministry for Digital and Economic Affairs and the Austrian Foundation for Research, Technology and Development), Max Planck Foundation and Thyssen’sche Handelsgesellschaft mbH. For more information visit [www.khanu.de](http://www.khanu.de)

### **About of Masaryk University Technology Transfer Office**

Masaryk University Technology Transfer Office is a specialised department of Masaryk University that helps to transfer knowledge and technology into practice. The Office supports the university's cooperation with the commercial sphere, the creation of spin-off companies and the successful commercialisation of university research. For more information visit [www.muni.cz/en](http://www.muni.cz/en)

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