**GHENT BIO-ENERGY VALLEY BECOMES GHENT BIO-ECONOMY VALLEY**

Ghent Bio-Energy Valley was founded in 2005 at the initiative of Prof. Wim Soetaert, on the eve of the biofuel production in Belgium. It started as a Public Private Partnership between Ghent University, the City of Ghent, the Port of Ghent, the Development Agency of East-Flanders and a number of industrial companies that are active in the fields of generation, distribution, storage and use of bioenergy. Ghent Bio-Energy Valley aimed at supporting the development of sustainable bio- energy activities and resulting economic growth in the region of Ghent, Belgium.

The members of Ghent Bio-Energy Valley succeeded in acquiring **80% of the Flemish quota** for biofuels in October 2006, resulting in substantial investments in the port of Ghent. Industrial production at Bioro, Oleon (biodiesel) and Alco Bio Fuel (bio-ethanol) started in the spring of 2008.

Over the years, more companies joined Ghent Bio-Energy Valley and new activities were introduced. In spite of what the name suggested, Ghent Bio-Energy Valley has always supported the development of all biobased activities, not only bio-energy but also biochemicals and biomaterials. Our attention is now increasingly going to biochemicals and biomaterials, and biofuels have become quite mature. In order to cover better our scope of activities, a new name has become inevitable: Ghent Bio-Economy Valley. With this new name, Ghent Bio-Economy Valley wants to remain the main driver of the biobased economy in Flanders, as it was for biofuels eight years ago.

**Ghent Bio-Economy Valley** promotes the development of the biobased economy through joint research projects, clustering and synergy creation between the partners and communication towards the general public.

Currently, Ghent Bio-Economy Valley is involved in a joint research project with FlandersBio and essenscia, in the framework of CINBIOS, to look at the **valorisation of organic waste streams in Flanders (VISIONS)**. The biobased economy is looking into new feedstocks for their processes after the “food versus fuel” debate started the discussion on the use of food crops for biofuel production. An alternative is the use of organic waste streams for biobased production. For this, so called “second generation technology” is needed to convert these waste streams into suitable raw materials for biobased processes. However, this second generation technology is still under development, and forms the bottleneck for the further expansion of the biobased economy. By addressing this bottleneck and developing second generation technology for organic waste streams in Flanders, Ghent Bio-Economy Valley and its partners are enabling further growth of the biobased economy in Flanders.

Ghent Bio-Economy Valley has all the assets to help build the biobased economy. It is one of the founding fathers of the **Bio Base Europe Pilot Plant**, a flexible and diversified pilot plant capable of scaling up and optimising a broad variety of biobased processes up to 10 m3 scale, a critical step in the innovation chain. Ghent Bio-Economy Valley has a **strong industrial base** consisting of major biobased companies. Moreover, it has excellent perspectives for further growth given that the Port of Ghent, the number one bioport in Europe, has reserved **80 ha of industrial sites** at the Kluizendok for biobased industries.

All these assets are expected to give Ghent Bio-Economy Valley a boost to remain a leading European initiative for the development of the biobased economy of the future.