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Sanofi has announced that it has entered a research collaboration and license agreement with Evotec and Apeiron Biologics to discover and develop first-in-class small molecule-based immuno-oncology therapies to treat solid and hematological cancers by enhancing the anti-tumor activity of the human immune system.

"Immuno-oncology has emerged as a particularly promising field to create potentially curative treatment options for many cancer patients. Partnering with Evotec and Apeiron Biologics will significantly advance our shared vision toward realizing the full value of these innovative small molecule treatments," said Ms Victoria Richon, VP and Head of Cancer Research, Discovery and Early Development for Sanofi.

Based on Evotec's technological expertise and Apeiron Biologics' experience with immunology, the new collaboration will focus on the identification of novel small molecules and their targets to develop next-generation therapies in immuno-oncology. These treatments are expected to complement currently available checkpoint inhibitors.

The collaboration is based on the initial successful outcome of a phenotypic high throughput screen of potential compounds for development that was commissioned by Apeiron Biologics and conducted by Evotec. Under the collaboration, Sanofi has the option of screening its own compound libraries to identify new small molecule candidates for development.

"We are pleased and proud that our joint efforts in immuno-oncology with Apeiron have led to this partnership with Sanofi. The collaboration is a great example of an efficient translation from early-stage research to pharma development," said Dr Werner Lanthaler, chief executive officer of Evotec.

Dr Hans Loibner, chief executive officer of Apeiron Biologics said, "It is encouraging to see that our work, even at an early

stage, can attract interest from one of the world's leading, large biopharmaceutical companies. We look forward to applying all the different skills and resources bundled in this collaboration for the benefit of this treatment concept and ultimately for the benefit of patients."

Under the terms of the agreement, Sanofi will have sole responsibility for all development, regulatory, commercial and manufacturing activities of the products resulting from the collaboration. Sanofi will support two years of funding for Evotec and Apeiron to conduct the research program, which will include potential early success milestone payments.