



Pistoia Alliance European Life Science Informatics Forum – Benelux Chapter

Participant photos / brief biographies

Photo	Bio
	<p>Becky Upton</p> <p>Becky was appointed as the Pistoia Alliance’s first female President in June 2022. She is a long-time supporter of pre-competitive collaboration in life sciences and healthcare R&D and the critical role it plays in advancing science and is passionate about diversity in STEM. Becky is responsible for leading the Pistoia Alliance’s strategy and defining its future within areas of increasing importance to the industry, such as data standards, emerging technologies, diversity and inclusion, sustainability, and precision medicine.</p> <p>Becky first engaged with the Pistoia Alliance on its Lab of the Future project whilst at VWR (now part Avantor) where she worked for over a decade in sales, business development, and scientific services. From here, she joined the scientific instrumentation and analytical services company, Pion, as Managing Director, before moving to the Alliance as a project manager. She later became Chief Portfolio Officer and within this role established the Alliance’s first and thriving Diversity and Inclusion in STEM Leadership program. Becky re-joined the Alliance as President after a return to the commercial world as a Director at Impellam Group where she led the company’s STEM services strategy.</p> <p>Becky has a PhD in Biochemistry from Imperial College and an MBA from Cranfield University.</p>
	<p>Bérénice Wulbrecht</p> <p>Bérénice Wulbrecht is currently the Vice President of Solution Enablement at ONTOFORCE. With over 15 years of experience in life sciences, Bérénice takes the lead in providing expertise to various life science companies to support their journey in data transformation: turning their unstructured data into actionable insights for a variety of activities like target identification, clinical development, and medical affairs.</p> <p>Bérénice holds a master's in bioinformatics & molecular biology. Before joining ONTOFORCE, she gained experience working at the prestigious Pasteur Institute of Lille and at BASF Plant Science where she focused on gene discovery for crop improvement by combining multi-omics analysis with internal and public knowledge.</p>



Bert Torfs

Bert is a Sr. Fellow Architecture and Engineering at JnJ Innovative Medicine Technology R&D. That means he designs future proof solutions for the Global Sciences department, focusing on cloud-native implementations of systems that require High Performance Compute or require full integration.

Bert has a background in Chemistry and Computer Science. During his 28-year career at JnJ he has spent 26 years in various IT departments. In his current position, Bert is predominantly focused on the Discovery (overall process, and In-silico design using Machine Learning) and the lab execution (Scientific Data Management) systems.



Dorota Herman

I am a Principal Scientist and a group leader in In-Silico Discovery R&D at Johnson & Johnson Innovative Medicine in Belgium bringing seven years of dedicated experience to the field. My professional expertise spans data sciences, chemoinformatics, and computational biology. Within the realm of pharmaceutical research, my multidisciplinary skill set has proven invaluable in advancing drug discovery via AI/ML for small molecule with respect to experimental biological data and possible safety liabilities in early drug discovery phase.

Prior to my current role, I served as a postdoctoral researcher at VIB in Belgium, focusing on bioinformatics, omics data analysis, data integration, network analysis and ML based phenotype-transcriptome relationships. My journey commenced as a PhD student in Computational Biology at the University of Birmingham in England, where my research centred on the mathematical modelling of gene regulatory circuits.

Throughout my career, I have remained steadfast in my commitment to bridging the gap between biology and data science, leveraging my robust analytical and research capabilities. I possess an unwavering passion for contributing to cutting-edge advancements in drug discovery, and I am dedicated to driving meaningful progress in the field.



Dries De Maeyer

Dries is the leader of the single cell analysis team in the omics discovery group at Janssen Pharmaceutica. His group is a centre of excellence at Janssen regarding single cell data analysis. As such the group focuses on single cell data generation and analysis in the different therapeutic areas at Janssen such as oncology, neuroscience, immunology, etc. The expertise gathered from this wide application of single cell analysis, is shared with the broader community through the open source project OpenPipeline where he the group works together with external collaborators to exchange knowledge on best-practice single cell analysis methods.

Dries holds a master degree in cellular and genetic bio-engineering, an additional master in computer sciences, both from the University of Leuven, and a bio-informatics PhD in network omics analysis from jointly the University of Leuven and Ghent.



Francis P. Crawley

Francis P. Crawley is a philosopher with a career in bioethics and expertise in research policy, regulation, ethics, integrity & methodology as well as in data/AI/virtual twins ethics and law with particular attention to the life sciences: clinical trials, genomics/omics, new technologies. Expertise in EU, US, international and country-specific ethics, law, and patient and community interests in health-related research. Strong experience working closely with patients, communities, researchers, and policymakers across disciplines, domains, and geographic regions in establishing consortia, developing patient registries, contributing to the development of biobanks, drafting data management and data protection plans, and contributing to building data repositories.

Wide experience (e.g., UNAIDS, WHO, UNESCO, European Commission, Council of Europe, and others, including local organizations and industry) in developing health-related research projects, collaborative engagements, regulatory and policy outreach, and education and training in Europe, Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Eastern Europe & Central Asia. Leading roles in the development of international and national guidelines, capacity-building, empowerment, and education programmes for health research; including GCP, ethics review systems, genetics and biobanks, and data privacy & management (a GDPR DPO), with expertise in the ELSI aspects of data AI, digital twins, and organoids.

Since January 2020 highly active in the research, ethics, data sharing, and policy discussions on COVID-19, particularly in the areas of vaccines, repurposed medicines, and genetic modelling, having organised more than 40 global webinars and coordinating research across HICs and LMICs. He is at the forefront of the European and global movement to reform and advance research assessment in the universities and other research institutions, with a particular emphasis on research ethics and research integrity in developing policy for data and AI in the research assessment process.



Francisco Bonachela-Capdevila

Francisco Bonachela-Capdevila has been within R&D Business Technology in Johnson and Johnson Innovative Medicine since 2014, when he joined as a postdoc. During his career at J&J, Francisco has collaborated with diverse scientific groups to develop technology solutions to manage and provide access to data. He has worked with teams focusing on immunology, infectious diseases, vaccines and drug discovery process in general. Currently, he is particularly interested in omics data analysis and integration.

Francisco has a double background in Biochemistry and Computer Science from the University of Granada and holds a PhD in Bioinformatics from the KU Leuven.



Hans Vermeiren

Hans Vermeiren is currently working as a Data Scientist in the Discovery Sciences team at Galápagos. Scientific data handling has always been the core theme of his career. It started more than 20 years ago at Virco where Hans co-developed the algorithm to predict drug resistance from HIV sequences that was instrumental for the success of Tibotec's (now J&J) antiretroviral drugs. He was information scientist at Galápagos in the heyday of semantic web, a first encounter with the power of ontologies. He joined Biocartis in 2012 where he built the team responsible for delivery of the diagnostic software of the Idylla instrument. In 2020 he joined Galápagos again to focus on knowledge management, information retrieval and advanced data analytics.

Hans graduated as a master in chemical process engineering at the Catholic University of Louvain and has a PhD in applied biological sciences from the same university.



Harry van Haaften

Harry van Haaften is CEO of The Hyve. The Hyve started in 2012 and is based in Utrecht (The Netherlands). The Hyve specializes in support for open-source software for bioinformatics and translational research, such as cBioPortal, Open Targets, RADAR-base, FairSpace, and OHDSI. The Hyve offers several services related to the development and deployment of Knowledge Graphs, data modeling, training, data loading, application support, software development, and FAIR consultancy. The Hyve's mission is to enable open science by developing and implementing open source solutions, FAIRifying data and expert consulting in life sciences.

Harry has a master's degree in Human Nutrition and Business Administration at Wageningen University, The Netherlands. He has over 30 years of experience leading companies to a higher professional level in positions as an interim manager and an entrepreneur. In the last eleven years, he built up The Hyve with the founder Kees van Bochove. Harry started as the CFO and took over the CEO role in 2018.



John Wise

John is the Programme Coordinator for the PRISME Forum and is also a consultant at the Pistoia Alliance with responsibilities that include business development and member relations. He specialises in the coordination of pre-competitive collaborations in life science R&D IT and healthcare. John has had a long-time commitment to encouraging pharma to use expert, third-party, cost-effective, regulatory-compliant, secure, hosted information services.

Previously, John has held Informatics leadership roles in a variety of organizations including the University of London, Sandoz, the Imperial Cancer Research Fund (now CRUK), Roche, Ipsen and Daiichi Sankyo. John has also worked in the technology supply side of the industry. In these roles, he has gained direct hands-on experience writing analytical software, teaching computation, delivering IT capabilities, and providing computer-based services to the discovery, non-clinical development, clinical development, and regulatory affairs domains of the life-science industry.

John graduated in physiology from the University of Oxford and received a post-graduate certificate in education from the University of London.



László Kupcsik




László is leading a team of computational biologists supporting drug discovery efforts in all therapeutic areas at Galapagos. Over his years in the industry, he gained hands-on experience in various areas of bioinformatics, such as transcriptomics, screening methods, text mining and ontologies. His current interests are workflow automation, and pragmatic computational solutions that are sustainable in the long term.

László has a PhD in Molecular and Cell Biology from the Eötvös Loránd University in Budapest.



Rebecca Foulger

Rebecca has worked in the world of ontologies and Biocuration for over 20 years covering Academia, Pharma and the Health Sector. Rebecca began her Biocuration career at the University of Cambridge, developing and annotating the Gene Ontology (GO). Her subsequent roles at the European Bioinformatics Institute, University College London, Eagle Genomics and Genomics England have all embraced ontologies, from both the ontology development side, and the downstream user perspective. These led Rebecca to her current position as a senior Biocurator and Content Integration Manager at SciBite, Elsevier. Rebecca has hands-on experience with ontology building, aligning with existing Life Science ontologies, and Ontology Management Platforms.

	<p>Rebecca graduated from the University of Nottingham with a degree in Biochemistry and Genetics, before completing a PhD in Biochemistry.</p>
	<p>Somaie Salajeghe</p> <p>Somaie Salajeghe is a professional with a diverse background spanning both academia and industry. Currently serving as an IT Lead for the R&D Data team at Galapagos NV, she excels in bridging the gap between IT and business functions with her strong leadership skills, analytical mindset, and passion for driving business transformation through technology. She is adept at understanding complex business processes, identifying opportunities for optimization, and translating them into concrete digital solutions.</p> <p>With a track record of success in project management, resource allocation, and vendor selection, she has led numerous projects to successful completion. As the solution guardian, she ensures that solutions align with company's policies and standards, while also staying abreast of the latest trends and technologies in her domain.</p> <p>She has a Ph.D. in Biomedical Engineering from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.</p>
	<p>Valerie Morel</p> <p>Valerie Morel is the Chief Executive Officer of ONTOFORCE. Her areas of expertise include strategic and operational management of high-growth businesses. Valerie has previously held executive positions such as Chief Commercial Officer of FinTech scaleup Mobilexpense and Chief Revenue Officer of BlueBee, a genomics analysis solution provider acquired by Illumina in 2020.</p> <p>She holds a master's degree in business engineering from KU Leuven. Throughout her career, she has guided various companies through their scaling and internationalization phases.</p>
	<p>Zahid Tharia</p> <p>Zahid Tharia is a consultant with the Pistoia Alliance and a founding director of OpenPharma Research. Zahid has over 20 years' experience in business information and media for the Life Sciences industry. Zahid was MD of Health Network Communications, a business he founded in 2006. Health Network rapidly grew into a market leading and award-winning international Life Science events company with a portfolio of large-scale events in Europe and the US, the company was sold to Terrapinn in 2016. Prior to that, he ran Informa's international life sciences business.</p> <p>Zahid has a Bachelor's degree in Medicinal Chemistry from the University of Essex and a Masters in Biochemical Immunology.</p>