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EIB provides EUR 180 million loan for Sittard-Geleen's, hospital of the future

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has granted a loan of EUR 180 million to finance the construction of the Orbis Medical Park (OMP) in Sittard (NL). Philippe Maystadt, President of the EIB, Ludo Jansen, President of the Board of Orbis healthcare group and Guus Broos, Member of the Board, signed the loan agreement on 9 December, on the building site in Sittard, in the presence of Leon Frissen, the Queen's Commissioner for the Province of Limburg. The EIB loan will mainly be devoted to the construction of the new Maaslandziekenhuis hospital, frequently referred to as "The Hospital of the 21st Century".

The Orbis Medical Park was conceived around a totally innovative approach to healthcare, in which prevention, cure and care go together. Adjoining the new Maasland Hospital will be a Care Promenade, the Prins Claus Centre for mental healthcare, and a rehabilitation and recovery centre. The Care Promenade will accommodate a wide range of care-related facilities as well as the Orbis healthcare group's executive offices. The new hospital is set up for a "New Way of Working". All working, care and treatment processes were redefined and redesigned for that purpose, and the construction blueprints and systems then tailored to the new concept. The work is not divided up between different departments, but is organised with the patient at the centre. What makes all this possible are intelligent care-related logistics and full ICT support, for example the Electronic Patient Dossier and a computerised planning system. The "New Way of Working" and the new Maasland Hospital will soon set an example of pioneering healthcare in the Netherlands.

The Orbis Medical Park is being built by the Orbis healthcare group. In addition to the new hospital, the group consists of nine multifunctional care centres and its own home nursing organisation. Construction of a tenth multifunctional centre (the Hoogveld Centre in Sittard) commenced this month. On 1 January 2006, Orbis will merge with one of its most important regional partners in home nursing, Thuiszorg Westelijke Mijnstreek. After the merger, Orbis will have a workforce of 5,500, making it one of the biggest employers in south Limburg.

This project, requiring investments worth 360 million euros, is expected to boost the economy of the Sittard-Geleen region. This was an important element attracting EIB financing, along with the groundbreaking approach of the project, the cross-border nature of the facility, and its plans to cooperate with other hospitals in the region. The OMP indeed satisfies one of the EIB's priority objectives: to finance human capital projects within the context of the Lisbon Agenda and the European growth and employment strategy.

Background note:

Financing the upgrading of health infrastructure in Europe has been one of the EIB's priorities since 1997. Such investments foster the EU's economic and social cohesion by helping to provide access to the best health and hospital services in the less developed regions and stimulates the development of new technologies. Since that year the Bank has made available nearly EUR 8 billion for the modernisation or construction of hospital and healthcare facilities in the European Union.

The present loan in favour of the Sittard-Geleen hospital is the second EIB operation in the health sector in the Netherlands; it previously financed a hospital in Heerenveen. Over the decade, the EIB provided over EUR 5 billion to investment projects in that country. More generally, the EIB grants some EUR 1.5 billion worth of loans in the Benelux countries each year.

The European Investment Bank (EIB), the financing institution of the European Union, provides long-term loans in support of projects furthering the objectives of the European Union. The EIB, whose shareholders are the twenty-five Member States, finances both public and private sector projects throughout the Union, including public-private partnerships (in total about EUR 40 billion per year).

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