New CISH will allow SMEs to appoint researchers

By 2014, Fribourg will have a new Centre for Integrative Human Health (CISH Fribourg) that will offer its services and assistance to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and larger firms looking to benefit from its research institute and university laboratories — that's the promise from Jean-Marc Brunner, who is in charge of the project, and Thomas Jenny, vice-rector of the University of Fribourg. "This centre of excellence will play a pivotal role in transferring technology between research and the industry," emphasises Jean-Marc Brunner. CISH Fribourg will operate as a public-private partnership, in the same way as the Swiss Centre for Electronics and Microtechnology (CSEM) in Neuchâtel.

THE FIRST MILESTONE

The University of Fribourg, the Fribourg Hospital (Hospital Fribourgeois) and the Adelphi Merkle Institute have joined forces to create the new undertaking. By mid-June, those behind the project had already laid down the broad guidelines. CISH Fribourg is to be built on the Bluefactory site, a technology park that will be created on the site of the former Cardinal brewery, founded in 1788. Research will focus on three platforms: biomedical, computer science/biometrics and material sciences. As well as the medical approach to health, activities will concentrate on themes such as ageing and wellbeing, aspects of human health that are currently the focus of much interest.

A BUDGET OF 15 MILLION SWISS FRANCIS

With an estimated budget of 15 million francs needed to cover both the wages of highly qualified consultants and the cost of hardware, Jean-Marc Brunner and Maryline Mailland, in charge of research promotion, have set out on their rounds to approach politicians and large companies in the hope of securing the necessary funds.

"We are facing an important gap in the market with an interface which is capable of directing SMEs efficiently," continues Jean-Marc Brunner. "Our business plan anticipates that the centre will be self-financing within five years."