

Press Release

29 November 2019

## **Panel of judges awards five outstanding deals for the prestigious Belgium M&A Awards 2019.**

On Thursday 28 November over 400 top-level professionals in M&A, corporate finance and private equity came together to celebrate the best deals and dealmakers of 2019. The M&A Awards, organised by Alex van Groningen BV, is the landmark event for Belgium's leaders in M&A and proves that there is great value in a platform for Belgium M&A professionals.

### **A thorough debate and a rigorous selection process**

For the M&A Awards Belgium 2019, the organization received thirty-four extensive pitches from M&A professionals from all over Belgium. The period under review is for deals announced between 1 October 2018 and 30 September 2019 - a full twelve months of activity. The panel of judges nominated thirteen finalists in five award categories, view all the nominees [here](#) or [MaAwards.be](#). The judges that have cast their votes and determined the winners include Urbain Vandeurzen (Chairman Panel of Judges and Chairman of Smile Invest), Philippe Haspelslagh (Honorary Dean Vlerick Business School), Eric van Zele (Former President & CEO Barco), Renaat Berckmoes (Partner Fortino Capital), Michaël Sephiha (Journalist at Mediafin/De Tijd) and Pierre Demaerel (Secretary General at Belgian Venture Capital & Private Equity Association). Read all biographies [here](#).

All thirteen finalists have been thoroughly evaluated by the panel of judges. The judges determined the five Award winners by scoring each deal on the key aspects rationality, entrepreneurship, complexity, vision, timing, process and the impact on the company itself, the direct stakeholders and society.

### **Winner M&A Award Best Large-Cap Deal: Galapagos - Gilead**

The Panel of Judges awarded the cooperation agreement between Galapagos and Gilead because of its innovative character and the clear strategic rationale for both parties. Galapagos remains financially and organizationally independent with this deal because Gilead recognizes the added value of the current management. In this way, Galapagos retains all production licenses in Europe. On the other hand, for an attractive price, Gilead is acquiring a greater stake in Galapagos; licenses for distribution outside of Europe and a pre-ownership right on new medicines. The jury sees the agreement as an elegant non-attack treaty where there are clearly two winners. In addition, the Panel of Judges praises the innovative fundings methods applied to this deal. [Read pitch](#).

### **Winner M&A Award Best Mid-Cap Deal: Kinopolis Group - MJR Digital Cinemas**

To do an overseas acquisition in times when the cinema industry is experiencing strong competition from parties such as Netflix is a courageous decision. In 2017 Kinopolis acquired a company in Canada. The position acquired there was used as a springboard to the United States. Although acquisitions across the ocean are always exciting, the Panel of Judges believes that the "Ink Spot strategy" can be successful. The cooperation with the Canadian team shows that is was a well-considered acquisition. Relatively speaking, it is an impressive acquisition, because Kinopolis EBITDA increases by more than 10 percent. The Panel of Judges also sees a good match in the philosophy that Kinopolis and MJR share. Both parties go beyond traditional cinema visits and offer an "experience". [Read pitch](#).

### **Winner M&A Award Best PE Growth Capital Deal: HG Capital - Combell Group**

In recent years, Combell has created a leading position in the Danish and Belgian markets through dozens of acquisitions. The Panel of Judges is impressed by the way in which this buy-and-build strategy has been shaped. After a strong local position had been acquired under the founder, Waterland took the step across the border. Under HgCapital, the pace of the buy-and-build machine is further increased, while founder Jonas Dhaenens is still involved in the company. The Panel of Judges is impressed by the timing and thoroughness of all the acquisitions. For example, there seems to have never been too much paid for an acquisition. Combell is a prototype of a situation where entrepreneurship and private equity reinforce each other. [Read pitch](#).

**Winner M&A Award Best Venture Capital Deal - IC-Technology: CapitalG - Collibra**

The jury emphasizes that Collibra is currently the only Belgian unicorn. It is therefore not entirely surprising that the company managed to get 110 million out of the market. That the investment branch of Google has led this investment round is not only a quality stamp in itself, it is also the largest investment by Google in the Benelux. With the money invested, Collibra can not only expand its product portfolio but also benefit from the knowledge that Google / Alphabet has in the field of machine learning and artificial intelligence. [Read pitch.](#)

**Winner M&A Award Best PE Venture Capital - Life Sciences: Confo Therapeutics raises €30 million**

Although Confo Therapeutics was able to raise money earlier, the Panel of Judges was impressed by the size of this investment and the quality of the investors. The investment not only gives Confo Therapeutics the opportunity to fund its ongoing Research and Development but also gives it the opportunity to develop as a platform. [Read pitch.](#)

**Experience the M&A Awards 2020**

The M&A Awards 2020 will be held on 26 November in Brussels. Join the M&A Awards gala dinner with your team and relations (8 seats + 4 after party tickets). From 6.00 PM the champagne reception, followed by the luxury dinner with entertainment and plenty of networking opportunities. [MaAwards.be](#).

For more information:

Ezri Joy Blaauw

Head M&A Networks Benelux | Alex van Groningen BV | Amsterdam Institute of Finance

+31(0)205788913 | +31(0)646384782 | [eblaauw@alexvangroningen.be](mailto:eblaauw@alexvangroningen.be)

[MenA.nl](#) | [MaAwards.nl](#) | [AIF.nl](#) | [VeeCee.co](#) | [MaAwards.be](#) | [Executive Days Belgium](#)