

French biotech tackling hearing loss wins 2025 Enterprise Europe Network Award

French biotech [Cilcare](#) is the winner of the 2025 [Enterprise Europe Network](#) (EEN) Awards, announced at the Network's Annual Conference in the Danish city of Aalborg on 28 November, rewarding its success in leveraging EEN support to develop its achievements in hearing loss research.

Millions of people around the world suffer from hearing loss, yet effective treatments remain limited. Cilcare, founded in 2014 by three women entrepreneurs, set out to meet this challenge by developing advanced therapies for hearing disorders, such as tinnitus and cochlear synaptopathy.

To achieve their goal, the company sought early support from the Enterprise Europe Network, a flagship project funded by the European Commission that helps SMEs grow internationally through tailored matchmaking and strategic advisory services. Thanks to this support, Cilcare is now a leader in its field, its innovative treatments offering hope to sufferers around the world.

A targeted international strategy

From the outset, Cilcare had global ambitions. *"We turned to the Enterprise Europe Network because it offered a structured and trusted pathway to international growth,"* says CEO Celia Belline. Early Network support included creating and promoting a partner-search profile on the Network database, significantly boosting Cilcare's visibility within the European health sector.

As Cilcare's strategy evolved, the company saw potential in the Japanese market. *"Japan was identified as a strategic market very early in our development,"* Celia Belline explains. Their first Japanese client came in 2016, confirming demand for their unique preclinical expertise in ear disorders. Recognising cultural nuances, Cilcare invested heavily in cultural training and joined Club Japon Occitanie, deepening their market insight and relationship-building capabilities.

Participation in the [Biotech Missions to Japan](#) organised by Network partner EU-Japan Centre was pivotal, says Celia Belline: *"They provided direct access to key players in Japan's biotech ecosystem, accelerating relationship-building and deal-making."*

This targeted approach helped lay the groundwork for impressive strategic outcomes. In 2024, Cilcare secured a €15 million upfront licensing agreement with Japanese

pharmaceutical company [Shionogi](#), with potential milestone payments reaching €400 million.

Tailored Network support for sustained success

Bénédicte Ganivet, Cilcare's adviser at [CCI Occitanie](#), the local French Network partner, recognised the company's potential from day one. *"Cilcare immediately stood out thanks to its strong scientific foundation,"* Bénédicte Ganivet recalls. *"Their proactive mindset made our collaboration highly effective from the very beginning."*

Bénédicte Ganivet provided ongoing tailored support, adapting strategies as Cilcare's goals evolved. Initially focusing on European R&D partnerships, she later guided their successful expansion into Asia. *"Japan was a natural fit,"* she says. *"The country's ageing population faces increasing auditory health challenges, which aligns directly with Cilcare's mission."*

Through the Network's Health Sector Group, Bénédicte Ganivet collaborated closely with Alessandro Perna from the [EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation](#). The EEN Japan team helped Cilcare successfully navigate three EU-Japan Biotech Missions, most recently in 2024, boosting their credibility and visibility at BioJapan, Japan's premier biotech event.

Cilcare also received vital support for their European Innovation Council (EIC) Accelerator applications. *"The Enterprise Europe Network played a key mentoring role throughout our EIC Accelerator journey,"* Celia Belline affirms. *"Thanks to this support, we were twice selected to present our innovations to a European jury and were awarded the Seal of Excellence."*

The company now plans further international expansion, including establishing a subsidiary in Japan by 2026. Celia Belline's advice to other biotech SMEs is clear: *"Be transparent and precise. Invest in cultural understanding. Be patient, stay ready. Building partnerships takes time, but consistency, persistence and adaptability are key."*

This long-term collaboration illustrates the transformative impact of targeted, strategic support from the Enterprise Europe Network, empowering SMEs like Cilcare to achieve global leadership and deliver tangible improvements to people's lives.

"The EEN support we received played a key role at every stage of our growth," Celia Belline insists. *"From early B2B matchmaking and partner search profiles to strategic preparation for international expansion, the Network consistently adapted to our evolving needs. We always felt we had a dedicated strategic partner by our side."*

About the Enterprise Europe Network

Launched by the European Commission in 2008, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) is a global network of partner organisations dedicated to supporting small and medium-sized enterprises in expanding their businesses internationally. With over 560 partner organisations in more than 55 countries worldwide, the Network provides tailored guidance, resources, and support to empower businesses to succeed in the European Single Market and beyond. Since 2008, the Network has supported an average of more than 260,000 companies per year, with an impressive 97% of clients rating the Network's support as fast, efficient and tailored, and 91% of clients stating that Network services accurately match their business needs.

For more information about the Enterprise Europe Network, visit the Enterprise Europe Network [website](#) and follow EEN on [X](#), [Facebook](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

About Cilcare

Cilcare is a biotechnology company specialising in auditory sciences, dedicated to developing cutting-edge solutions for the characterisation, diagnosis, and treatment of hearing disorders and related diseases. Founded by three visionary entrepreneurs, the company now brings together a team of 45 international experts, supported by a scientific advisory board. Since its inception in 2014, Cilcare has been tackling global hearing health challenges by combining an advanced R&D platform, a promising pipeline of drug candidates, and the power of artificial intelligence and machine learning to better characterise different forms of hearing loss. For the past 10 years, Cilcare has also been providing its technology to industry leaders and researchers in Europe, the United States, and Asia, helping accelerate the development of drugs, gene and cell therapies, and medical devices for hearing disorders.

For more information, visit www.cilcare.com.