

Ophthalmology

Théa doubles its research-space footprint and innovates on all fronts



Théa now operates 1,000 m² of purpose-dedicated space, with December's extension completion doubling capacity. © Richard BRUNEL

Théa, French leader in pharmaceutical eye-care products, increases its research and clinical trials capacity by doubling its innovation space footprint in Clermont-Ferrand. It also promises several breakthroughs for innovation.

Like everybody else, 2020 closed in full-on Covid-19 mode, but that didn't stop the bold Clermont-based company from finishing the year on a high.

The recently-completed extension to Théa's headquarters in Clermont-Ferrand's Brézet business park was officially unveiled to staff in December. This extra 1,450 m² of floorspace has allowed Théa to double its innovation footprint, which now spans 1,000m². The €3 million investment (without counting machinery), packaged over 18 months, marks the second time the company has expanded its research space capacity, after earlier work completed in 2010.



Photo: Richard Brunel

Covid effect

Théa, founded in 1994 and now leader in pharmaceutical eye-care products in France, is signalling that it intends to push for further growth, despite a relative tail-off in this year's business.

Théa Group CEO Jean-Frédéric Chibret told us "we had tabled on 4% growth, and ultimately performance held steady, at €593M in turnover (instead of the €625M projected) against almost €600M in 2019. Business has registered continued growth in the chronic diseases segment (led by glaucoma), but Covid-19 and the first lockdown hit us hard on cataract surgery (-80% in spring) and on ocular health businesses like allergies or conjunctivitis."



Théa CEO Jean-Frédéric Chibret (right) alongside Mohamed Naji, chief business development officer (centre) and Colin Francou, Director of Théa Open Innovation.

A positive message

The boss of Théa, who took over from his uncle Henri Chibret in 2008, nevertheless opened the year by addressing a positive message to his teams (1,500 employees across the world, with nearly 500 based in Clermont-Ferrand).

“As conferencing and business travel were curtailed, the pandemic led us to cut operational expenditure on sales and marketing, so we managed to maintain our R&D budgets across the world—which is what is most important for us. Innovation is currently driving 10–12% of our turnover, and we want that figure to grow.”

A quarter of the staff based in Clermont-Ferrand—130 people—work in the innovation branch. Note too that Théa has recently moved to secure several partnerships that are set to expand its scope of business.