Professor Marcel Jaspars' team at Aberdeen University worked with both industry and academic partners across European institutions, on a project funded by the nal round of the EU's FP7 programme, nishing in March 2017. Marcel explains: "What we do mainly is discovery of natural products from marine sources – invertebrates, deep-sea bacteria and fungi. We have done this for a very long time so it was obvious that we should apply for this particular call and put together a big team. Really, this was right in the middle of our skill-set.

"The University of Aberdeen was the scienti c lead on the project – the administrative lead was KU Leuven [in Belgium] because of their standing and knowledge of dealing with EU grants. This was great for me as it allowed us to focus on the science without getting caught up in the administrative side of things".

A pipeline of international partnerships

The project included researchers from 24 partner institutions, from 14 countries, including Italy, Spain, Belgium, Denmark, Norway and Germany, which are part of the EU funding programmes, as well as wider international partner countries such as China and South Africa.

Marcel believes the international make-up of the collaboration brought together complementary expertise and skills. He explains: "We had everything from the beginning to the end of a drug discovery project so we decided to treat things as a pipeline – we had groups with expertise in isolating bacteria, which was done in Ireland, Norway and also in Italy. Then we had the building of the extract libraries, mainly done in Spain and Norway, but also in China and some work in Costa Rica.

"Next was the biological screening of the libraries: this was done in Leuven, Spain and Norway as well as at partner companies. We had scale-up and downstream testing which was done in part at a company in Austria and in a veterinary school in Spain. Finally we had a big partnership on governance and policy of the oceans, which resulted in us getting involved on a UN [United Nations] process that's still going on.