



Office for Life sciences

A position from the Swedish Government on a strategy for European life sciences

In the current uncertain geopolitical situation, it is important to have a viable and growing life science sector, strengthening Sweden's and Europe's competitiveness and making our societies healthier and more resilient. The path Europe choose will affect how we manage to tackle both the climate and health challenges.

The European Union will benefit from adopting a life sciences strategy that fosters a robust, innovative and collaborative ecosystem that drives scientific excellence and delivers tangible societal benefits. We need to make it easier for entrepreneurs to turn research into commercial products and innovations with the overall aim to improve the health of our populations.

Sweden proposes that the following three themes function as cornerstones, in the area of human health, in the upcoming strategy.

1. Excelling in patient benefit through innovation

Several member states within the EU have a long tradition of strong research, development, innovation and production within the health care sector. Innovations have not only relieved patients from sickness but have also been of enormous importance to health care with less invasive interventions and better outcomes. Sweden has also experienced the strong correlation between a vibrant life sciences industry, a dynamic research environment, a robust health care system and access to medicines.

However, a fast and an equal implementation of new products and treatments in health care is crucial to also make the best use of the innovative force. Each member state has its own national system for financing healthcare and deciding on pricing and reimbursement. Since these systems in themselves are part of the solutions for making innovations available to health care and patients, an EU strategy must take steps to support and facilitate in this process.

Clinical trials and studies are not only steps in the approval process, but also provide patients across Europe with early access to new treatments. Therefore, it is of great importance to patient benefit to ensure that clinical trials and clinical studies remain in the EU. The system for clinical trials must also continuously develop to meet new demands to further secure new innovations for European citizens.

2. Governance for improved co-creation and competitiveness

The operative implementation of the life sciences strategy is dependent on effective governance. Since the field of life sciences includes academic research, industry as well as health care it is important to establish an inclusive and overarching structure for policy and governance. The aim of such a governance is to make sure that the work is unified and coordinated to ensure a successful and purposeful steering towards a common goal for the life science sector and the union. The Office for life sciences within the Swedish Government has proven a well-functioning solution to facilitate initiatives with a whole-of-society approach.

The Draghi report, as well as the sector, underline the importance of reducing unnecessary administrative and regulatory burden. A shift towards financial and regulatory frameworks that encourage a vibrant ecosystem in order to facilitate research, development and production.

According to the Swedish experience cooperation between actors within the whole life sciences sector is the key to success. Public-private partnerships between the life sciences business sector, research institutes and our healthcare providers have helped innovation to significantly improve treatment and the quality of life for patients. Collaboration for co-creation will lead to synergies that

will supersede the individual efforts. Sweden benefits from several such partnerships e.g. the Testa-Center, AstraZeneca BioVentureHub, NorthX Innovation Hub and CCRM Nordic.

3. Reinforce our positions of strength and promoting excellence

Advancing fundamental research excellence, within the life sciences area will serve as a driver for business growth, competitiveness and the development of critical and emerging technologies. A continued and reinforced focus on excellent research and research infrastructures, in Horizon Europe and the coming funding programme for research and innovation, are a prerequisite for future innovations. An emphasis should be put on making research infrastructures more open, interoperable and reusable ecosystem also for enterprises and especially SMEs.

Just as important is excellence within the workforce. Attracting and educating for a highly skilled workforce has long since been a part of our European society and will be of great importance in the future. A collaborative and a cross-sectoral approach e.g. between public and private organisations, is necessary, in order to ensure long-term skills supply.

A prerequisite for most advancements in life sciences, and a reason why Sweden has been successful in life sciences, is the high-quality health data. Our joint and responsible efforts to make more health data available, nationally and cross-border, through the implementation of EHDS and EOSC, are crucial. In line with the Lund Declaration on Maximising the Benefits of Research Data, ensuring that health data are FAIR, high-quality and as open as possible and closed as necessary will unlock greater innovation potential, enhance research excellence and improve societal resilience across Europe.

To further excel in innovation the EU need to make use of cross-sectorial strengths, by incorporating groundbreaking technologies into the field of life sciences. This is utterly important for the continuous advancement in areas such as precision medicine and ATMP, as well as for in vitro diagnostics and medical devices.

In Sweden we have been striving for sustainability in industry for the last decades. Sustainability as well as resilience are very relevant, in industrial production, research as well as in healthcare. Therefore, the coming EU life sciences strategy should embed sustainability and resilience at its core for a stronger and more competitive Europe.