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To the European Commission

A life science strategy for the EU – input from Research!Sweden

Thank you for the opportunity to give input to the work on EU's life science strategy. [Research!Sweden](#) is a non-profit foundation with the mission to inform and raise awareness of the importance of medical research – for health and prosperity. We contribute to political decisionmakers by providing quantitative and qualitative analyses, cutting-edge seminars and constructive discussions for improving the research- and innovation-climate for life science.

One of our goals, from the start in 2010, was that Sweden should have a life science strategy. We worked hard for this to come true and after that we have continuously contributed to its content. With the same sense of urgency, we are happy to contribute to a European life science strategy. Our think tank “[Agenda for Health and Prosperity](#)” plays a key role in that contribution. The think tank is a neutral platform where 40 organisations representing academia, healthcare, industry, patient advocacy and other interest groups, collaborate to provide evidence-based proposals for policy makers on how to improve the life science system.

When forming a life science strategy, it is important to have visions and goals that are prioritised and agreed upon by the various stakeholders in this complex system. It is not an easy task, so we will share ours, hoping that it may contribute to the process at the EU level. In this paper we also share some action points that we believe are key to address in the upcoming life science strategy for the EU.

We are at your service for further discussions and contributions to the important work of putting together an insightful, visionary and realistic life science strategy that indeed will strengthen the EU.

Sincerely,



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Vision

The EU is a global key player within life science, attracting top talents. With large and long-term investments in research, education and development, there is room for curiosity and scientific excellence.

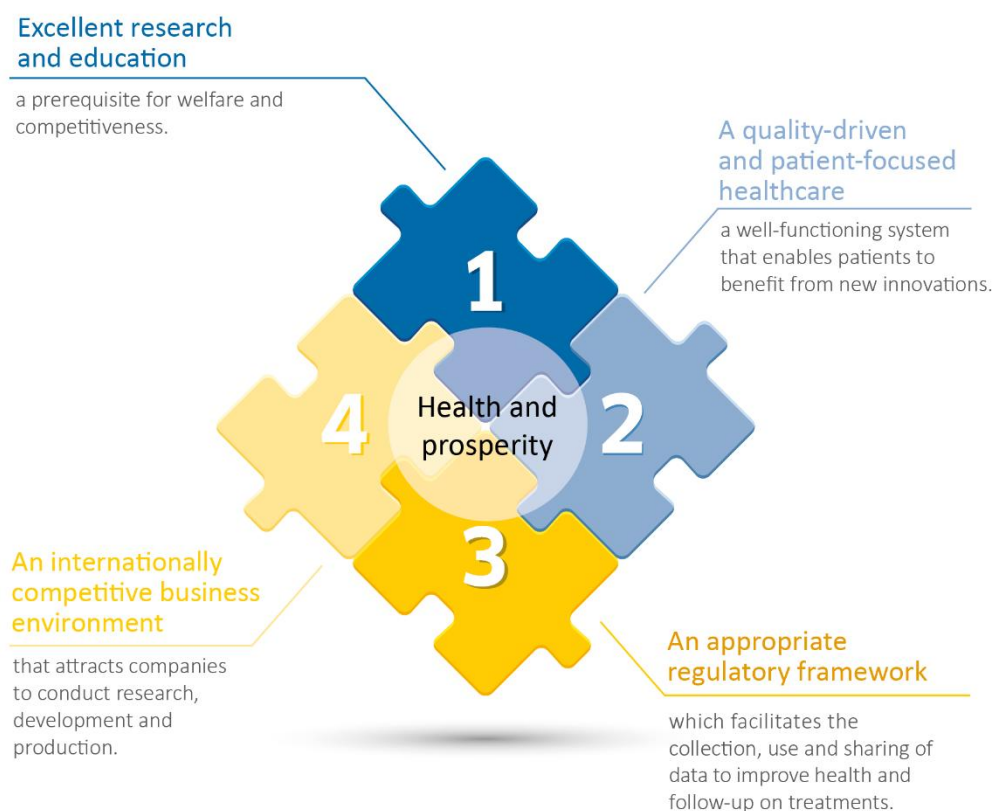
New knowledge is put into practice within healthcare. The interaction between academia, industry, healthcare and citizens creates an attractive environment for research and innovation. This, in turn, creates high quality healthcare.

Healthcare has a coordinated mission to document relevant information that contributes to interoperable platforms for research and innovation. Researchers and companies are attracted to the EU to perform research and clinical trials.

The EU is a magnet for life science investments. With an innovative and dynamic environment, in combination with attractive business conditions, Europe is one of the most competitive life science regions in the world.

Goals

The life science system is complex, and it is important to always keep the interactions and dependencies of various actors in mind when doing analyses and policy. With the overall goal of increased health and prosperity, we have defined four main goals that are tightly linked together and need to be worked on in parallel, see the following figure:



In the strive to reach these four goals, there are many things that the individual member countries can work on within their own nation, but there is also a need for several actions on the EU level.

Action points for the EU life science strategy

There are numerous actions that would be beneficial for life science in Europe. General objectives for the EU should be to increase investments in research and to reduce obstacles to entrepreneurship and innovation, while still upholding patient safety. Rules and regulations need to be adjusted to serve the goal of making use of new technologies and health data, so that progress can be made without unnecessary delay. This is vital for patients and for the competitiveness of both academia and industry.

There are also some prioritised action points that we would like to mention:

Increase investments in life science research

There is fierce global competition for talent and the European Commission should take initiative to attract top researchers from other parts of the world. Not least those from the US who currently experience cuts in their funding and restrictions on their freedom to perform research. The proposal from twelve European countries for an initiative to attract American researchers includes several important measures: strengthened funding, an updated migration framework and strengthened partnerships between European and American universities.

The above action is urgent. The life science strategy must also include actions to make sure that the EU is able to retain top researchers, long-term. Stable and competitive research funding is absolute key. The ERC should be strengthened to promote high quality groundbreaking medical research.

Facilitate the processes for clinical studies within the EU

Europe's global share of clinical trials has been declining over the past decade, which is worrying. The opportunities to conduct clinical trials in the EU need to be increased. Three thoughts on this:

- Clinical research projects are complex and often have a variety of partners, which requires extensive administration and legal processes. The processes, including permissions required to conduct clinical studies, need to be simplified for the EU to offer a competitive environment.
- An increasing number of clinical studies and trials are targeting diagnoses where there are few patients. Increased collaboration within the EU between researchers, as well as using the entire EU as a patient intake area for studies, would create a more attractive environment for companies to conduct their studies here.
- Decentralised clinical trials is a method of collecting data within the framework of the trial, remotely and/or using digital tools, which is becoming increasingly important. Within the EU new ways of conducting trials, such as virtual clinical trials, should be facilitated.

Increase the possibilities to use health data for the good of the patients and for competitiveness

Data is one of the most important resources of the future and health data is key to being able to develop new methods and products for healthcare. Structures for, and access to, data can make the EU better positioned in the global competition.

The EU regulation EHDS (European Health Data Space) aims to promote the use and exchange of health data across borders within the Union, and to increase transparency and strengthen individuals' control over their own health data. A common digital infrastructure and framework will facilitate access, use and sharing of health data in a secure and reliable manner. EHDS requires member countries to establish national digital infrastructures for health data, which will also be an important prerequisite to derive maximum benefit from AI.

Implementation must now aim for appropriate regulatory frameworks and authorisation processes, so that EHDS truly facilitates work with health data at European level and does not contribute to new barriers that could slow down progress.

Strengthen collaboration with patient representatives in research and development projects

Patients and their loved ones have knowledge that ranges from general experiences to in-depth diagnosis-specific knowledge. This is invaluable in a research context and patients therefore have a role to play in developing and improving the quality of clinical research.

Systematic and strategic collaboration with patient associations can clarify their role in relation to research and enable patient-centered research that considers crucial perspectives that only a patient or a loved one can contribute with. They can for example identify areas within clinical research that need to be developed, identify what should be evaluated, broadening the questions and facilitate the recruitment of patients for studies.

To achieve this, structures and processes for patient collaboration are needed, for example in the form of policies for patient collaboration in calls for proposals and research support linked to clinical research.

Create a stronger home-market for life science companies in Europe - procurement as a tool for innovation

A very large sum of money is spent every year on public procurement across the EU, not the least within healthcare. Procurement can promote the development and introduction of new solutions, which strengthen the internal market, create jobs and economic growth. It also strengthens the Union's competitiveness vis-a-vis the outside world.

The potential of innovation procurement is substantial and has so far been underutilised. The rapid development of new technology (AI, for example) puts greater demands on how procurement is designed and carried out. Technology that is procured may already become outdated during the procurement process. There is risk that the procurement will not result in the purchase of the most resource-efficient product with the greatest benefit.

Work is ongoing within the EU to facilitate and increase the development-enhancing elements of procurement. This is key to the competitiveness of life science in the EU. It is important that small, as well as large and medium-sized companies, can participate in public procurement. The possibilities to procure innovative healthcare products that are cost-effective in the long term need to be secured. The ongoing work needs to continue and there should also be an emphasis on methods that all member states can use to improve innovation procurement within health and life science.

We are at your service

There are more actions that would strengthen the competitiveness of life science in Europe than those we have briefly mentioned here. And there is, of course, more in-depth material for the actions mentioned. We are at your service for further discussions and contributions to the important work of putting together an insightful, visionary and realistic life science strategy that indeed will strengthen the EU.

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