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The Swedish Cancer Society's Input on the EU Life Science Strategy

The Swedish Cancer Society is an independent charity organization established in 1951. We are one the largest research founders in Sweden and our vision is to defeat cancer. Our goal is to reduce the number of people affected by cancer, ensure that more patients survive and that everyone has the best possible quality of life, both during and after cancer. As such, the Swedish Cancer Society has chosen to focus its input on life science areas relevant to cancer.

Europe's competitiveness in the life sciences area is key for speeding up the development and access to more effective cancer medicines and treatments in the region - and for ensuring that all patients have the best possible chance of overcoming their disease. When addressing health sciences, the strategy should therefore be based on a clear patient perspective and promote equal access to new treatments and medicines across the EU.

Improved conditions for clinical trials and patient participation

To ensure that patients access new and better treatments as soon as possible, it is essential position the EU as a premier destination for clinical trials and attract greater investment in the life sciences through creating an environment that supports efficient, multinational studies across Member States. The time and administrative effort required to initiate these studies must be minimized. To fully leverage the Clinical Trials Regulation (CTR) and the joint Clinical Trials Information System (CTIS), the EU must adopt

harmonized regulatory frameworks, align ethical review processes, and ensure access to specialized expertise and high-quality laboratory resources.

Moreover, the EU Life Science Strategy should foster faster, more effective cross-border patient recruitment. This is especially important in cancer research, where eligibility for trials increasingly depends on specific genetic mutations. Consequently, enhanced health data sharing between countries is crucial for identifying and enrolling the right patients. Establishing a single European market for health data through the European Health Data Space (EHDS) and robust supporting IT infrastructures are key steps toward achieving these goals.

Improved conditions for precision medicine and data-driven research

The EU should make substantial investments to establish world-leading infrastructure and competence centers for precision medicine and data-driven molecular biosciences. This includes the acquisition and operation of next-generation sequencing (NGS) equipment, other -omics technologies, and advanced data processing capabilities. By promoting shared resources among EU Member States, researchers can access cutting-edge tools and expertise, ensuring equal access to state-of-the-art diagnostics and precision therapies.

Additionally, improving access to health data and biobank samples across Member States for secondary use is paramount. Clear ambitions, goals, and strategies should be implemented to streamline and accelerate the process of making health data and biobank samples available for research, while maintaining robust data protection and ethical standards. This also includes harmonisation of legal frameworks, ethical review processes as well as harmonising with the upcoming Data Union Strategy that aims at increasing access to large and high-quality data.

Collectively, these measures will strengthen the EU's leadership in precision medicine, drive innovation, and ultimately improve patient outcomes.

Improved conditions for research funding, collaboration and innovation capacity

The EU Life Science Strategy should address the pressing need for clearer guidance on research funding through EU Framework Programmes. By providing well-defined opportunities and streamlined processes, the EU can more effectively attract, retain, and create appealing career paths for the most talented researchers.

In addition, the Strategy should foster a robust innovation climate that accelerates the translation of research findings into healthcare solutions, ensuring tangible benefits for patients. This requires setting explicit targets and measurable indicators to track and drive progress over time.

To achieve these objectives, we recommend the establishment of a dedicated Life Science Office in Brussels. By coordinating life science initiatives and engaging relevant stakeholders—including civil society and patient organizations—this office would strengthen the competitiveness of the sector and enhance the EU's ability to address emerging challenges in life science research and innovation.