

LIFE SCIENCES DECLARATION

Act now to secure health, prosperity and strategic autonomy in Belgium

The strength of Belgium's healthcare system, scientific excellence and economic future depends on the choices policymakers make today.

Life sciences are not a distant promise. They are a present-day engine for better health, sustainable care and long-term growth. When innovation is enabled, patients benefit, researchers thrive and healthcare professionals can deliver better outcomes. When innovation is constrained, it moves elsewhere. Investment follows. Access to care is delayed, and society pays the price.

Belgium now faces a clear choice: restore the positive cycle of life sciences innovation or accept gradual decline.

A virtuous circle that benefits everyone

A well-functioning innovation cycle, from discovery to clinical practice and reinvestment, creates a virtuous circle with tangible benefits for everyone:

- Patients gain faster and more equitable access to innovative, life-saving treatments.
- Healthcare professionals can rely on better therapeutic tools, improving outcomes and quality of care.
- Researchers and academics work in an environment that attracts funding, talent and global collaboration.
- Our health system becomes more sustainable as better outcomes reduce long-term costs.
- Our economy grows through high-value jobs, R&D investment and exports.
- Belgium strengthens its strategic autonomy, reducing dependence on external innovations and supply chains.

When this cycle weakens, innovation slows down, investment relocates and access to care is postponed. When it weakens, everyone loses: patients wait, health outcomes deteriorate, healthcare pressures rise, and Belgium's competitiveness erodes.

Belgium is at a tipping point

Globally, investment in life sciences is accelerating at unprecedented speed. Other countries, especially the US and China are making deliberate choices to attract research, clinical trials and manufacturing.

Without decisive action Belgium risks evolving from a pharma valley into a pharma desert:

- Breakthroughs will increasingly be developed and tested elsewhere.
- Belgian patients will wait longer for new treatments.
- Researchers will face shrinking opportunities and brain drain.
- Healthcare budgets will remain under pressure, without long-term gains.

Restoring the virtuous circle

Life sciences innovation is long-term, costly and inherently risky. It only succeeds when the entire chain is supported:

- Fair valuation and timely access determine whether we can invest.
- Predictable and competitive frameworks determine whether we dare to invest
- Revenues from successful innovation fuel reinvestment, new discoveries and better care.

Breaking this cycle harms patients, undermines science, weakens healthcare delivery and ultimately increases public costs.

Our call to policymakers

We urge Belgian decision-makers to act now on four priorities that deliver clear and measurable benefits:

- I. **Stimulate innovation:** Strengthen intellectual property protection and safeguard incentives for research and development.
Benefit: More research in Belgium, stronger academic–industry collaboration, and high-value jobs.
- II. **Recognise healthcare as an investment:** Treat healthcare spending, including innovative medicines, as an investment in outcomes, not a cost to be minimised.
Benefit: More sustainable healthcare and better long-term results for patients.
- III. **Accelerate patient access:** Simplify, align and speed up access pathways for innovative treatments.
Benefit: Earlier access, fewer inequalities and more effective use of scientific progress.
- IV. **Restore competitiveness:** Reduce unnecessary regulatory complexity and ensure Belgium remains an attractive place to develop, test and produce innovation.
Benefit: Retained talent, stronger investment climate and durable economic growth.

The cost of inaction is higher

Failing to act does not save money. The cost is higher through delayed care, lost innovation, weakened research ecosystems and growing strategic dependence.

- Restoring the positive circle of life sciences innovation delivers:
- Better health for patients
- Stronger tools for healthcare professionals
- A future for scientific excellence
- A resilient and sustainable Belgian economy

This is a shared responsibility; but leadership must start now.

We choose action.
We choose innovation.
We choose Belgium's future in life sciences.