

# Pharmaceuticals boost Sweden's growth, resilience and healthcare capacity



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## A crucial choice for Sweden

We live in an age of major medical advances that offer patients new potential treatments and cures. Medicines not only contribute to improved health, but also to more healthy years of working life, less time spent in the healthcare system and a more productive economy. At the same time, Sweden's pharmaceutical industry is one of its most important industries – as a driver of exports, research and innovation, and a generator of skilled jobs.

The pharmaceutical industry contributes a total of around SEK 190 billion to the Swedish economy and provides more than 85,000 full-time equivalent jobs.<sup>1</sup> Corporate investment in research and development in Sweden is significant – currently standing at SEK 13.6 billion.

However, the playing field is rapidly changing, and Sweden is now at risk of falling further behind – with lower levels of business investment and more restricted access to new treatments as a result. Sweden is already among the countries that invest the least in new medicines as a share of GDP, ranking 17th out of 22 European countries.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, the United States and China are increasing their investments in research and innovation. In addition, the current US Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) pricing policy prevents companies from setting higher prices in the US than in comparable countries. As the US accounts for a significant share of global costs for pharmaceutical research and innovation, this policy places additional pressure on Europe.

We now find ourselves in a new situation, and if Sweden does not clearly demonstrate its willingness to invest in research and innovation in the pharmaceutical sector, MFN and the price pressure policy may have a significant negative impact on our patients, on the development of healthcare, and on the willingness and ability of pharmaceutical companies to invest in research and innovation in Sweden.

Sweden is now facing a crucial choice: to risk restricted access to new treatments and the loss of corporate investment and innovation to other countries, or to act to consolidate and strengthen its position as a leading life science nation.

With the right policy decisions, the industry can contribute even more to patient health, Sweden's growth, healthcare capacity and national resilience.

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<sup>1</sup>Total effect on the economy calculated on the basis of direct, indirect and induced effects, Statistics Sweden, Lif analysis

<sup>2</sup>EFPIA

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## Reforms aimed at achieving greater competitiveness and a stronger Sweden

### Seeing medicines as an investment in Sweden's future

Medicines generate value that extends far beyond health – into people's lives, healthcare capacity and Sweden's economy. Investment in new treatments leads to better health, a reduced need for healthcare and higher productivity.

At the same time, as a driver of research, exports and jobs, the industry is crucial to Sweden's growth. This necessitates a long-term investment perspective rather than a short-term budgetary perspective. However, Sweden is currently lagging behind in terms of investments and risks losing out on both innovations and clinical trials.

#### Lif wants to see:

- **Increased public funding for pharmaceuticals**

Being a world-leading nation in life sciences is about leading throughout the innovation chain – from initial research and clinical trials, to the development and early use of new treatments for patients, leading to better health outcomes. As a small country with low prices, where innovations are introduced late in the day, the new geopolitical situation leaves Sweden particularly vulnerable. To remain attractive for investment in research, development and production, Sweden needs to be prepared to pay for the innovation that emerges from the use of new medicines.

- **Medicines and modern treatments used to free up healthcare resources**

The Productivity Commission clearly highlights the contribution of medicines to greater healthcare capacity and productivity across society.<sup>3</sup> When patients remain healthier for longer, this frees up healthcare resources – resources that are critical, with staff shortages and waiting lists some of the biggest challenges facing healthcare.

- **More clinical trials**

Ensure that Swetrial is fully established as a partnership for national mobilisation. Achieving the objective of establishing Sweden as a leading nation for clinical trials requires greater implementation capacity and prioritised investments that boost Sweden's attractiveness and ensure that we are able to accommodate companies' clinical trials.

<sup>3</sup>SOU 2025: 96 More opportunities for greater prosperity



## Ensure rapid and equal access to new medicines

The current system of lengthy processing times and a significant administrative burden creates delays and obstacles for new treatments reaching patients in need. Today, less than half of new medicines reach Swedish patients within three years of EU approval.<sup>4</sup> Sometimes they do not reach Swedish patients at all. This entails a risk of poorer health and making Sweden less attractive as a research nation. Lif therefore welcomes the recently appointed Pharmaceutical Inquiry, which aims to expand state responsibility for medicines and vaccines.

The Swedish pricing and subsidy system requires modernisation to ensure that new treatments can reach patients sooner – and on equal terms – throughout Sweden.

### Lif wants to see:

- **A reformed pricing and reimbursement system – a way in for all new pharmaceuticals**

A coherent and predictable system that is subject to the rule of law for the pricing and reimbursement of medicines is an important prerequisite if patients are to have prompt and equal access throughout Sweden. It is also an important prerequisite for incentivising pharmaceutical companies to launch and supply medicines on the Swedish market.

- **Greater state responsibility for funding and introduction**

The current system for the pricing and reimbursement of medicines is split between the state and the Swedish regions. This leads to long processing times, a lack of predictability and patients having to wait to access new treatments. A prerequisite for a more coherent and future-proof system is full state responsibility for pricing, reimbursement and funding. This would ensure predictability and efficiency in the introduction of medicines, ensuring that patients have more rapid and equal access to new treatments. It would also boost Sweden's competitiveness in a new global environment and allow us to maintain our position as a strong nation in the life sciences.

- **Consideration of the full socio-economic benefits in reimbursement decisions**

The Swedish Government should instruct the relevant government agency to consider the full socio-economic benefits – including productivity, working capacity and reduced pressure on healthcare – when making decisions concerning price and reimbursement, which is the intention of the law, even if it is not put into practice. The levels used to evaluate health and treatment have effectively remained static for over twenty years, without reflecting medical advances or greater value to society.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> EFPIA, WAIT

<sup>5</sup> NULL 2025



## Boost Sweden's resilience and competitiveness

Access to medicines is a key component of Sweden's resilience. In an uncertain world, we need to secure access to medicines both in everyday life and in crisis situations.

### Lif wants to see:

- **Competitive conditions for investment in research, innovation and production**  
Sweden needs to continue its work on regulatory simplification and faster processes, both nationally and at EU level. A robust domestic and European R&D infrastructure and production capacity for pharmaceuticals is a strategic interest that Sweden must safeguard. Reform to introduce a strong R&D tax credit needs to be pursued.
- **Safeguarding trade flows and robust European cooperation**  
Sweden's pharmaceutical supply is also dependent on well-functioning trade flows. Tariffs, export restrictions and protectionist measures risk limiting access to medicines. Sweden therefore needs to continue to be a clear voice for free trade and robust European cooperation.
- **Strengthening prevention, early detection and self-care**  
Prevention and early treatment are critical for both public health and the economy. Investing in early diagnosis, prevention and early medical treatment, including vaccination, reduces the need for more resource-intensive healthcare at a later stage, helping more people to live longer, healthier and more productive working lives.

Sweden is facing a crucial choice. The reforms concern the role Sweden wishes to play in a changing world. With the right policy decisions, the pharmaceutical industry can become an even stronger driver of growth, resilience and healthcare capacity. The alternative is that Sweden loses ground, investment and access to innovation. What does Sweden want?





Read more (in Swedish) at [Lif.se/valet2026](https://lif.se/valet2026)



The research-based  
pharmaceutical  
industry