

Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment,  
23 Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2,  
D02 TD30.

4<sup>th</sup> December 2025

To whom it concerns,

Cork Chamber welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Department of Enterprise, Tourism and Employment's public consultation on the development of a new National Life Sciences Strategy.

Cork Chamber represents 1,200 members together employing 130,000 people throughout the city, metropolitan area and county. Our vision is to lead a transforming and ambitious Cork city and county, and our purpose is to unite, represent and support our members and community. At Cork Chamber, our direction is guided by our formal pledge to uphold the UN SDGs, five of which have been identified as priority areas by the Chambers Ireland network. Cork Chamber has also been designated an SDG Champion by the Department of Climate, Energy and the Environment for 2024 – 2025.

Our advocacy efforts are shaped by the views and priorities of our partners, and are informed by our continuous engagement with members, our Board and key stakeholders in Cork city and county.

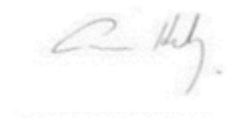
The life sciences sector plays a key role in the Irish economic development, particularly in the Cork region, which is home to a large concentration of firms operating in the sector. In addition, Cork has a strong offering in life sciences education and research.

Ongoing support for research and education to ensure a strong talent pipeline for the life sciences sector is critical and should be a core focus of the new strategy. Promoting collaboration and innovation through the development of research and industry clusters will also be key to the sector's future development.

The development of a comprehensive strategy for the sector is therefore welcome and should aim to position competitiveness at the fore of all policy developments in the

sector, supporting the sector's future development and ensuring Ireland remains an attractive location for research and investment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Conor Healy', is positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Conor Healy

CEO

## **Scope**

Cork Chamber welcomes the ambition to develop a comprehensive strategy for the life sciences sector. The inclusion of all relevant sectors across biopharmaceuticals, medical technologies, agriculture, fisheries and food production would be welcome. Particular consideration should be given to biopharmaceuticals, medical technologies and food production given the importance of these sectors to the Irish economy. These sectors play a key role in supporting foreign direct investment and talent attraction in Ireland, and ensuring a supportive policy environment for their future development is essential.

With this in mind, ensuring strong talent pipelines, as well as available land and other infrastructure for industrial development, such as water, wastewater and energy, is critical. As highlighted by some of our members in the food industry, the scarcity of suitable production units and the shortage of skilled talent in the Cork region are already limiting the ability of firms to grow and scale locally, underlining the importance of addressing these challenges in the strategy.

## **Objectives**

Ensuring that Ireland is equipped to meet future needs and maintain its competitive offering in the life sciences sector in an international context should be a key consideration of the new strategy. With geopolitical uncertainty continuing at a global level, it is vital that Ireland works to strengthen the areas of its economic competitiveness within its control in order to support the continued attraction of investment and talent.

In line with the aims set out in the Programme for Government, boosting the role of Enterprise Ireland and the IDA should be a key objective, ensuring that Ireland showcases its competitive offering on the global market. Beyond the scope of the strategy, consideration should also be given to continued investments in housing, infrastructure development, and talent and skills, which all play an important role in supporting Ireland's international competitiveness as a whole.

With regard to talent and skills, the strategy should consider the evolving needs of life sciences sectors and should concentrate on strengthening talent pipelines to support future sectoral development. Collaborations between industry and educational institutions will be critical in this regard and should be supported by the strategy to ensure that graduates are equipped with the skills they need to build successful careers in Ireland's world-class life sciences industry.

Ongoing support for upskilling and reskilling is critical too and will ensure that those working in the sector, or interested in transitioning to a life sciences career, can access short courses and other supports, allowing employees to obtain future-proof skills in a flexible manner while in employment.

Cluster organisations in the life sciences sector play an important role in fostering collaboration between academia and industry. The further expansion and development of cluster networks should also be considered by the strategy in order to ensure ongoing engagement, as well as alignment with peer countries, many of which have much more developed cluster organisations connecting the full life sciences value chain.

At present, only 1.5% of the life sciences industry in Ireland is made up of indigenous companies, with FDI accounting for the remaining 98.5%. As a result, the sector is particularly exposed to geopolitical shifts and changes to trade policy. The sector is also heavily concentrated, both geographically and functionally; in 2022, for example, just five companies accounted for 43% of Ireland's total exports. Only 5% of jobs are in early-stage research. Diversifying operations to include the full value chain, from discovery to delivery, is critical to ensure that Ireland keeps up with global trends

Cork Chamber collaborates with Dublin Chamber and Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry through the Tri-Region Partnership to advance shared aims for economic development on an all-island basis.<sup>1</sup> Developing competitive innovation clusters across the island is a key focus of the partnership's work and the three Chambers have been engaging with those involved in the life sciences sector across both academia and industry to identify key policy enablers to support the growth of such clusters. In this regard, consideration could be given to the establishment of a steering group for the sector across both Ireland and Northern Ireland, as well as a dedicated fund for all-island research and innovation. Engagement with initiatives like the Shared Island Fund and other cross-border collaborations should be another key consideration in the strategy to support all-island cooperation.

Financial and other supports for innovation are critical for both indigenous firms and multinationals, and the strategy should consider all available supports for the sector, such as the R&D Tax Credit, for example. Possible expansion of supports or targeted supports for the life sciences sector in particular should be considered, alongside the availability of information and advice with regard to accessing these supports. Possible communications campaigns and engagement with industry in order to raise greater awareness of available supports should also be considered. Cork Chamber welcomes the commitment to introduce an R&D Compass as outlined in Budget 2026; the role of the life sciences sector should also be considered in this context.

## **Opportunities and Challenges**

Ensuring dedicated, accessible funding for research and innovation in the sector is essential to support the development of the life sciences sector, including dedicated

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<sup>1</sup> Cork Chamber, [Tri-Region Partnership Policy Position Paper](#)

funding streams for both large multinational firms and indigenous SMEs operating in the sector.

Academic and industry actors have highlighted the absence of dedicated funding streams to support the sector on an all-island basis. Innovate UK supports existing bilateral funding innovation programmes for the UK with countries like Switzerland and Germany, however no comparable funding mechanism currently exists for Ireland and Northern Ireland.

With regard to the potential development of a national, government-supported cluster organisation for the life sciences sector, Cork should be considered as a potential location, given its well-established industry and academic offering in the sector. The strategy should consider the importance of government funding and support to facilitate the development of a national cluster organisation.

Leveraging the existing pharmaceutical ecosystem in Cork to collaborate with research institutions in areas like late-stage product development also presents a distinct opportunity to further collaboration and connection between industry and academia. Targeted supports to develop capabilities and commercialise late-stage R&D activities into manufacturing should be explored by the strategy, which would in turn reduce the development timeline for medicines from research stage to market access.

In addition, ongoing geopolitical uncertainties pose a risk to the growth of the life sciences sector in Ireland, particular the pharmaceutical sector. It is crucial that the strategy takes a forward-looking approach, strengthening Ireland's competitive offering in order to mitigate the impact of global challenges insofar as possible. Ensuring Ireland's readiness for future investment is essential, including the maintenance of a strong talent and skills pipeline, as well as the availability of zoned, serviced lands and IDA support for foreign direct investment.

Supporting infrastructure is also important in this regard. Ensuring the security of energy supply to support future development is crucial. Sustainable and secure energy supply is a growing concern for many firms, and the development of renewable energy to support industrial expansion should also be considered. Concerns regarding Ireland's ability to provide and maintain critical infrastructure and sufficient housing supply pose a risk to Ireland's competitive reputation internationally; addressing these concerns through the work of the IDA, Enterprise Ireland and the diplomatic corps should be a key focus to ensure that Ireland remains an attractive location for inward investment. In this context, it is essential that momentum continues for the identification and delivery of a large-scale, serviced, strategic 'next generation' IDA site in Cork to facilitate national expansion of the life sciences sector and ensure the region is investment-ready.

## **EU Context**

The publication of the European Commission's 'Choose Europe for life sciences' strategy earlier this year is a welcome step towards fostering greater collaboration across EU Member States in the area of life sciences.

Alongside close collaboration with Northern Ireland and the UK, cooperation with European counterparts on a cohesive strategy to foster the growth of the domestic life sciences industry in Europe and attract inward investment is critical. Continued international collaboration should be a core focus of the strategy, as well as alignment with the aims of the recently published European strategy.

The European strategy sets out a number of key aims that should be considered in Ireland's plans, particularly the goal of optimising the research and innovation ecosystem through the establishment of an EU investment plan and the promotion of a One Health approach to research and innovation under the Horizon Europe work programmes 2026 – 2027.

The emphasis on sustainability at an EU level is also welcome, and should be included in the national strategy, promoting sustainable research and innovation developments. In addition, the European strategy makes reference to the use of AI to support innovation, which should also be explored at national level.

Aims to establish a Life Science Coordination Group to align policies and funding across sectors and support greater engagement are also welcome, as are commitments to scaling up collaboration through clusters across Europe. The National Life Sciences Strategy should actively seek to engage with the European Commission and individual Member States to ensure that Ireland's life sciences sector benefits fully from developments at EU level and plays a key role in shaping cluster programmes and other initiatives.

The European strategy makes welcome reference to ongoing initiatives to improve Europe's competitiveness as a whole, including the implementation of the Draghi and Letta reports. In Ireland, the National Life Sciences Strategy should seek alignment with similar initiatives at a national level, such as the recently published Action Plan on Competitiveness and Productivity, to ensure a cohesive policy framework that promotes competitiveness at all levels.

Ireland's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union presents an important opportunity to spearhead the further development of these policies, and government should seek to engage with industry and academic stakeholders in the sector to ensure their views are reflected in the progression of these policies at EU level.