

Press release

10-year consultation between the federal government and the Health, Science & Technology Group

Belgium remains the best country in the world for pharmaceutical research, production and distribution

Brussels, 19 December 2017- Today GSK, Janssen, Pfizer and UCB, the four biggest pharmaceutical investors in the country, united in the Health, Science & Technology Group, discussed the results of ten years of investments with Premier Charles Michel, the vice-premiers and the Ministers of Public health & Social Affairs, Finance and Budgets.

The foundations for this meeting were laid ten years ago during the “Verhofstadt II” government and continued by the subsequent governments up to today. This was also included in the government’s program as the “*Biopharma R & D consultation platform*” between the government, the representatives of the most important pharmaceutical investors (HST) and pharma.be. The purpose of that meeting was to preserve, and possibly even improve, the strong Belgian position in pharmaceutical research and production, within a competitive international environment. For the same purpose, the Health, Science and Technology group also set up programs at regional level and with the various responsible administrations.

Strong results

During the past ten years, the four companies achieved the following:

- Research and development - more than € 20 billion investments, with a record of € 2.9 billion in 2016
- Buildings and production - more than € 10 billion investments, or an average of € 1 billion per year
- Employment - more than 18,000 employees currently, of which 5,000 were researchers from 80 countries
- Export - more than € 40 billion annually

Strategic importance

These four companies represent 40% of all R & D expenses in Belgium, regardless of the sector. For the pharmaceutical sector, this is more than 90% of all R & D investments and more than 50% of employment. These four companies also represent approximately 11% of the Belgian exports.

Due to the strategic importance of the pharmaceutical sector for the Belgian economy, the dialogue with the government and Pharma.be was carried on, which led to the desired results, while investments in the neighbouring countries have deteriorated.

These investments are significant for our country: the funds are used for collaboration with universities, research institutions, small bio-tech companies, hospitals, sub-contractors specialized in research and production. Annually, hundreds of millions are distributed to thousands of suppliers in the construction, maintenance, catering, safety etc. These massive investments pump resources into a strongly developed eco-system of bio-medical sciences and health care.

Global results for patients

These investments do not only have a positive effect on our own country. They also lead to results for patients worldwide. The four companies are active in the fields of vaccines and medicines against infections, cancer, heart and vascular diseases, mental health, inflammatory diseases. In the past few years, there have been major breakthroughs in Belgian laboratories: the first vaccine ever against a parasite (malaria-vaccine), the first new treatment for tuberculosis in forty years, a new treatment for epilepsy.



Consultation must continue

The Health, Science & Technology Group emphasises that Belgium cannot rest on its laurels. There is an intense international competition to attract investments. It is thus important to maintain the existing consultation and to further develop Belgium as a true “pharma valley”.

Here are the most important challenges:

- Investments in fundamental research in health sciences
- Promoting corporate investments through an attractive fiscal policy
- Making Belgium more attractive to the top researchers in the world and their families
- Fast access to medical innovations for patients

An agreement was reached with the government, among others, to set up an “observatory” that checks what other countries are doing in these fields and what Belgium can do to maintain its top position.

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