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25.06.2025

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Vanessa Vega Saenz discusses Denmark's strategic approach to attracting foreign investments in life sciences, highlighting the country's strengths in clinical trials, production, and health data access. Supported by a robust regulatory framework, strong public-private collaboration, and a clear national vision, Denmark is both a competitive European hub and a trusted partner for international investors.

To begin, could you outline the role of Invest in Denmark and your responsibilities within the organisation?

Invest in Denmark is the national investment promotion agency of Denmark and is part of the Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our team is composed of a mix of diplomats, investment managers, and sector specialists, and we are structured across three tiers: staff at our Copenhagen headquarters, project managers operating out of various Danish regions, and investment managers based in twelve diplomatic posts across Europe, North America, and Asia.

Our primary function is to attract foreign direct investment into Denmark, guided by four strategic priorities. First, we focus on high quality investments that support Denmark's positions of strengths in Life Sciences and Food, Cleantech, and Tech. Second, we seek to accelerate the green transition and attract sustainable investment opportunities. Third, we are committed to attracting investments that benefits all parts of Denmark, not just the capital region. Lastly, we prioritise

investments that contribute to the overall robustness and resilience of Danish society.

At the national level, our Copenhagen team engages with overarching strategies and policy developments. Regionally, our colleagues maintain close connections with local ecosystems—municipalities, industrial associations, innovation clusters, and universities—to ensure alignment with local needs. Internationally, our teams identify emerging trends and prospective investors in their respective markets, and work to match global business interests with Danish opportunities. In essence, we serve as a bridge between Danish political ambitions and business opportunities on the one hand and international capital and innovation on the other hand.

As you mentioned, life sciences is recognized as one of Denmark’s most strategic industries. What would you say is Denmark’s value proposition for life science investors?

Absolutely. Life sciences represent one of Denmark’s most dynamic and productive sectors. From a macroeconomic standpoint, the industry generates more turnover annually than any other sector in the country. It also boasts the highest value-add and productivity per employee and outpaces other sectors in terms of growth, corresponding to an average annual growth in the value add of 8 percent since 2010. In addition, life sciences are among the most energy-efficient industries in Denmark, aligning closely with the country’s strong focus on sustainable development.

The sector accounts for over 20 percent of Denmark’s total goods exports and attracts a significant share of foreign direct investment. Notably, more than one-quarter of all employees in the sector work for foreign-owned companies. In terms of workforce share, Denmark has the highest proportion of life sciences employees in Europe, with approximately three percent of its total workforce employed in this field.

Beyond these statistics, investing in Danish life sciences means joining a robust and well-integrated ecosystem. The entire value chain, spanning from early-stage research to manufacturing and commercialisation, is accessible within the country. This structure appeals strongly to foreign investors, particularly those looking for a seamless path from discovery to delivery.

Denmark consistently ranks highly across international indices for competitiveness, productivity, and quality of life. One of the standout features is our Flexicurity model: it is relatively straightforward to hire and, if necessary, to let go of staff, that in turn benefits from a solid social safety net—something that sets us apart from many other European countries.

We are also strategically positioned as a gateway to both the Nordic and wider European markets. On a more human level, Denmark offers a high standard of living, political stability, and a business environment rooted in trust and transparency. These factors collectively contribute to the ease of doing business here.

We always ask incoming investors why they chose Denmark, and the responses tend to highlight many of the same themes: a stable policy environment, access to skilled labour, an efficient regulatory framework, and quality of life. Specifically, for the life sciences, investors value the comprehensive ecosystem and the ease of forming public-private partnerships. The Life Science Strategy Toward 2030, which is a joint initiative involving several ministries, exemplifies this cross-sectoral collaboration. It is based on recommendations issued by the Danish National Life Science Council, which has members from the healthcare system, educational institutions, patient associations, business organisations, life science companies and authorities, making it a living example of the country's cooperative spirit.

Which segments within life sciences are particularly aligned with Denmark's strengths and investment priorities?

At Invest in Denmark, we focus on three core segments: pharmaceuticals and biotech, digital health, and medtech. In terms of actual foreign investment trends, we see the greatest activity in clinical trials, manufacturing, and venture capital.

Clinical trials are particularly attractive for foreign investors. Denmark ranks first in Europe in terms of clinical trials per capita, and the majority of growth in this area is driven by foreign firms. This is thanks to long-standing government efforts to enhance the regulatory framework and a unique healthcare infrastructure, including the CPR system—a lifelong personal registry that links healthcare records with disease-specific registries and biobanks.

High levels of public trust also result in a strong willingness among citizens to participate in trials. As trial recruitment is always a key challenge, this makes Denmark an ideal setting for clinical research.

There is also increasing political and commercial interest in bringing high-value life science manufacturing to Denmark. This includes interest from contract development and manufacturing organisations (CDMOs). The government is also developing new frameworks to support this.

Venture capital should also be highlighted, as Denmark has become one of the leading European destinations for life sciences venture capital investment on a per capita basis. This trend has accelerated in recent years and is supported by the strength of the local innovation ecosystem and our proactive approach to investment facilitation.

What are some initiatives from Denmark’s life science strategy that stand out to you as most relevant for foreign investors?

There are several. First, the commitment to strengthen Denmark as a leading destination for clinical trials as I mentioned, with Trial Nation, a national initiative to attract and facilitate clinical trials, playing a key role. The current life science strategy also establishes a fourth Medical Research Ethics Committee to fast-track Phase I trial applications within 14 days. This initiative will further improve Denmark’s global competitiveness in early-stage research.

Second, the strategy includes a move towards centralising access to health data. Plans are in motion to establish a single point of contact and a national analytics platform for health data. This will allow researchers and companies to access public datasets in a coordinated way, through both public and public-private frameworks.

Third is the “red carpet” initiative, which supports companies seeking to establish or expand manufacturing capacity. It offers a one-stop-shop to simplify regulatory approvals and ensures designated industrial zones are pre-equipped with infrastructure, making it easier and faster to move forward with investments.

At Invest in Denmark, we see ourselves as proactive matchmakers—aligning the strategic priorities of Denmark, including those set at the political level, with the needs and ambitions of international investors. The life science strategy, in this context, is more than just policy. It’s a living framework that we use actively to guide and attract the right partnerships. Whether it’s digital health solutions that reduce clinical burdens or frameworks that enhance production capacity, the strategy provides clarity, direction, and confidence. In an increasingly uncertain global landscape, this combination of commitment, predictability, and follow-through is something investors truly value.

**How does Denmark position itself within the wider European life sciences landscape?
With Denmark’s upcoming rotation at the head of EU presidency, how does the country balance contributing to EU competitiveness while also differentiating itself?**

Denmark is both a contributor to, and a beneficiary of, Europe's collective competitiveness. We firmly believe we are stronger together. At the same time, we are able to bring certain best practices to the table—particularly our coordinated public-private engagement and inter-ministerial approaches.

The Danish National Life Science Council recently submitted a proposal to Brussels that reflects our national model as a blueprint for the wider European strategy. We are often seen as a role model in how to implement strong regulatory frameworks without compromising efficiency or speed. Good governance and agility are not mutually exclusive.

Talent is a concern in many countries right now. How is Denmark positioned in terms of attracting and developing talent in life sciences?

Talent development is a national priority, and life sciences receive a significant share of public research funding—health research is the single largest research area in Denmark. Danish universities continue to produce a strong pipeline of life science graduates, and this effort is reinforced by substantial private sector contributions to the national research infrastructure. Although global competition for talent remains intense, Denmark's education system and collaborative industry-academia environment provide a strong foundation for long-term workforce development.

Are there any common misconceptions about Denmark that you would like to clarify for international investors?

There are a few. One is the perception that Danes leave work early and therefore do not work hard. In reality, Denmark ranks among the most productive countries globally. Parents may leave the office relatively early to pick up children, but the quality and output of the Danish workforce are very high.

Another misconception is about labour laws. Many investors are surprised to learn how flexible and employer-friendly the Danish system is. Similarly, corporate taxation is often seen as a disadvantage, but many foreign companies find Denmark's tax framework very competitive.

In life sciences specifically, health data can be a point of confusion. Some companies outside Europe expect to purchase datasets directly. In Denmark, access is possible but requires

partnerships with Danish researchers and respect for regulatory conditions. The quality of our health data is exceptional, but we handle it with care. Here, data usage is based on trust and long-term value creation, including for Danish citizens, not commodification.

Do you have any final thoughts or messages for life science companies or potential investors?

If you are interested in Denmark as an investment location, reach out to Invest in Denmark. We are here to help you understand what is possible, make the right connections and guide you through the process. Our door is always open.

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