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We need a strategy for Life Science in Sweden

The trade unions at AstraZeneca in Sweden are relieved that no merger between Pfizer and AstraZeneca will occur right now. At the same time we must use this breathing space to strengthen Swedish Life Science and show the world around us that we have a research environment of the highest quality.

It is very probable that Pfizer will approach AstraZeneca again when the time period expires in six months. If AstraZeneca chooses to invite Pfizer to negotiations, these can start already in three months. But even if that is not the case, other major changes that affect the sector in Sweden are not unlikely to happen.

During the last weeks, the government, the opposition, representatives of this line of business and academics have all rejected this affair as associated with a risk for negative consequences. This has created a commitment to Swedish Life Science that we must make the most of now.

‘There is no time to lean back’, says the local unions at AstraZeneca.’ We employees must continue our work to lead the development of new drugs. Simultaneously the government quickly must outline tools that improve

Sweden's position in case of new takeover bids or other major changes. The pharmaceutical industry is in many respects far too important to Sweden, for it to be acceptable that its future depends on one company's wish to lower its taxes.

Our Life Science sector is strong, but more needs to be done. A wide group of interested parties should, together with the government, develop a strategy for this sector in both the short term and the long term.

'But we must also carry out general measures that strengthen the possibilities for large firms to act in Sweden, say the unions from central level. Over the last few years we have seen many examples that the share of national owning, the nationality of the board and the management and the placement of the head quarter are deciding factors for the localization of the operation. It is not enough to be competent and it is not always business rationale that decides. Therefore we must dare to fight for Sweden as a very competitive country for industrial activity. The dismantling of the pharmaceutical industry does not only affect the employees and the patients but the society as a whole'.

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