

## **Recommendation of a Strategy for the Development of Life Sciences in Austria**

Austria has focused attention on the development of the life sciences for many years. For a long time these sciences have been regarded as one of the most promising frontier technologies – and today a number of companies have even gained an international reputation in this field. However, the market still appears to be far from saturated. Scientists also continue to harbour strong hopes of achieving further successes with the life sciences.

### **The Austrian Council therefore recommends:**

- Political leadership, raising awareness and communication: A clear political commitment and the creation of a general framework conducive to the long-term positive development of the life sciences in Austria are required. The “life sciences also need to be embedded in popular consciousness as an opportunity for Austria”.
- The development of Austria as a **single** life sciences region. Attracting companies and academic institutions to one location generates powerful synergy effects in terms of the exchange of knowledge and technologies. Efforts should therefore be stepped up to attract university institutes, non-university research facilities, competence centres and companies to a shared location.
- Internationalisation – Research Co-operation: This refers to the systematic utilisation by Austrian organisations at all levels of the opportunities offered by European research and technology programmes. Furthermore, the mobility of scientists should be used as an instrument to foster the international networking of expertise and transfer of technology.
- Promotion of scientific research and excellence. Scientific excellence forms the basis for innovation and its successful commercial implementation. It is therefore essential to improve longterm

support for basic research in all areas of the life sciences at universities and at non-university research institutes.

- Education and the promotion of young scientists: The aim is to increase the number of highly qualified science graduates and in doing so to increase the attractiveness of degree courses in the natural sciences. This is aimed at ensuring a high number of appropriately qualified workers for the biotechnology industry.
- The establishment of decentralised technology transfer centres at universities and the development of licensing and marketing structures: There is a lack of knowledge about intellectual property rights at universities. This knowledge should be built up. Furthermore, incentives should be created for inventors, and marketing and licensing structures improved, as this will impact positively on the climate of innovation at universities and Fachhochschulen.
- Strengthening of non-university research: Nonuniversity research can be strengthened by setting up research centres based on the model of the Max Planck institutes and the Helmholtz Association etc. (new types of centres of excellence). The restructuring of the Ludwig Boltzmann Research Association can generate considerable impetus for the life sciences landscape in Austria through clearer structures and more efficient dimensions.
- Co-ordination of the funding agencies and instruments: The establishment of the funding bank Austria Wirtschaftsservice (AWS) and the Austrian Research Promotion Agency (FFG) have created good prerequisites for optimising funding structures at the programme level by eliminating overlapping. This discussion will also have to be conducted in the life sciences.
- Start-up and founder funding, seed financing and growth financing: The aim here is to establish spin-offs with long-term viability, generate highcalibre jobs and, in the process, establish Austria as an internationally recognised centre of life sciences
- Fiscal aspects: Inter alia, the research tax allowance should be extended to cover contract research, while the fiscal treatment of stock option programmes should be modified.
- Improvement and expansion of infrastructure: A lack of affordable bio-technology-specific infrastructure (in the immediate vicinity of

research facilities) – restricts the further development of local life sciences clusters. In order to avoid a situation in which potential entrepreneurs are forced to move to other locations and established start-ups develop relocation plans in the expansion phase, it is essential to develop and provide appropriate infrastructure (if necessary by using public-private-partnership models).