

Denmark calls out for Asian investment

09 June 2011 | News

image not found or type unknown



Denmark boasts of the third largest drug pipeline in Europe and is a leader in areas of enzymes, CNS, diabetes and cancer research. BioSpectrum explores the infrastructure and opportunities provided by the country to its biotech sector

Image not found or type unknown

The government of Denmark is looking to attract Asian life science companies to invest in Denmark, especially in the field of R&D. In a recent media visit organized by Invest in Denmark, an investment promotion agency which is a part of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Denmark's health minister Mr Bertel Haarder told *BioSpectrum* that his government is working on several legislations aimed at attracting private investments from Asian countries, particularly from India

It is noteworthy that Denmark will hold the presidency of the European Union in the first half of 2012, and according to Mr Haarder, the health and life sciences industry is one of the top agendas of his government. Under the

'Health Innovation' plan, the Danish government is working on a legislation that would reduce the review period of clinical trials in Denmark from 30 days (fastest in Europe) to a minimum of seven days. Mr Haarder believes that setting up research centers in Denmark will help Indian companies get European approvals, as the infrastructure in Denmark does not allow excessive red tape.

The Danish government is also working on a stronger legal framework for private-public partnership on research in healthcare sector. Their primary focus is on pharma, medtech and health technology. The government has reserved 41.1 billion DKR for the implementation of a new national hospital plan. Focus in the hospital plan is greater specialization and hence better treatment, more cost-efficient hospitals and better conditions for research and development. The government has set up a new body for e-health that will be responsible for governing the implementation of the national electronic patient record system by the end of 2013.

“One of the major attractions for foreign investors is our patient records. The Danish health registers enables researchers to monitor patients across time, regions and sector. The Danish Serum Institute is currently establishing a national bio bank, granting access to serum samples from all over the country,” said Mr Haarder.

Medicon Valley cluster (Fact file)

- Population of approx 3.5 million.
- Companies with R&D and/or production: Approx 100 (red) biotech companies, 25 pharma companies (7 major) and 100 medtech companies.
- International companies with affiliates in Medicon Valley: More than 200 pharma companies and 170 medtech companies.
- Approx 40,000 employees in the private life sciencesector.
- Approx 10,000 life science researchers in the private and public life science sector.
- Twelve universities, five of which supply life science related educations.
- Approx 150,000 students, 45,000 of whom study life science.

- Approx 2,600 life science PhD students are enrolled at the universities of Copenhagen and Lund.
 - Approx 7,000 life science university students graduate every year.
 - Thirty two hospitals, 11 of which are university hospitals.
 - Six science parks with a significant focus on life science.
 - Six incubators, two of which have a significant focus on life science.
 - More than 50 contract research organizations and contract manufacturing organizations.
- Copenhagen, being a

The Danish Council for Technology and Innovation has invested in a "Strategic Platform for Innovation and Research (SPIR)" within intelligent solutions for welfare service challenges. The SPIR is a partnership between a number of private companies and universities and aims at basic

Funding for Danish health research on public facilities has more than doubled in the last decade. This is due to an increase in government funding, and success in taking home donations from European and American foundations such as the Novo Nordisk Foundation and the Lundbeck Foundation. Health research comprises 33 percent of Danish

The Danish government calls for Indian companies to set up operations in Denmark. "Denmark is a gateway to most part of Northern Europe.

major life sciences hub, is the ideal place for Asian companies to set up their North European headquarters. This will allow them to cover the market in Germany, Holland, Belgium and UK. The company tax rate here is only 25 percent and expatriates can benefit from a special tax regime," said Rasmus Bj rn, business development manager, Invest in Denmark.

Clinical trial hub

Approximately 1,000 clinical trials are approved and carried out every year in Denmark and about 20,000 Danes participate in clinical trials each year. According to Denmark's ministry of interior and health, Denmark conducts the highest number of clinical trials in Europe per million inhabitants. The country has a long tradition for patient and population registration. The Danish population is homogeneous with registered and easily accessible data, providing unique information on the patient population. Denmark has organized public health and death registries and a unique social security number system. Thus, data is available for studies, making Denmark particularly suited for epidemiological and clinical research. Some of the companies that chose Denmark for conducting clinical trials are:

Pfizer: The effect of low-dose human growth hormone therapy in HIV infected patients on highly active antiretroviral therapy.

GlaxoSmithKline: Human papilloma virus vaccine consistency and non-inferiority trial in young adult women.

Astra Zeneca: Casodex vs Placebo in non-metastatic early prostate cancer.

Merck: A comparison of two total hip replacements: hip resurfacing system versus Mallory-Head/Exeter.

Novartis: A study to evaluate the effect of letrozole and tamoxifen on bone and lipids in postmenopausal women with breast cancer.

Sanofi-Aventis: Simvastatin as an add-on treatment to copaxone for the treatment of relapsing multiple sclerosis.

Eli Lilly & Co: Enzastaurin for patients with metastatic colorectal cancer.

Highly qualified work force

Approximately 1.8 million people live in the Greater Copenhagen Area, and if we include the Swedish side of the Medicon Valley, there are approximately three million people residing in this area. In total, they represent a workforce of roughly 1.5 million people of whom 42,000 are employed within the life sciences sector. Medicon Valley contains a highly educated work force, with 27 percent of people aged between 25 and 64 years holding tertiary degrees. It is also the best place to access one of Europe's most skilled talent pools.

The Medicon valley

Medicon Valley is a bi-national life sciences cluster that spans the island of Sealand in Eastern Denmark and the Sk ne region of Southern Sweden. It is one of Europe's strongest life science clusters with a large number of pharmaceutical, biotech and medical device companies and research institutions located within a very small geographical area.

Local and international investors have provided the capital need for the continued growth of these companies. Together with specialized service providers such as different CROs, CMOs, consultants and patent attorneys, all the competences required to bring new and innovative products to the market are available. About 467 life sciences companies from across the world operate from this cluster.

- Ashish Saraf

(The writer was in Copenhagen at the invitation of Invest in Denmark)

'We will help India to tap the EU market'

Mr Freddy Svane, Ambassador, Royal Embassy of Denmark, New Delhi

image not found or type unknown industry is a major world player, particularly in the areas of consumer, CNS research, diabetes and

cancer research. Denmark, which boasts of the third largest commercial drug development pipeline in Europe, is continuously developing its research methodologies and is thus at the forefront of cutting edge biotech and pharma research. The excellent infrastructure provided by Denmark along with the various socio-economic incentives, being provided by the country, is attracting several foreign companies to set up their business in Denmark.

The representative of the Kingdom of Denmark in India, Mr Freddy Svane, the Danish Ambassador to India, while speaking exclusively to BioSpectrum revealed that the world leader in clean technology is looking forward to collaborate with Indian firms to tread the path of success in biotechnology.

Q What is the present scenario of co-operation between Denmark and India?

Presently, we have more than 120 Danish companies that have set up their own establishments and are heavily investing in India. On the other hand, there are a lot of opportunities for Indian companies to grow in Denmark. I see many opportunities for interaction between the Governments of Denmark and India and also between the industries and the farmers of the two countries. We are doing a lot of work at the embassy along with our Trade Mission and our colleagues at Invest in Denmark in order to take the co-operation between the two countries to a higher level. Looking into the detailed collaboration that the Danish government and the Indian government currently have, we have a joint commission that sets out joint priorities and biotech is perhaps the most important priority.

Q Why do you think companies from India should invest in Denmark?

Denmark is a small country with only 5.4 to 5.5 million inhabitants. However, the number of clinical trials that we have conducted total to more than 2,000 global clinical trials in a year. The Danish government has decided to establish a fast track system that will drastically reduce the time required to obtain permits for clinical trials. We have the infrastructure in place which is important to developing a new drug. Denmark has a model called as a 'flexicurity' model that offers operational flexibility to Indian companies that are planning to set up business in Denmark. Corporate taxes are just about 25 percent, which is less than the European Union's average. Denmark also has an English speaking population and a highly talented workforce. The government spends around 63.68 crore (€10 million) every year to provide infrastructure for life sciences, IT and clean tech sectors and also in education and in schemes such as the industrial-PhD program. It is fair to say that biotech companies in India, who want to come to Europe, have the perfect hub in the form of Denmark. We have the full range of products and services in place such as infrastructure, top institutions and a lot of biotech and medtech companies among others, which would attract the ambitious Indian biotech industry.

Q Which Indian companies have invested in Denmark until now?

During the last year, we had seen a large number of Indian investments been made in Denmark. Vimta labs, one of the leading clinical research organizations (CROs) of India and Aurobindo Pharma have just established their branch office, thus tapping into Europe by using Denmark as a hub. Also, a company called Ecron Acunova has invested in Denmark. We also have a strategic alliance with Aurigene. We are seeing a large number of Indian firms showing their interest in the Danish market trying to explore the facilities that we have.

—Saptarshi Chaudhuri in Bangalore