

## Summary of the main recommendations

The world has entered the age of the life sciences. More and more, the life sciences help us address social challenges in healthcare, food supply, energy security and environmental sustainability and enable our knowledge economy. The Netherlands has a unique position. Our scientific research in the life sciences is in the global top three, and our country is home to strong food, health, agricultural and chemicals & energy sectors that can deliver on the promise of the life sciences.

Nevertheless, translating our excellent knowledge into novel products, processes and services and delivering these to society is difficult. To overcome this challenge, academia, industry and the government have joined forces in recent years in precompetitive research collaboration on an unprecedented scale. It is now time to follow through and make that investment pay off.

Many representatives from the life sciences field have come together to write *Partners in the Polder*. The book articulates the promise of the life sciences and discusses how the Netherlands can deliver on that promise, paying particular attention to the role of public-private partnerships (PPPs). *Partners in the Polder* looks at how academia and industry are coming together to translate basic knowledge into practical applications: the origins of the PPP, its purpose and outlook, strengths and weaknesses, successes and failures.

*Partners in the Polder* makes three main recommendations that are broadly supported by the field and draw on the experience and expertise of scientists, researchers, business leaders and policymakers from all corners of the life sciences and on studies and publications from industry associations, the OECD, the Innovation Platform and others. The authors hope that this summary of the main recommendations piques your interest in the book itself. It contains many more observations, lessons and recommendations.



### **I. Provide continuity in innovation policy for 15 years or more (p. 62-66)**

The Netherlands has the ambition to become an internationally leading knowledge economy and play a prominent role in addressing social challenges like climate change. For that, innovation is crucial. Innovation in the life sciences can take 15 years or more: from the initial idea to the uptake of a new product, process or service in society. Much time, energy and money needs to be invested in uncertain outcomes. The Dutch government stimulates innovation with many sound policy instruments. Innovation policy itself, however, changes at least every four years – in priorities, criteria, instruments, procedures and points of contact. If the rules keep changing during the innovation game, returns on previous investments will be low, new efforts will be few and we will not realize our ambitions.

To change this, the field must first articulate where it wants to go and what it needs to get there. That is what *Partners in the Polder* aims to do. With this, the government can formulate long-term objectives (> 15 years) to guide its innovation policy. Such objectives make it possible to keep the rules largely constant, in line with (inter)national best practices and tailored to the life sciences. The right (mix of) instruments can then be deployed in each stage of innovation and progress and results monitored throughout. This way, public money will be invested effectively and legitimately.

### **II. Build on the strengths that have been developed (p. 67-75)**

All life sciences stakeholders need to build on the strengths developed. The first priority must be to reap the fruits of earlier investments by creating the best conditions for use and delivery of innovations. These include easy access to knowledge and patents, ample availability of (venture) capital, the absence of unnecessary regulatory constraints, well-informed and critical citizens, and a well-functioning

market. The field and government together need to create such conditions, and *Partners in the Polder* contains many tips and ideas for doing so: from valorization mechanisms to certification systems to acting as launching customers.

We should take our rich (national) landscape of PPPs to the next level of scale and scope. It is recommended that the field consolidate the more than 40 Dutch PPPs in which life sciences play a role into ten or fewer clusters that are part of international networks, and that the government continue to invest in such partnerships. The government should also increase investment in the basic research in academia that is needed to preserve our world-leading knowledge position (especially in harsh economic times). Academia in turn has the responsibility to valorize its research results: to make it easy for entrepreneurs to acquire and build on its knowledge and patents. Another priority is education. Life sciences innovation needs educated scientists, entrepreneurs and venture capitalists, as well as informed citizens who can decide to use an innovation (or not).

### **III. Position the Netherlands as one bioregion (p.75-78)**

In the Dutch life sciences, distances between world-leading academic groups and strong industry sectors (food, health, agriculture, and chemicals & energy) are small. By positioning itself as a single bioregion with local hotspots and capitalizing on the Dutch traditions of cooperation and trade, the Dutch life sciences could become incredibly competitive and attractive to international partners.

Successful collaboration will increasingly be a source of competitive advantage. The life sciences field will continue the cooperation that began with writing this book, share experiences and set up (informal) coordination wherever useful. Today's PPPs will help future ones take advantage of the lessons learned and existing back offices. In short: the Dutch life sciences stakeholders will be ever more *Partners in the Polder*.