



Annual Conference 2026

The Dual Engine Approach

The ACCELERATE Annual Conference 2026 took place in Brussels from 5-6 February, bringing together 232 participants from 22 countries, including 189 attendees and a global virtual audience. ACCELERATE is a collaborative platform, and participants represented key stakeholders – academics, patient advocates, regulators and industry leaders. While most attendees were from Europe, there was strong international participation, with over 60 coming from US, as well as representatives from Canada, Japan and Australia.

The conference marked 14 years of progress in paediatric oncology drug development and setting strategic priorities for the future. The conference theme - The Dual Engine Approach - emphasised that to cure more children and adolescents with cancer, we must 1) accelerate the smart development and use of adult cancer innovations and 2) build new paediatric-first development pathways to incentivize the development of specific paediatric oncology drugs.

Topics were explored through presentations and panel discussions, allowing participants to exchange insights and emerging developments on the five-year horizon, while identifying key avenues and considerations for accelerating paediatric drug development - both in adapting adult innovations and advancing paediatric-specific therapies.

The following topics were discussed:

- Understanding the global framework for paediatric oncology drug development for the next 5 years
- Improving generation of evidence in paediatric oncology drug development
- Accelerating the development of paediatric-specific oncology products
- Paediatric Strategy and Impact Forums
- Will the regulatory framework support and incentivize?
- Accelerating paediatric drug development of adult innovations
- Developing paediatric-specific oncology drugs
- Building the ACCELERATE work plan: 2026 and beyond

Key Takeaways:

- The conference opened with a forward-looking discussion on how to build a global framework for paediatric oncology drug development over the next five years. Speakers called for both speed and responsibility—a dual approach that



accelerates the safe adaptation of adult cancer innovations for children while also developing paediatric-first development pathways.

- A central message emerged: designing treatments specifically for children cannot depend only on adapting adult therapies. Developing drugs around the unique biology of childhood cancers is essential to achieving additional breakthroughs.
- Speakers highlighted the potential of paediatric-first approaches that combine scientific innovation with commercial viability—aiming to trigger stronger immune responses, overcome tumour evasion, and improve long-term outcomes for young patients.
- Collaboration across disciplines, sectors, and borders was presented as a cornerstone of progress. Moving promising therapies from scientific potential to real impact demands early academic–industry collaboration, stronger biological rationale for targeted treatments, and supportive innovation ecosystems that translate research into access.
- The need for dedicated development pathways, designed from the outset with children in mind, was repeatedly emphasised as a necessity for sustainable progress in paediatric oncology.
- Discussions also addressed the practical and structural challenges of ensuring promising oncology innovations reach children faster and more equitably. Equitable access to research and clinical trials—and the expansion of cross-border participation across Europe—were seen as vital to creating equal opportunities for all children to benefit from novel therapies.
- The session on evidence generation focused on bridging the gap between clinical success and real-world impact. By aligning early with regulators and establishing transparent, sustainable infrastructures between academia and industry, stakeholders can streamline approvals and ensure that data-driven therapies reach children without delay.
- Preliminary results of the FDA RACE for children ACT launched in August 2020 were presented.
- The new regulatory framework with the revised EU Pharmaceutical legislation (to be voted by the EU Parliament in the following months) was discussed, including the paediatric development of an asset driven by its mechanism of action and no longer by its adult cancer indication.
- Ultimately, the ACCELERATE 2026 conference reinforced a collective vision: a more efficient, ethical, and global ecosystem for paediatric oncology—one that puts children first, from scientific discovery to real-world access.



Thank you to everyone who contributed, connected and shared ideas. The conversations continue beyond the conference, and the collective work to accelerate progress for children with cancer moves forward.

Together, you helped advance dialogue on innovation, collaboration, equitable access and the future of paediatric oncology drug development.

The next ACCELERATE Annual Conference will take place in Brussels on 6-7 February 2027.

[Annual Conference 2026 Programme](#)