

Press Release

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Science meets policy to discuss healthy ageing

One of Europe's biggest challenges is the burden of non-communicable diseases such as type 2 diabetes. According to the International Diabetes Federation there are currently around 66 million adults (aged 18-99) with diabetes in the European region and this is predicted to risk to 81 million by 2045. The total diabetes health expenditure for this region is over €180 billion.

Leading scientists from across Europe, collaborated in an EU funded research project to understand how a life-course approach to healthy ageing can reduce the risks of obesity, type 2 diabetes and other related diseases. Evidence is building to suggest that early interventions play a role in reducing the risks. Psychosocial factors also play a significant role in an individual's risk of 'unhealthy ageing'.

To convey these important findings to policy makers, the project consortium was hosted by Finnish MEP Sirpa Pietikäinen at an event held at European Parliament. The event was also supported by Christel Schaldemose, Danish MEP and Co-Chair of the EU Working Group on Diabetes (EUDWG) and Beatrice Lucaroni from the European Commission. In addition, Pasi Mustonen, Finnish permanent representative to the EU on health, gave a point of view from the Member States about putting health research into practice.

Sirpa Pietikäinen said "DynaHEALTH is an outstanding example of a research project studying health issues in a holistic manner, across the life-course. It provides a valuable framework to how we understand and integrate the different causes and interactions of aspects impacting on a person's health, the likelihood of illnesses, and the processes behind the generation and advancement of illnesses, as well as their prevention and cure."

The DynaHEALTH project strongly supports the design of health and social policies which consider a life-course approach to address the prevention of obesity and type 2 diabetes. Dr Sylvain Sebert explains "Obesity and type 2 diabetes represent a major public health concern and EU funding to enable the coordination of research at a European level is critical to tackling challenges of this scale. Our research has identified that there is an interplay between biological and psychosocial factors in determining the risks of obesity and type 2 diabetes, and therefore unhealthy ageing. We need to unravel the complexities of the biological and psychosocial factors and identify the key windows of opportunity to intervene. We know, for example, that unemployment is a risk factor for prediabetes and type 2 diabetes."

The importance of early life interventions is also supported by DynaHEALTH. Early life changes, during critical periods of development, potentially have a significant impact on



reducing the risks of obesity and type 2 diabetes in later life, and the associated health, social and economic consequences. Research is ongoing to provide the evidence needed to shape policy and design more effective interventions, but we have already made a significant contribution to this complex picture.

This key event at European parliament has initiated this important dialogue and the consortium will continue to finalise its research to enable continuation of these discussions and provide the evidence policy makers need to make sound investments in public health.

Notes to editors:

See more at: www.dynahealth.eu

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About DynaHEALTH

Partners:

- University of Oulu, Centre for Life Course Health Research and the Northern Finland Cohort Centre, Finland (Coordinator);
- Abbott, Spain;
- Academic Medical Centre, Amsterdam, the Netherlands;
- Beta Technology Ltd, UK;
- Brunel University London, UK;
- Erasmus University Medical Centre Rotterdam, the Netherlands;
- Imperial College London, UK;
- Institute of Diabetes Research, Helmholtz Zentrum München, Germany;
- Center for Clinical Research and Disease Prevention, Bispebjerg and Frederiksberg Hospital, The Capital Region, Copenhagen, Denmark;
- Laboratorios Ordesa, Spain;
- Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich, Germany;
- The Folkhälsan Research Centre, Finland;
- University College London, UK;
- University of Granada, Spain.



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About Horizon 2020

Europe has a 10-year growth and jobs strategy called **Europe 2020**. It was launched in 2010 to create the conditions for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Five headline targets have been agreed for the European Union to achieve by the end of 2020, covering employment, research and development, climate/energy, education, and social inclusion and poverty reduction.

Europe has identified new engines to boost growth and jobs; these are addressed by seven '**flagship initiatives**'. Within each initiative both the European Union and national authorities have to coordinate their efforts, so they are mutually reinforcing. '**Innovation Union**' is one such flagship initiative. '**Innovation Union**' is the European Union strategy to create an innovation-friendly environment that makes it easier for great ideas to be turned into products and services that will bring our economy growth and jobs.

Horizon 2020 is the financial instrument implementing the Innovation Union and:

- Has a budget of nearly €80 billion for the period 2014-2020 which makes it the biggest European Union Research and Development programme ever.
- Is open to everyone.
- Has three priorities (Industrial Leadership, Excellent Science and Societal Change); each of which has a number of sections with a different focus and each section has a detailed work programme.

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/what-horizon-2020>