



Press Release

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Finding ways to help people stay healthy through ageing

A new European research and innovation project studying healthy ageing launched this month. This collaborative project has been awarded funding from Horizon Europe, the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. Led by the University of Oulu in Finland, the consortium's research will use longitudinal cohorts and biobanks spanning the entire life course to explore how a person ages with multi-morbidity, which means having two or more long-term health conditions, and how it could be prevented.

By 2050, it is projected that the population aged 75 years and over will double in almost all European regions. This demographic projection presents important personal and societal challenges that require integrated and agile solutions. A person's opportunity to stay healthy through ageing depends on their capacity to function in everyday life in a rapidly changing society. We advocate that this can be promoted from as early as possible and/or actively corrected by personalised prevention. However, to address the gaps in scientific evidence and the multiple ethical, societal and structural barriers which exist, researchers need to work together with policymakers and citizens of all ages.

One way of addressing these challenges is to gain a deeper understanding of people's diverse living environments, social stressors, and the biology of ageing. Adopting a life-course and digital-based approach, the project will generate bio-psychosocial models and AI-assisted, age-friendly tools, to detect, prevent and reduce the risk of ageing with multi-morbidity. The project team will design solutions for person-centred health and care services that focus on specific periods of life and are needs-based. These solutions will be co-designed with citizens, patients, healthcare providers, and policymakers, and include:

- Running cohort-based clinical studies, and
- Developing a Europe-wide digital, interactive, healthy ageing atlas to inform policymaking and strategic urban development for age-friendly neighbourhoods.

This highly ambitious project includes 22 partners, from research institutions, small and medium-sized enterprises, and an NGO, across 11 countries, with expertise in ethics and healthcare systems, environments and participatory science, life-course epidemiology, economics, molecular ageing, trustworthy artificial intelligence, integrated systems design, life-course based interventions, FAIR data management, nursing and healthcare, patient advocacy, and communication and knowledge management.



Project Coordinator Professor Sylvain Sebert says *“I am so happy our project has been awarded funding. It will enable us to understand the patterns of ageing and then translate this knowledge into concrete, effective prevention programmes and solutions for people to age more healthily. Far too many people are now burdened with multiple chronic illnesses that combine mental health disorders such as depression and anxiety, and physical diseases such as obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular diseases, into multi-morbidity. Unfortunately, we can observe the premise of these patterns emerging long before they are diagnosed. Yet, the knowledge about how such diseases, traditionally considered different in nature, may relate to each other is very uncertain. Personally, this is a dream project, and I am excited to get started. Equally exciting is that the project will kick-start the next follow-up of participants in the Northern Finland Birth Cohort 1966, one of the flagships of the University of Oulu started sixty years ago!”*

The STAGE project, which started on 1st January 2024, is a six-year project with a total grant of €17.7m from Horizon Europe and €2.2m from UKRI. A comprehensive website will be launched by April 2024.

The consortium held its kick-off meeting on 23rd and 24th January 2024 in Helsinki, Finland, where partners presented and discussed the project strategies and activities needed to progress the research. Expected policy outcomes were also discussed and a workshop on defining and engaging stakeholders was held.

To keep up to date with the project’s progress, please follow the project’s social media channels: [@STAGEProjectEU](#) on X and [The STAGE Project](#) on LinkedIn.

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Notes to editors

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About STAGE

Partners:

- University of Oulu, Finland (Project Coordinator)
- Ab.Acus SRL, Italy



- Beta Technology Ltd, UK
- Erasmus University Medical Center, Netherlands
- European Association for the Study of Obesity, Ireland
- Liva Healthcare A/S, Denmark
- Helmholtz Center Munich, Germany
- Imperial College London, UK
- Region Hovedstaden, Denmark
- Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
- Software Research & Development and Consultancy Corp (SRDC), Turkey
- Stichting VUMC, The Netherlands
- Technical University of Munich, Germany
- University Medical Center Groningen, Netherlands
- University of Barcelona, Spain
- University of Bristol, UK
- University of Haifa, Israel
- University of Liège, Belgium
- University of Rome Tor Vergata, Italy
- University of Turin, Italy
- Utrecht University, Netherlands
- WeDo|Project Intelligence Made Easy SL, Spain.



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About Horizon Europe

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation with a budget of €95.5 billion.

It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.

The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing, supporting and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges. It supports creating and better dispersing of excellent knowledge and technologies.



It creates jobs, fully engages the EU's talent pool, boosts economic growth, promotes industrial competitiveness and optimises investment impact within a strengthened European Research Area.

Legal entities from the EU and associated countries can participate.