

EVENT REPORT:

European

Collaborative effort

in Diabetes

Research

7 June 2023



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hosted by
MEP Dan Nica

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More than 32 million people live with diabetes in the European Union. Diabetes is one of the greatest health challenges of modern times and this challenge will continue to increase unless we take concrete action and unless we work together, notably in the field of research. In particular, collaborative European projects have already done important work to ensure timely diagnosis, provide pumps and CGMs to patients, and develop prevention and cure.

On 7 June, the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) and Innovative Health Initiative (IHI) organised a breakfast debate in the European Parliament titled '[European Collaborative Effort in Diabetes Research](#)'. Researchers, policymakers, patient advocates and stakeholders reflected on recent advances in the field and the need for further collaboration in diabetes research. The panellists agreed that research and multi-stakeholder collaboration and engagement are crucial to future success in diabetes innovation.

The event was [hosted](#) by **MEP Dan Nica** (S&D, Romania). In his introductory remarks, MEP Nica stressed that collaboration between policymakers, researchers and healthcare practitioners is essential to ensure that people with diabetes benefit from the best care. He emphasised that the European Parliament should support EU action to help Member States to provide the right treatments and care equipment to people with diabetes. In particular, the EU should leverage the lessons from Horizon Europe's [Cancer Mission](#) to make the most of research funding for diabetes.

MEP Dan Nica also outlined other measures that need to be taken to better tackle diabetes. Policymakers need to work to implement a minimum set of standards for early detection, screening, monitoring and treatment of diabetes. Researchers should be granted access to the data needed to conduct accurate studies, which in turn can be translated into innovation. Last but not least, people with diabetes should not be stigmatised but benefit from early detection and proper treatment.



Jeannette Söderberg, JRDF Director of European and Middle-East Research, [outlined](#) the scale of the challenges facing people with type 1 diabetes (T1D). Whereas around 295,000 people have [T1D in Europe today](#), around 400,000 people would still be alive if they had had access to the right treatments. JRDF has committed 2.5 billion euros to research projects and initiatives for T1D since 1970 and tremendous advances in diabetes research have been made over the past decades. However, much work remains to be done on preventing and discovering the cure for type 1 diabetes.



Enric Claverol, Programme Manager at the European Innovation Council (EIC), [presented](#) the work of the EIC as part of two diabetes projects it is funding, including the [Touch Glucose Monitoring](#) project developing non-invasive measurement of blood glucose, as well as [Indigo's](#) continuous multi-metabolite monitoring system. There is significant potential for non-intrusive micro-devices to deliver high-quality data. The EIC will continue supporting and funding diabetes research.

Mr Claverol also outlined three challenges to turning diabetes research into effective treatments. Firstly, bureaucratic inertia in assessing the eligibility of projects for funding is delaying research and development. Simpler processes would be critical to accelerating innovation. Secondly, many companies have experienced challenges in bringing diabetes to market because of implementation of the [Medical Device Regulation \(MDR\)](#) and the assessment of CE marking. Thirdly, patients sometimes cannot access existing technologies due to inadequate national price and reimbursement frameworks.

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Hugh Lavery, Executive Director at the IHI, [presented](#) several diabetes projects financed by the EU and the life sciences industry. These include the [IMIDIA](#) project on the role of beta cells in diabetes, [BEAT-DKD](#) developing tools and knowledge treating diabetic kidney disease (DKD) and the [SOPHIA](#) project studying the relationship between weight gain and diabetes. In addition, the [INNODIA](#) project examined tools to predict and prevent T1D, and the [DIRECT](#) consortium has published on the use of GLP-1 agonists to treat type 2 diabetes (T2D).

Mr Lavery stressed that no single institution, government or stakeholder has the resources to tackle research challenges alone. The IHI will continue to serve as a platform that will unite players and stakeholders from different sectors to build the trust, collaboration and knowledge needed for success.



Dr Kate Gajewska, Patient Advocate and Committee Member in the International Society for Paediatric and Adolescent Diabetes (ISPAD), [shared](#) her experience as a person diagnosed with T1D 36 years ago. She emphasised that incremental advancements in technology in diabetes management have changed the lives of people with diabetes. However, most people with T1D are not using available technology, partly due to low levels of health literacy regarding the advantages of technology to improve diabetes management and health outcomes. She also called for implementing a Diabetes Strategy across all Member States to ensure harmonisation and equity in access to care and treatments.



Chantal Mathieu, President of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) and Vice-Chair of the European Diabetes Federation (EUDF), [emphasised](#) the strength of Europe's leadership and collaboration in diabetes research. Research has great potential to improve the lives of people at risk of or with diabetes. The EDENT1FI project, for example, is developing screening for young children with T1D. However, action needs to be taken for Europe to remain a leader in the field. Systems need to be adapted to the specificities of research type, such as basic research and clinical trials. There also needs to be continued investments in infrastructure, logistics and clinical trial networks.



Cajsa Lindberg, T1D advocate and advisor with IDF Europe closed the event and [stressed](#) that while T1D has a big impact on individuals' everyday lives and on society, little is known about the causes of the disease. Research is making progress in Europe but a further push is needed to discover the origins of T1D and develop ways of preventing and curing the disease.