

## Human Microbiome Action – Towards Better Public Health

For decades, chronic diseases have been steadily on the rise, representing a major threat to healthy ageing. According to the WHO, chronic diseases will affect one in four people by 2025. The development of health and disease is shaped by an important factor. On and inside of our body live over 100 trillion microbes that are often referred to as our microbiota or microbiome. In fact, the number of microbes in an average human body exceeds by far the number of human cells. Most of them can be found in our gut, particularly in the large intestine. These microbes are generally not harmful, rather they are considered beneficial colonizers that are essential to maintaining health. They help us break down our food to extract essential nutrients, produce certain vitamins, regulate our immune system, and fight off other disease-causing microbes. Scientists in the field of microbiome research, a sector that studies the relation between microbes and our health, found that changes in the microbiome are linked to numerous diseases such as obesity, diabetes, allergies and even anxiety, depression, and autism.

Despite recent achievements in microbiome research, we are far from fully understanding the whole potential of our microbial friends. The **Human Microbiome Action** project aims to further improve microbiome research and innovation by providing important guidelines and recommendations for the international research community, so that future insights from this field can be used to improve public health. **Human Microbiome Action** will bring together international experts to secure standards and deepen our knowledge about the microbiome. Finally, this will lead towards microbiome-based research and innovations for better diagnosis and personalized disease prevention and treatment. The project will pave the way to a European Microbiome Centres Consortium, a platform to collaborate with microbiome experts in Europe and worldwide. With **Human Microbiome Action**, the human microbiome will be recognized for its true value in mankind and leading towards a better public health.

**Human Microbiome Action** is a project funded by the European Commission through the Horizon 2020 program. Coordinated by the French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (INRAE), 17 European partners from 9 different countries will work on this ambitious goal over the next years until 2024.

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