

## **Lords Oral Question led by Viscount Stansgate – UK's participation in the Horizon Europe research programme – 8 September 2022**

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This briefing includes:

1. Suggested Interventions
2. Background
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### **1. Suggested Interventions**

- *My Lords, Horizon Europe's predecessor, Horizon 2020, delivered over €573m to dementia research projects.<sup>1</sup> It is only through research that the causes of dementia can be fully understood, allowing for the development of new treatments and potential cures. Can the Minister confirm what steps the Government is taking to ensure this vital European funding for dementia research is not lost?*
- *My Lords, the Government's recent announcement of the National Dementia Mission will see dementia research funding doubled to £160m a year by 2024 – a hugely welcome step forward for the field. To unlock the full potential of this funding, it's vital that UK dementia researchers are still able to collaborate internationally on important and innovative projects through the Horizon Europe programme. Will the Minister relay this point to colleagues as negotiations on the UK's association agreement continue?*
- *My Lords, work to improve the UK's dementia research infrastructure, including the creation of institutions such as the UK Dementia Research Institute (UKDRI), has set the UK on course to be a world leader in the field. To cement this status, we need to ensure the best and brightest European researchers are incentivised to conduct their research in the UK. What assessment has the Minister made of the impact uncertainty around the UK's association to Horizon Europe will have on the UK dementia research field?*

### **2. Background**

**There are currently an estimated 900,000 people living with dementia in the UK, a number which is set to rise to 1.6m by 2040.<sup>2</sup> Yet of the top ten causes of death worldwide, dementia is the only one that can't be cured, stopped, or even slowed down.**

**Until recently, research into dementia had been largely neglected and chronically underfunded. However, in August 2022, the Government announced the National Dementia Mission to double research funding to £160m a year by 2024 and establish a new taskforce to speed up research.<sup>3</sup>**

**This is a hugely welcome development, but in order to fully unlock the potential of this funding, it's vital that the UK continues to attract the best and brightest dementia researchers from across Europe and enables them to collaborate on significant international research projects. Involvement in Horizon Europe provides the ideal method through which to do this, and thus cement the UK's status as a science superpower – so the UK's association agreement must be urgently formalised.**

<sup>1</sup> **Alzheimer Europe.** Horizon Europe Research Programme. 2021. <https://www.alzheimer-europe.org/policy/eu-action/horizon-europe-research-programme-0>.

<sup>2</sup> **Wittenberg, Raphael et al.** Projections of older people with dementia and costs of dementia care in the United Kingdom, 2019-2040. 2019. Care Policy and Evaluation Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science. [https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec\\_report\\_november\\_2019.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2019-11/cpec_report_november_2019.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> **UK Government.** Prime Minister launches 'Dame Barbara Windsor Dementia Mission.' 14 August 2022. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-launches-dame-barbara-windsor-dementia-mission-2#:~:text=Prime%20Minister%20Boris%20Johnson%20launches,million%20a%20year%20by%202024.&text=The%20Prime%20Minister%20has%20launched,the%20late%20Dame%20Barbara%20Windsor>.

### 3. Dementia research

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The National Dementia Mission is a huge step in the right direction for dementia research. Now we need to see these funds committed to and delivered in full, with money spent in the right areas. This will help ensure we understand the causes of dementia, develop effective treatments, improve care, and one day find a cure.

**Research is knowledge. It leads to innovation and empowers people, and it can remove the fear of dementia, too.** In order to truly revolutionise how people with dementia are diagnosed, treated medically, supported, and cared for, we cannot stop now – we must build on past success and use the National Dementia Mission to drive forward progress.

Providing this promised funding will be crucial to the Government's aims to level up the UK and make it a science superpower, as well as to the retention of the best and brightest researchers, including early career researchers. **The APPG on Dementia's 2021 report, *Fuelling the Moonshot*, provides a number of recommendations for how funding can best be spent to cement the UK's status as a world-leader in the field of dementia research.**<sup>4</sup> These include:

- Directing funding towards the development of novel methods for early diagnosis, such as blood and other biomarkers for different types of dementia, with systems prepared to roll out these tests when validated.
- Entrenching the UK's global leadership in biomedical and translational dementia research by confirming appropriate funding for the UK Dementia Research Institute (UKDRI) for the next 10 years.
- Building on the success of the multidisciplinary approach of the Alzheimer's Society's Centres of Excellence model by expanding it and introducing 3 new centres that will focus on the biggest challenges in dementia research.
- Establishing a specific fund to support both clinical and preclinical postdoctoral research positions and talent retention in dementia research.

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation, with a budget of €95.5bn. Its predecessor programme, **Horizon 2020, saw €573m invested in dementia research. Uncertainty around the UK's association agreement with Horizon Europe threatens both to hamper fruitful UK-EU collaborations, and to prevent the National Dementia Mission from reaching its full potential.** Some of the best and brightest researchers may be disincentivised to bring their research to the UK without the confidence that they can draw on Horizon Europe funding in future.

**Investing in dementia research creates huge economic opportunities.** One study, conducted by Oxford Economics in 2020, found that **every £1 of public research and development spending stimulates between £1.96 and £2.34 of private investment.**<sup>5</sup>

**It is vital for dementia research that the UK's association agreement to Horizon Europe is formalised as soon as possible.** This will ensure progress on dementia research in the UK and internationally can continue, with brilliant researchers encouraged to conduct research in the UK now and long into the future.

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<sup>4</sup> APPG on Dementia. *Fuelling the Moonshot: Unleashing the UK's potential through dementia research*. September 2021. [https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/Fuelling\\_Moonshot\\_APPG.pdf](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-09/Fuelling_Moonshot_APPG.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> Department of Business, Energy, and Industrial Strategy. *The relationship between public and private R&D funding*. March 2020. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/897470/relationship-between-public-private-r-and-d-funding.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/897470/relationship-between-public-private-r-and-d-funding.pdf).