

Verslag OECD-EWI workshop
“Personalised nutrition for better health - targeting the microbiome”



Health systems are under increasing pressure due to the increasing incidence of complex chronic diseases. These are often linked to changing demographics and modified dietary patterns. Understanding the functioning of the human microbiome is opening new ways of treating many of such diseases as the microbiome has recently been described as a key biological interface between human genetics, lifestyle and environmental conditions.

Modulating the human microbiome based on personalised diets for personal health needs, is expected to provide new solutions for better health and boost innovation, leading to positive economic outcomes.

On 10 and 11 October the department of EWI organised together with OECD a policy workshop on “Personalised nutrition for better health - targeting the microbiome”. As a follow up of a first workshop organised in May 2016 by the department and OECD on “Microbiome, Diet and Health: Assessing gaps in science and innovation”. The report of the latter workshop can be found [here](#). Based on this report an OECD [Policy paper](#) ‘The Microbiome, diet and health towards a science and innovation agenda’ was published last week.

The aim of the second workshop was to provide a platform for discussion to promote better understanding across relevant scientific, regulatory, and commercial communities to contribute to an innovative sector. Personalised nutrition that target the gut microbiome may be considered a new development towards preventative and precision medicine.

Researchers, innovators, data managers, regulators, representatives of industry, OECD, European Commission and Flemish Government came together to have a fruitful exchange of information and debate. The key messages that came from the workshop were amongst others that despite of the large amount of research and significant progress made, a lot of unknown functions, variables and correlations remain that need further

research. Experts warned for the hype and overselling of the prospects in this field, but at the same time they were convinced that this field will further develop and new applications based on the new insights will be developed. Many challenges towards such new applications were identified, including the big data challenge, the regulatory issues, training and education of health workers and consumers, and even policy was mentioned as a hurdle. Nevertheless, the overall conclusion was that it is worth tackling these barriers to realise the promised potential. Outcomes of the workshop will serve as input for a workshop report.

The presentations of the workshop are available on the website:

<http://www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/evenementen/personalised-nutrition-better-health-targeting-microbiome>