

The European Brain Council's Weekly External Environment Update

Week of 30th January 2012

Quote of the week

"If we can't boost the number of scientists working on dementia, then we will fail the 820,000 living with dementia today, and we will be powerless to avert the looming increases in prevalence."

Rebecca Wood, chief executive of Alzheimer's Research UK, commenting on the charity's call on the government to commit to a national dementia research strategy, see articles of interest for further details

Agenda Watch

- i) On Tuesday 7th February, the Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption is organising a Public Hearing on **Partnering on Research and Innovation on the example of the pilot partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing**. Click [here](#) for further information

Institution Watch

- i) Click [here](#) to access the summary conclusions of the 12th meeting of the Strategic Forum for International S&T Cooperation (SFIC), held in Brussels on 16th December 2011
- ii) On Tuesday 24th January, The European Parliament's intergroup on Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity and the MEPs Against Cancer held a joint meeting on **Active ageing and cancer prevention**
- iii) Between February 24th and 25th, the European Commission is hosting a conference entitled [Towards active ageing at home](#) in Barcelona

Key updates this week

Joint debate on Horizon 2020

On January 25th, the ITRE committee held a joint debate on Horizon 2020. Amongst the contributions made, Teresa Riera Maddurell (S&D, ES), endorsed the approach of Horizon 2020 to cover the whole of the innovation chain from basic research to the market. However, she questioned how the system of cohesion funding would work, in light of member states that had not previously been able to participate much in the research framework programme, being able to access this.

Maddurell also highlighted concerns surrounding the budget division, stating that the budget for the Marie Curie programme, for example, is much less than that for the EIT.

In response to these points, Robert-Jan Smits, Deputy Director General of the Joint Research Council (JRC), stated that Ireland and Spain had used the structural funds intelligently to build capacity and are now participating well in the FP. As examples of best practice, he continued, this can be repeated elsewhere. In response to Madurell's point about budget division, Smits stated that if simplification is to be achieved, there must be one funding rate for all - there will inevitably be winners and losers, but the rules need to be fair.

Maria da Graça Carvalho (EPP, PT) was pleased with the separation of excellence and capacity building, but stated that a bridge needs to be built between Horizon 2020 and the structural funds, such as collaboration between large industrial concerns and SMEs. She also highlighted that Horizon 2020 should not just be a funding programme, but also provide structure in important fields such as health research.

Although there was no direct response to Carvalho's point on collaboration, Smits stated that the Innovation Partnerships are not an instrument but a forum to help define research objectives. Click [here](#) to view the meeting documents.

ERC support in Europe

Click [here](#) to view the 294 top level senior researchers selected to receive funding under the European Research Council's (ERC) fourth competition for its coveted Advanced Grants.

Study finds link between molecular signature and Alzheimer's

Scientists in Finland, funded in part by the PREDICTAD ('From patient data to personalised healthcare in Alzheimer's disease') project, have discovered how a biochemical signature can potentially predict progression to Alzheimer's disease.

Led by Professor Matej Oresic, the VTT Technical Research Centre scientists say it is possible to use a simple biochemical assay from a serum sample months or even years before initial symptoms of Alzheimer's emerge, to analyse this indicator. Using this type of assay in a medical setting helps doctors perform neurocognitive assessments, and it can also be applied in identifying patients who are at increased risk of suffering from this disease, and who need further comprehensive follow-up.

Investigating the molecular changes and processes that define MCI patients at risk of developing Alzheimer's was high on the researchers' agenda. They used metabolomics, a high-throughput method for detecting small metabolites, to generate profiles of the serum metabolites linked to the progression to Alzheimer's. They identified which patients diagnosed with MCI at baseline later

progressed to Alzheimer's. They also pinpointed the molecular signature able to identify such patients at baseline.

The study, published in the journal *Translational Psychiatry*, could lead to the development of methods for early disease detection.

Living well with dementia

Ten projects, led by community based organisations from eight European countries, have received the 2012 European Foundations' Initiative on Dementia (EFID) Awards. Click [here](#) to view the winners.

Articles of interest

- ✓ *Guardian online*, Charity calls for dementia research strategy

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/healthcare-network/2012/jan/25/dementia-research-national-strategy?newsfeed=true>

- ✓ *BusinessWeek*, Dementia's First Signs Appear Long Before Old Age, Study Finds

<http://www.businessweek.com/news/2012-01-10/dementia-s-first-signs-appear-long-before-old-age-study-finds.html>

Dates for your diary

2012 Meeting Schedule:

Board Meetings (BM), Telephone Conferences (TC) and Industry Board Meetings (IBM)

Day	Date &Month	Type of Meeting
Wednesday	22 February	Board Meeting (BM)1
Thursday	23 February	Industrial Board Meeting (IBM)1
Thursday	31 May	BM2
Friday	1 June	IBM2
Thursday	13 September	Annual General Meeting & BM3
Friday	14 September	IBM3
Thursday	6 December	BM4

Scientific Society Conferences

Conference	Dates	Location
EPA	3 – 6 March 2012	Prague
FENS	14 – 18 July, 2012	Barcelona
EFNS	8 – 11 September, 2012	Stockholm
ECNP	13 – 17 October, 2012	Vienna
EANS	24 – 27 October, 2012	Bratislava