

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



In a welcome contribution to greater transparency, the European Commission has recently started to publish summaries of the brain research funded by the Framework Programmes (FP) for research and technological development. The document currently available on the Cordis website (ftp://ftp.cordis.europa.eu/pub/fp7/docs/brain-research-eu-funding_en.pdf) provides the names, abstracts and funding status of all brain-related projects in FP6 and in the first two calls of FP7.

The next version of the document, to be published this month, will include the third call of FP7, in which brain research received substantial amounts of funding. We now know that the EC has invested €381 million on brain research in the first three calls of FP7, representing 21% of the health budget committed so far, compared with €260 million in the whole of FP6, which accounted for only 10% of the health budget. A further €24m of FP7 funding has been allocated to brain research-related projects in the first call of the Innovative Medicines Initiative, a public-private partnership between the EC and the pharmaceutical industry. This dramatic improvement is testimony to the growing awareness among policymakers of the importance of brain health to European citizens, and the European Brain Council is pleased to have played its part in bringing it about.

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MEETING THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

WITH POLAND SET TO TAKE OVER THE PRESIDENCY OF THE EUROPEAN UNION COUNCIL IN JULY 2011, THE TIMING SEEMED RIGHT FOR THE EBC TO OPEN UP A DIALOGUE WITH THE RECENTLY APPOINTED PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT, JERZY BUZEK, TO DISCUSS ITS GOALS AND HOW THEY MIGHT COINCIDE WITH THOSE OF THE POLISH PRESIDENCY.

On 24 September, therefore, the EBC's President, Executive Director and Project Manager, Julien Mendlewicz, Ian Ragan and Tadeusz Hawrot respectively, met Professor Buzek and Eschel Alpermann, who heads the parliament's Internal Policy and Legislative Affairs Team. Also present at the meeting in Brussels were Grzegorz Opała, head of the Polish Brain Council, and Jan Krzysztof Frackowiak, who directs the Polish Academy of Sciences in Brussels.

Professor Buzek supported the idea of including brain research and brain diseases on the Polish presidential agenda, perhaps by linking these to the challenge of Europe's ageing population, and there was a good discussion of various ways in which this could be realised, both in Poland and in Brussels. The idea was mooted of holding the EBC's annual European Brain Policy Forum in Poland in 2011, on an age-related brain disease, and of the EBC organising

this jointly with the Polish Brain Council and with Hungary, which will also hold the EU Presidency in 2011.

Professor Buzek and Mr Alpermann were extremely helpful in advising us on the procedure to be followed to launch a European Year of the Brain. This would represent the culmination of the EBC's campaign to raise awareness of brain diseases in Europe, and we asked for Professor Buzek's help in keeping this in the minds of Members of the European Parliament, as planning begins for the 8th Framework Programme.

Professor Buzek has been a long-term supporter of the EBC and it was therefore with great pleasure that we were able to congratulate him on his new appointment and to offer him Honorary Membership of the EBC in recognition of his help. ■

Ian Ragan
Executive Director, EBC

*From left to right:
Ian Ragan, Jerzy Buzek,
Julien Mendlewicz,
Grzegorz Opała, Tadeusz
Hawrot, Jan Krzysztof
Frackowiak*



To ensure that this promising trend continues, the EBC is undertaking a revision of the Consensus Document on European Brain Research (see EBC website), which has been used extensively by the EC's Research Directorate-General in its selection of topics for FP7 funding. A longer-term project will be to expand and update the Cost of Disorders of the Brain in Europe study (see EBC website) to include another six major diseases in addition to the existing twelve. This major undertaking will take two years but we hope that the new figures will be sufficiently impressive to have a real impact on the funding priorities of the European Member States and of the EU via FP8.

In July, the Swedish Presidency hosted a conference which resulted in the Lund Declaration. This called on European institutions and Member States to cooperate to meet the grand challenges of our time, and to rethink the existing research structures in Europe. One of the grand challenges the conference identified was Europe's ageing society, or rather the quality of life of its elderly citizens: their independence, capacity for active participation in society, enjoyment of life and dignity.

Since these qualities of life depend on a healthy brain, and since many of the brain diseases related to old age remain incurable, the grand challenge posed by an ageing society is, in fact, the maintenance of brain health. Hence the EBC sees the Lund Declaration as a renewed call to arms, and a fresh incentive for securing for brain research the resources it deserves. ■

Julien Mendlewicz
President, EBC

THE EBC MEETS ITS NATIONAL COUNTERPARTS

OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS, THE NUMBER OF NATIONAL ACTION GROUPS (NAGs) AND NATIONAL BRAIN COUNCILS (NBCs) HAS GROWN IMPRESSIVELY AND THERE ARE NOW 17 SUCH ORGANISATIONS IN EUROPE. FIFTEEN OF THOSE WERE REPRESENTED AT A MEETING IN BRUSSELS ON 25 SEPTEMBER, WHERE THE MAIN ITEM OF DISCUSSION WAS THE CREATION OF A NETWORK OF NAGs AND NBCs.



Many of these organisations are at early and informal stages of their development, so it was agreed that the network should also be an informal organisation, to avoid too much bureaucracy. The delegates supported a motion to elect representatives of the network as observers to the EBC Board, thus enabling the national organisations to contribute more effectively to EBC activities. Roland Pochet and Jure Bon, of the Belgian and Slovenian Brain Councils respectively, were duly elected to that role.

Ian Ragan of the EBC emphasised how important the European Member States, as embodied by these nascent organisations, are to the achievement of the EBC's goals. He also said that linking the EBC's campaigns to the rotating EU Presidency (see previous story) was an effective way of gaining political attention, although it required lengthy groundwork. The delegates in turn described the activities they are undertaking in their

own countries to raise awareness of brain research and brain diseases, and highlighted common problems such as lack of funding. Tadeusz Hawrot, the EBC's Project Manager, introduced his guide to creating national organisations, which is available on the EBC website.

Among the joint activities proposed between the EBC and the national organisations was the 2010 European Brain Policy Forum, which will be organised jointly by the EBC and the Spanish Brain Council (see next story). Another idea that was supported enthusiastically by delegates, was that each NAG or NBC would invite two MEPs from its country to attend a lunch at the European Parliament, which will be organised to mark the launch of the revised Consensus Document on Brain Research. ■

Ian Ragan
Executive Director, EBC



Roland Pochet is a professor of cell biology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. His scientific fields are cell biology and neurosciences. He is the General Secretary of the European Calcium Society and of the Belgian Brain Council.



Jure Bon is the Secretary of the Slovenian Brain Council. He works as a psychiatrist in the Psychiatric Hospital Begunje and in the Division of Neurology, University Medical Centre, Ljubljana. He also serves as Treasurer for the Slovenian Psychiatric Association and is a past member of the Executive Board of the Slovenian Neuroscience Association.



EBC MEETS ITS INDUSTRIAL PARTNERS

THE NINTH BIENNIAL MEETING OF THE EBC AND ITS INDUSTRIAL PARTNERS TOOK PLACE AT THE OFFICES OF SERVIER BENELUX IN BRUSSELS AND WAS VERY WELL ATTENDED, WITH 15 DELEGATES FROM 14 COMPANIES.



SPAIN TO HOST EBPF 2010

The foundation of the Spanish Brain Council (SBC) in July this year represented an important milestone since it was the first National Action Group established under the auspices of the EBC to transform itself into a formal legal body, in the form of a brain council.

In 2010, the SBC will pass another milestone when it takes on the major task of organising the European Brain Policy Forum (EBPF), jointly with the EBC. The theme of the forum will be schizophrenia and the European society, and it will be held over 23-24 February 2010. For the first time in its three-year history, it will not take place in Brussels, but in Madrid, the capital of the country that will hold the EU Presidency at the time.

The EBC hopes that linking the forum with the rotating EU Presidency will raise the profile of brain diseases both in the host country and among policymakers in Brussels. If the strategy is successful, we will explore future collaboration with Poland and Hungary, holders of the Presidency in 2011.

Details of EBPF 2010 are available on both the SBC and EBC websites and registration has just opened at the former: www.spanishbraincouncil.org. In the meantime, the EBC wishes SBC President Julio Bobes and all the members of the SBC Board every success for the future. We hope that other NAGs will follow Spain's strong lead. ■

Ian Ragan
Executive Director, EBC



The 9th meeting of the EBC and its industrial partners, Brussels, October 2009

The encouraging news about the increased funding of brain research in the first three calls of the 7th Framework Programme arrived just at the right time to show our industry partners the fruits of our strategy. They were, in turn, very supportive of our major initiatives for 2010 and expressed interest in helping us with the further development of National Action Groups and National Brain Councils, a key pillar of our strategy.

As always, our industrial partners were full of good ideas, and the EBC will adopt their suggestion to launch a News Alert service that will provide its members and supporters with frequent updates about its activities.

We will also provide a one-page summary of the EBC's mission, successes and goals, and a short annual report. These documents will also be published on our website.

The EBC was particularly pleased to welcome Ellen Strahlman, Chief Medical Officer at GlaxoSmithKline, who was attending her first meeting with the EBC. We would like to thank David Neale of Medtronic for his unflagging support as industry representative to the EBC Board, and to welcome his successor, Reinhard Krickl, also of Medtronic. Last but not least, we would like to thank Servier Benelux for generously offering to host the meeting. ■

Ian Ragan
Executive Director, EBC

IN BRIEF

EPA GOES CORPORATE

The European Psychiatric Association (EPA), the largest international association of psychiatrists in Europe, has decided to offer a new category of membership, corporate membership, while retaining the category of individual membership. Its goal in doing so is to increase and reinforce its cooperation with national and international psychiatric associations in Europe. Eleven organisations have already declared their intent to join the EPA as Corporate Members, and others who are interested in doing so, or who would like more information about the project, are invited to contact EPA Administrator Clarisse Altes-Sroussi at: clarisse.altes@europsy.net



EFNS EUROPEAN FEDERATION OF NEUROLOGICAL SOCIETIES

LAST CALL

The 31 December 2009 deadline for applications for the European Federation of Neurological Societies' 2010 Fellowships is fast approaching. The EFNS is offering up to eight scientific and four educational fellowships to support young European neurologists in carrying out research projects in clinical and basic neurology. For more information and application forms, please visit: <https://www.efns.org/EFNS-Fellowship-Programme.283.0.html>

NEWS FROM ESTONIA AND SWEDEN

AFTER THE SUMMER BREAK, THE EBC'S CAMPAIGN TO ESTABLISH NEW NATIONAL ACTION GROUPS (NAGs) AND NATIONAL BRAIN COUNCILS (NBCs) CONTINUED WITH MEETINGS IN ESTONIA AND SWEDEN.



The first meeting of the Swedish National Action Group, Stockholm, November 2009. From left to right: Lars Farde, Ian Ragan, Bengt Winblad, Susanna Lindvall, Aleksander Mathé, Sven Ove Ögren, Tadeusz Hawrot, Torgny Svensson, Bo Ingemarsson

In Tartu, Estonia, representatives of neuroscience, neurosurgery, neurology, psychiatry and patient organisations met on 17 September and welcomed the idea of creating an Estonian Action Group. Toomas Asser, President of the Baltic Neurosurgical Association, volunteered to be the group's spokesman. The participants discussed the Estonian situation with respect to brain diseases, noting the high quality of some areas of neuroscience research and the need for improvement in other areas, such as the care of psychiatric inpatients. The EBC would like to thank Janika Kõrv of the University of Tartu for her help in organising the meeting.

At the beginning of November, the EBC's Ian Ragan and Tadeusz Hawrot attended a kick-off meeting of the Swedish NAG at the Swedish Medical Association's headquarters in Stockholm. Representatives

from psychiatry, basic research, industry and patient groups agreed on three national issues that a Swedish NAG should address: the fragmentation in both basic research and clinical practice in Sweden; the relative neglect of brain diseases in young people; and a need to return to the "traditional" disciplines of physiology and pharmacology in tackling brain disease. The EBC is very grateful to Aleksander Mathé of the Karolinska Institute for organising the meeting, and to AstraZeneca for its generous financial support. Professor Mathé was chosen as the coordinator of the Swedish NAG.

Detailed reports of both meetings are available on the EBC website. ■■

*Ian Ragan
Executive Director, EBC*

CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

**2nd BID Workshop:
Brains in Dialogue
on Genetic Testing**
Trieste, Italy
28-29 January 2010
www.neuromedia.eu/Sections.aspx?section=55.280

**18th European
Congress of Psychiatry**
Munich, Germany
27 February-2 March 2010
www.europsy.net/

**European College
of Neuropsychopharmacology
Consultation Meeting:
The Future of the
Placebo in Clinical
Trials in Brain Diseases**
Nice, France
7-9 March 2010
www.ecnp.eu

**European Association
of Neurosurgical
Societies Annual
Meeting**
Groningen,
The Netherlands
25-27 March 2010
www2.kenes.com/eans/Pages/home.aspx

**European Federation
of Neurological
Societies Academy**
13-16 May 2010
Staré Splyav,
Czech Republic
www.efns.org/EFNS-Academy-2010.255.0.html

**3rd International
Congress on
Neuropathic Pain**
Athens, Greece
27-30 May 2010
www.kenes.com/neuropathic

**7th FENS Forum
of European
Neuroscience**
Amsterdam,
The Netherlands
3-7 July 2010
<http://fens2010.neurosciences.asso.fr/>