

## EBC – Annual General Meeting 2009

Report of Activities 2008 - 2009

### European Commission

#### DG Research:

In **December 2008** three applications in which EBC is a partner were submitted for funding in the 3<sup>rd</sup> call of Framework 7, one of which was successful. The CUBE application (<http://www.europeanbraincouncil.org/projects/CUBE.htm>) was the highest ranked of those submitted but it did not meet the threshold for funding. We are instead pursuing an update and expansion of the existing Cost Document and have applied to Lundbeck for 850.000 Euros for this study. Lundbeck generously made a grant of 600.000 Euros available for the revision of the CDBE study and additional funding is being sought.

The PATCOST application on healthcare outcomes and cost benefits, in which EBC was a partner, was also unsuccessful. However, the PARADISE application on psycho-social aspects of brain disorders was funded and negotiations and contracts are now effectively concluded for a start in January 2010. .

**January 2009** it was decided that EBC in co-operation with EFNA would work towards a “Year of the Brain” and we thank Medtronic for its interest and support of this idea. Contacts were made with Janez Potocnik, Commissioner for Research and his cabinet members to explore the possibilities for this initiative. There is no chance to have such a Year until 2013 at the earliest, but one possibility is to join with the proposed European Year of Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity being proposed for 2012.

In **July 2009**, the fourth Call of FP7 was published for proposals to be selected in 2010. It aims to ensure continuity with the previous work programme and to develop new activities within budgetary constraints. The estimated total budget allocation for the work programme 2010 is EUR 651 500 000 drawing from the 2010 budget.

In 2010, the main focus will be on the following three key challenges: *Providing tools for translational research*, *Structuring translational research in the field of cancer* and *Structuring translational research in the field of neurodegenerative diseases*. The approach proposed by the EC to undertake the latter is through Joint Programming and €2m have been allocated to fund a suitable proposal.

Officers of the EBC also met the new Health Director in DG Research, Dr Ruxandra Draghia-Akli to impress on her the importance of brain research.

The likelihood of major changes in resource allocation in the remaining years of FP7 is small and will depend on the preferences of the new Commissioner for Research when he/she is appointed. Nevertheless the EBC will maintain its pressure on the EC and engage other stakeholders to ensure that the progress we have made in FP7 so far is maintained. The EC has committed over €300m to brain research in the first three calls of FP7, more than in the whole of FP6 and more than to cancer research.

#### DG SANCO

Several specific Working Groups and Task Forces have been set up by DG SANCO.

In **November 2008** EBC took part in the meeting of the Task Force dedicated to Rare Diseases. The report of the meeting can be found at:

<http://www.europeanbraincouncil.org/publications/neuropoliticalBibliography.htm>

The application submitted to DG SANCO for funding of the annual European Brain Policy Fora was not successful.

## European Parliament

**STOA** – Science Technology Options Assessment: In **December 2008** EBC was officially invited to present its work at the European Parliament in Strasbourg where the STOA meeting took place. Philippe Busquin, MEP for Belgium and Chair of the STOA Panel, invited EBC to deliver an “Expert Presentation”. The lecture addressed the topic “The importance of research for a better quality of life”.

More on STOA can be found at [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/stoa/default_en.htm)

In order to ensure the active involvement of MEPs in European and national policy, visits are paid to MEPs. The June 2009 elections slowed down the work considerably as many of the members of the European Parliament have been replaced.

One of the two committees that are of major interest to the work of EBC is the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy (**ITRE**). This Committee is key to decisions related to research funding. In June 2009 the committee was re-organised and the newly elected members to the committee can be found at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/homeCom.do?language=EN&body=ITRE> and  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/membersCom.do?language=EN&body=ITRE>

In **February 2009** EBC was invited to present at the Public Hearing on Mental Health of the ITRE Committee at the European Parliament in Brussels.

Also the Environment, Public Health and Safety Committee (**ENVI**) is of importance to the work of EBC. More on ENVI can be found at;

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/homeCom.do?language=EN&body=ENVI> and  
<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/activities/committees/membersCom.do?language=EN&body=ENVI>

## National Brain Councils (NBC) and National Action Groups (NAG).

It is with pleasure that we report on the growing number of NBCs and NAGs.

Start up meetings for NBC's were held in the Czech Republic (October 2008), France (February 2009) and Estonia (September 2009). A meeting will be held in Sweden in November.

In February 2009 a second Annual Meeting of NBCs and NAGs took place. It was agreed to set up an alliance of national brain councils and national action groups allowing fast spreading of news and the enhancement of joint activities at the European as well as on the national level. The meeting was attended by delegates from 12 countries.

The planning meeting for the Alliance took place in Brussels on September 25<sup>th</sup>. Delegates from 15 countries participated in the planning meeting and elected two delegates to represent the group on the EBC Board. Prof. Roland Pochet (Belgian Brain Council) and Prof. Jure Bon (Slovenian Brain Council) will attend the EBC Board meetings on behalf of all NAGs and NBCs.

The NBCs and NAGs have been very active in the dissemination and translation of national versions of the EBC publications. Executive summaries of the major publications have been translated in various EU languages and are available for use on the EBC website in: English, French, German, Greek, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Slovakian, Slovenian, Spanish, Hungarian, Lithuanian, Danish, Estonian, Finnish and Swedish.

These councils are very important with regard to the **dissemination** at the national level of all EBC publications and work. The interaction with the **national policy makers**, who then are elected to

European positions, closes the loop of interactions at the national/European level. For this reason, we are focusing on those countries soon to hold the EU Presidency and whose priorities are still to be decided. The existence of a NAG or NBC provides a means of attracting interest in Brussels and the EBC has had meetings with the Permanent Representations of France, Czech Republic, Spain, Sweden, Hungary and Poland this year. Through the support of the Polish NAG, the Polish Permanent Representation and the Polish Science Agency, the EBC was able to gain the support of the President of the European Parliament, Jerzy Buzek, for putting the brain as one of the priorities for the Polish Presidency in 2011.

A position paper on EBC membership and work with NBCs has been written and can be found at: [http://www.europeanbraincouncil.org/pdfs/Publications\\_/EBC%20-%20Position%20Paper%20on%20member%20organisations.pdf](http://www.europeanbraincouncil.org/pdfs/Publications_/EBC%20-%20Position%20Paper%20on%20member%20organisations.pdf)

## Members

**EUFAMI** – European Federation of Associations of Families of People with Mental Illness and **ESN** (European Societies of Neuropsychology) obtained free of charge observer-status for one year, but we report with regret that EFIC (European Federation of IASP Chapters) has not renewed its membership.

A successful meeting of the industry partners was held in January at the offices of Eli Lilly in Brussels and a further meeting is planned in late October at Servier. The EBCs finances continue to depend on industry support to a major extent and like all other organizations we have been affected by the global economic situation as well as restructuring within the pharmaceutical sector.

## Participation in major meetings

It is with great pleasure that EBC took part in several meetings of its member associations.

Special sessions, workshops and discussion groups took place at the annual meetings of EPA – European Psychiatric Association, FENS – Federation of European Neuroscience Societies, EHA – European Headache Alliance European and the Migraine Day of Action. EBC also took part in the High-level Conference organised by DG SANCO.

## European Brain Policy Forum

Beginning in 2008 the EBC launched a series of **Annual Multidisciplinary Forums** designed to involve all those with a stake in brain research in the building of a European research strategy towards tackling the major brain diseases. A major goal of each BPF will be to raise awareness of the research and resource requirements for making further progress in understanding that disease. Each multidisciplinary forum will focus on one major disease and in particular, neglected areas of that disease.

The **2009** EBPF addressed **Depression and the European Society**. The EBPF took place at one of Brussels' historical institutions the Académie des Sciences. The 2009 EBPF saw the participation of 140 delegates from most of the 29 European countries.

The full report of the 2<sup>nd</sup> EBPF can be found at:

<http://www.europeanbraincouncil.org/pdfs/EBPF/2009/EBPF%202009%20Report%20of%20the%20forum.pdf>

The 2010 EBPF is being organised in Madrid with the Spanish Brain Council. The subject will be Schizophrenia and the European Society.

## Position Papers

In the overall interest of its member societies, EBC decided to become a member of the following associations:

European Alliance for Access to Safe Medicines – EAASM ([www.eaasm.eu/](http://www.eaasm.eu/)) and the ,European Coalition for Biomedical Research, ECBR ([www.ecbr.eu](http://www.ecbr.eu))

In order to sustain the work of these organizations, position papers subscribed by all the EBC member societies have been written and posted on the website. These can be found on the “publications” page of the website.

### **Other Projects**

Revision and update of the 2006 **Consensus Document on Brain Research in Europe**. The publication will be updated and the various chapters re-written. All EBC member societies will be involved in providing names of experts.

**Brussels Office:** EBC’s office has been refurbished and four working stations as well as a meeting room are now available. Mr. Tadeusz Hawrot (Poland) joined the EBC staff in June 2009.

Evelyn Sipido / Ian Ragan