

Executive Director's report to the EBC GA-October 2011

This report covers the year to October 2011

Project work

Consensus Document

The Consensus document was published in March 2011 in the European Journal of Neuroscience following collaboration with several hundred scientists across Europe. It was extremely well received by the European Commission and a range of other stakeholders. The document will be instrumental in helping set the framework for the remainder of FP7 and FP8. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1460-9568.2010.07596.x/pdf>

Significant aspects of the document will be used within the Polish Presidency meeting

All MEPs have received a copy.

New and Updated Costs Document

The new costs study is complete (based on 2010 data) and will be published in early October in the ECNP journal European Neuropsychopharmacology. It is much awaited by the European Commission who will use it as part of the justification for FP8 calls and for supporting EYOB.

A major launch event will be held in the European Parliament on October 4th with significant attendance from MEPs and Commission officials and we are planning for considerable media coverage. Please mark the date in your diary and attend if possible. The day before October the 4th there will be a meeting of the NBCs and the day after October the 5th is the Board meeting and General Assembly.

This data is key to our advocacy efforts over the coming months and years. Information packs, fact sheets, press releases and so on will be made broadly available for ongoing use by members and interested parties.

A major media plan has been developed and is currently being implemented under embargo to ensure we maximise press coverage of the data.

National Brain Councils (NBCs)

Nearly 25 countries have formed or are in the process of forming National Brain Councils and National Action Groups which are independent but aligned with the main goals of the EBC. In the past year we have initiated NAGs or NBCs in Israel, Switzerland, Finland, Romania and Bulgaria. Discussions with Latvia and one of the potentially new EU members Croatia, scheduled to join the EU in 2013 will be held next.

The full network of NBC/NAGs will meet in Brussels on the 3rd October. Discussion will mainly focus on exchange of good practice, involvement in the European Year of the Brain and the study “Cost of Disorders of the Brain in Europe”. NBC/NAGs representatives will attend the Parliamentary meeting and beforehand they will invite MEPs from their respective countries to the meeting in the expectation of raising MEP attendance over that normally seen at meetings such as this.

European Year of the Brain 2014 (EYOB)

Further slow progress is being made towards the European Year of the Brain 2014. We have been told verbally that this will be made the official year for 2014 and the file is with President Barroso but formal written approval by the Commission has not yet been received. The ‘Amazing Brain’ book has been particularly well received and we have produced a film to show to potential funders of the year, which will be shown at the Board meeting. A copy of the film will also be given to all European Commissioners together with a clear justification for the EYOB.

We hope to have endorsement from the Commission in the next month or so, before a communication to the European Parliament and European Council later in the year. This then sets in motion the decision making process leading to budget and so on but would enable us to look for corporate sponsors and make our plans with the European Commission and nationally with National Implementation bodies.

A critical component of bringing the European Year to life will be its’ outreach programme through exhibits, its’ school and universities programme and digital and social media campaigns. All are being planned, the funding is being sought, initially to support the project through until the end of 2012, when the larger corporate sponsorship should become active. A series of meetings will be held with potential funders of the seed money over the next few weeks, these include with trusts and foundations, industry and high net worth individuals who have an interest in brain disorders.

PARADISE project

PARADISE – Psychosocial Factors Relevant to Brain Disorders in Europe is a Coordination Action financed by the EC within the FP7. EBC is responsible for creating and maintaining project website, dissemination activities and organizing stakeholders’ conference at the end of the project.

The next project meeting is in Geneva on September 23, 2011 with invited experts to discuss a harmonized protocol for documenting psychosocial difficulties. The next annual meeting will be on the 16th November 2011 in Milan.

FP7/8

A number of proposals are being made for the Health 2012 initiative, submission date 4th October. These are part of a two stage process.

For any of you who are not familiar with the programmes please follow this link for more information http://ec.europa.eu/research/fp7/index_en.cfm

We are applying to be part of several consortiums working in areas where we can contribute significantly, further details will be provided if we reach the second stage of the process.

The Consensus document was extremely well received by the Commission and we have had multiple discussions with them about utilizing this during the upcoming programmes. This will further be helped when we publish the results of the new Costs study.

Plans are already underway for FP8 within the Commission and we will continue to work with them to make sure that the themes chosen reflect the impact brain disorders have on society and the continued need for increased research to address this need

Meetings

Hungarian Presidency

A highly successful meeting was held in Budapest under the Hungarian Presidency. Organised by Professor Tamas Freund this examined 'Discovery research in neuropsychiatric disorders: depression, anxiety and schizophrenia in focus' and included many EBC speakers and was the only research and development meeting held during the Presidency.

Polish Presidency Meeting

Plans are well advanced for this meeting to be held during the Polish Presidency (July-December 2011). EBC in collaboration with Professor Opala, the Polish Ministry of Health and DG SANCO will hold a Presidency Conference, "Ageing, Stroke and Alzheimer's Disease-finding innovative solutions" on the 18th November 2011 in Warsaw. This will be attended and addressed by European Parliament President Jerzy Buzek, together with representatives of the European Commission and Polish Government. EBC speakers will be amongst the major speakers. A dinner for speakers, key attendees and EBC Board members will be held on the evening of the 17th November.

We are also designating the 18th November as the first European Day of the Brain. Information packs will be prepared and disseminated to all our members, NBCs and NAGs and the media.

Danish Presidency Meeting

We are beginning plans for the Danish Presidency (Jan-June 2012) and hope to hold a Presidency meeting in Copenhagen. Potential themes are under discussion.

Cyprus, Lithuanian and Irish Presidencies

Initial contacts have been made with Cyprus on holding a Presidency Conference during the Cyprus Presidency (July-Dec 2012) and with Ireland for the Irish Presidency (Jan-June 2013) together with the Lithuanian Presidency (July-Dec 2013)

MEP Interest Group on Mental Health

In collaboration with GAMIAN this meeting was held in Brussels on the 22nd September, chaired by three influential MEPs. A series of recommendations will be implemented following the meeting including Parliamentary questions.

EBC day to day activity

Invitations for EBC to participate in Commission led activities/ other stakeholder initiatives is increasing, demonstrating our increasing influence in the EU. Regular interventions/presentations are being made at both national and regional level.

Finance/Membership

We remain in line with our projected budget provided the promised incremental funding is delivered on schedule.

New industry members are St Jude Medical and Vifor, other potential members both industry and European scientific societies that fit with our statutes have been approached and we await various information/final agreement.

A separate organisation set up to deliver the EYOB is being created and ensure that clear lines of responsibility, both fiscal and organizationally are being established. This will ensure that day to day EBC responsibilities continue unencumbered by EYOB activities.

Communications

A weekly environment report has been produced and circulated to all members and feedback on its' usefulness has been good. This will continue to monitor the areas in which we work and key agendas and meetings as well as key publications.

A series of advertisements calling for the European Year of the Brain have been published. The website is undergoing a major overhaul to include a members only section, better availability of resources, slide sets, publications, meetings and so on. This will be rolled out in the coming weeks.

Staff

Tadeusz and Eveline continue to provide me and EBC with invaluable support and I thank them for their excellent contributions

Dr Alastair Benbow

Executive Director
European Brain Council
October 2011