

OUR BRAINS, OUR FUTURE:

THE VALUE OF BRAIN RESEARCH – FROM BASIC TO CLINICAL – TO IMPROVE PATIENT OUTCOMES IN EUROPE

ORGANISED BY THE EUROPEAN BRAIN COUNCIL IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE SPANISH BRAIN COUNCIL AND THE SPANISH NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL (CSIC)

HOSTED BY THE SENATE OF SPAIN IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE SPANISH PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Room Europe – Palacio del Senado, C. Bailén, 3 | Madrid, Spain | 28 November 2023

Introduction

In the framework of the **Spanish presidency of the Council of the European Union**, the [European Brain Council](#) (EBC) will organize an event in the Senate of Spain this coming November 2023.

Among its list of priorities, the healthcare agenda of the Spanish Presidency places a strong emphasis on improving health outcomes and addressing pressing challenges within the European Union, including building towards the creation of a European Health Data Space (EHDS) to improve healthcare policies and research, disease prevention, health promotion, and tackling prevalent health issues, including mental illness.

Across the European Union and beyond, society is facing health-related challenges like never before. This is particularly true for brain disorders, neurological and mental alike, which are widespread, disabling, and difficult to treat. Improving the health and well-being of citizens has become the top priority for many governments and brain health should not be left behind. In fact, it is estimated that up to one billion people worldwide live with a neurological condition and 970 million people around the world were living with a mental health disorder as of 2019, with anxiety and depressive disorders the most common¹. In Europe alone, approximately 60% of the population lives with a neurological condition² and one in six citizens is affected by mental ill-health.

However, although in the last half century, the field of neuroscience and our knowledge of the brain has advanced considerably, many important aspects remain extremely elusive. Clearly, without a substantial increase in efforts and resources to promote fundamental understanding of the mechanisms that generate proper brain function, it will be impossible to design treatments that address the real pandemic of brain health, currently affecting a substantial part of world's population. Moreover, Europe cannot ignore that this field of research holds immense appeal for a growing number of young minds, as the brain is one of the last unexplored frontiers.

The time to act is now and the Spanish Presidency priorities are a first concrete step towards increased awareness and action. Europe must take a central position in the global effort to unravel the mysteries of the brain, both through promoting fundamental scientific research and the practical and clinically beneficial application of the knowledge that basic research generates. Enhancing collaboration in the space can fast track us towards better understanding the brain through basic research, innovation in clinical research and treatment methods and effective outcomes to the benefit of people living with and affected by brain conditions.

¹Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. Global Health Data Exchange (GHDx), (<https://vizhub.healthdata.org/gbd-results/>)

²Deuschl G., Beghi E., Varga T., European Academy of Neurology, FACT SHEET: The burden of neurological diseases on Europe, 2019, <https://bit.ly/3HYmhtL>

The **European Brain Council** and its wide community of members and partners has served as a convener for experts in the brain research area and health space to raise awareness, share best practices, exchange ongoing work, align priorities and advocate for a real change: recognizing and prioritizing urgent intervention on the burden of brain disorders and building towards a brain healthy future for Europe and beyond.

This event will demonstrate just how important this prioritization is. Crucial elements in the complex chain from basic neuroscience to patient improved outcomes will be broken down and explored. Research into the space remains crucial yet underfunded and often misunderstood and neglected, which has a massive impact on the lives of patients. With greater prioritization and overhaul of brain research in Europe, we can foster a personalized approach when developing innovative therapeutic options and better address patient relevant outcomes.

Draft Programme

This event will bring together renowned experts, leading scientists, patient advocates, representatives of industry and political decision-makers. It will take place over one morning and will be divided into four distinct sessions, each addressing key aspects of brain research and brain health and its promising future.

9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30-9:45	Opening Address • Prof. Carlos Closa, Vice-President, Spanish National Research Council • Prof. Suzanne Dickson, President, European Brain Council • Prof. Juan Lerma, Vice-President, European Brain Council
9:45-10:05	Keynote Lecture: <i>The Complexity of the Brain</i> • Prof. Richard Morris, Edinburgh Futures Institute, Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) Past President, Brain Prize Winner 2016
10:05-10:45	Session 1: Healthy body, healthy brain: protecting our most valuable asset The human brain is complex. As the control centre of our body, this organ directly affects every function, ranging from rational thinking, emotions, heartbeat, breathing, food and fluid intake, sleep, etc. A healthy brain is the ultimate prerequisite for quality of life and sustainable well-being. It allows people to thrive: to live in health and in happiness, to power our labour markets and economies, and to build for future generations. Prioritising and supporting the advancement of brain health and brain research should be viewed as an investment into prevention, wellness and optimization, and creating a better future for every citizen of the world. Recognising the importance of the patient perspective on brain health, we begin this event by hearing the voice of people who have lived with a mental or neurological condition, providing insight drawn from their lived experience: • Rosa Montero, Novelist • Asier de la Iglesia, Professional Basketball Player • Dr. Usman Khan, Chair, Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association • Tineke Mollema, Board Member, GAMIAN-Europe
10:45-11:10	Session 2: Understanding the brain – from genes to circuits to behaviour and back The second part of this symposium will focus on scientific advances in understanding the human brain, from exploring genes to understanding brain circuits and their influence on

	behaviour. By supporting basic research and encouraging collaboration between researchers, we can look forward to major breakthroughs in the understanding and treatment of brain diseases, paving the way for new treatments and a better quality of life for all. • <i>Genes, circuits and behaviour, Presentation by Prof. Juan Lerma</i>, Instituto de Neurociencias CSIC-UMH. Vice-President, European Brain Council • <i>A unique coding of memories in the human brain, Presentation by Prof. Rodrigo Quian Quiroga</i>, ICREA Research Professor, Hospital del Mar Research Institute
11:10-11:20	Break
	Session 3: The challenge of addressing patients' needs Moderated by Dr. Usman Khan, Chair, Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association The third part of the conference will be dedicated to the importance of taking patients' needs into account in the research into brain diseases. In doing so, it is crucial to highlight the challenges faced by patients, whether in terms of access to care, stigma or finding solutions adapted to their specific needs. By putting patients at the center of discussions, we contribute to creating a more inclusive and fairer society for all. Keynote Lecture: <i>Personalised and Precision Medicine in patients with Autism Spectrum Disorders (care and research)</i>, Dr. Mara Parellada, Coordinator, AMITEA Programme Keynote Lecture: <i>Technological developments for severe neurological disorders - Focus on neurodegenerative diseases</i>, Prof. José Obeso, Director, Centro Integral de Neurociencias AC (CINAC) Panel discussion featuring: • Dr. Mara Parellada, Coordinator, AMITEA Programme • Prof. Giancarlo Comi, President, European Charcot Foundation • Dr. Paola Zaratini, SSC Co-Chair, PROMS Initiative • Stéphanie Hoffmann-Gendebien, Head & General Manager, Amylyx Pharmaceuticals EMEA • Prof. José Obeso, Director, Centro Integral de Neurociencias AC (CINAC)
11:20-11:30	
11:30-11:40	
11:40-12:20	
12:20-13:00	Session 4: Addressing brain challenges at the EU level Moderated by Frédéric Destrebecq, Executive Director, European Brain Council The final part of this symposium will address the need for policy action at the European Union level to address brain-related challenges. An effective EU brain action plan would coordinate basic and clinical research efforts, share best practices, and mobilise resources to support research, improve brain health care, and promote education and public awareness. By supporting this initiative, EBC and its partners aim to take the lead in promoting innovative policies and effective programs to improve brain health across Europe. Panel discussion featuring:

	• Prof. Suzanne Dickson, President, European Brain Council • Dr. Mara Dierssen, President, Spanish Brain Council • Dr. José Luis Lanciego, President, Pan-European Committee of the International Brain Research Organization (PERC-IBRO) • Cristina Maragall, President, Pasqual Maragall Foundation • Dr. Francisco Colomer Sanmartín, Directorate General for Research Planning, Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation
13:00-13:15	Q&A with the Audience
13:15-13:30	Closing Remarks • His Excellency Mr. Francisco Manuel Fajardo, Fourth Secretary of the Senate's Bureau • Prof. Suzanne Dickson, President, European Brain Council • Prof. Juan Lerma, Vice-President, European Brain Council

Organisers



The [European Brain Council \(EBC\)](#) is a non-profit organisation based in Brussels encompassing scientific societies, patient organizations, professional societies and industry partners. Its main mission is to promote brain health and research with the ultimate goal of improving the lives of the estimated 179 million Europeans living with brain conditions. Aiming to speak with one voice, EBC stands as the platform to foster cooperation between its member organisations and other stakeholders, consistently promoting dialogue between scientists, industry and society.

As the network of key players in the “Brain Area” in Europe, EBC uniquely configured to be the go-to organisation to strengthen ties within the broader community at the European and global levels.

EBC Full Members:



Other Members/Partners include: [Industry](#) | [Associate](#) | [Observers National Brain Council](#)

Co-Organisers



The [Spanish National Research Council](#) (CSIC) is the largest public research organisation in Spain and one of the most important in the European Research Area (ERA), as well as the main player in the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation System (SECTI). Currently, the CSIC is formed by over 13,200 people, distributed between the CSIC Corporate Organisation and the 121 research institutes and three national centres, distributed throughout Spain, as well as an institute in Rome. The CSIC's research activity falls into three core areas, Society, Life and Materia, which cover the vast majority of academic disciplines. The CSIC is represented in the EU by the CSIC Delegation in Brussels.

The [Spanish Brain Council](#) is a Federation of Associations whose objectives are improving the quality of life of people suffering from brain diseases, promoting clinical Research to combat brain diseases and their consequences, promoting better understanding of brain diseases in Spanish society through training, providing information and promoting formative and informative actions against the physical and social barriers that suffer the people who suffer some disease of the brain and reducing the physical and social barriers that affect people with brain afflictions.



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This event is hosted by the Senate of Spain as part of the official calendar of meetings of the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

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Speakers



Prof. Suzanne Dickson

President, European Brain Council

Professor Suzanne L Dickson is a neurobiologist and Professor of Neuroendocrinology at the University of Gothenburg. She graduated with a Ph.D. in Neuroendocrinology from the University of Cambridge in 1993, where she later became Senior Lecturer in Physiology. She is a leading figure in neuroendocrinology and works within many European Union and international organisations and societies to promote research, facilitate grant funding and training of Early Career Scientists. Her research into the neurobiology of appetite aims to unravel neurobiological pathways that respond to orexigenic signals, such as the hormone, ghrelin, and that drive feeding behaviours, not only food intake but also food choice, food anticipation, food reward and food motivation. This work involves mostly preclinical studies and includes behavioural tasks, viral vector mapping, chemogenetics and RNAscope. She is Secretary and Executive Board member of the European College for Neuropsychopharmacology, and also chairs ECNP's Workshop for Early Career Scientists in Europe. She also is founder and co-chair of ECNP's nutrition network and EBRA's BRAINFOOD cluster.



Prof. Juan Lerma

Vice-President, European Brain Council

Prof. Juan Lerma is a Professor at the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC). His research is related to the molecular basis of neuronal communication, specifically the mechanisms used by glutamate and its receptors in synaptic transmission and plasticity to orchestrate fundamental physiological activities and trigger brain diseases when they are deregulated. He has been Director of the Institute of Neurosciences CSIC-UMH; President of the Spanish Society of Neuroscience (SENC); President of the Pan-European Regional Committee of the International Brain Research Organisation (IBRO). Currently he is Editor-in-Chief of Neuroscience, Director of the Cajal International Neuroscience Centre (CINC-CSIC), Vicepresident of the European Brain Council and Councillor of the Society for Neuroscience (USA).



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Frédéric Destrebecq

Executive Director, European Brain Council

Frédéric Destrebecq is the Executive Director of the European Brain Council since October 2014. In this capacity, he is responsible for providing strategic direction and leadership while managing the day to day operations of EBC and its ongoing relationships with its member associations and other stakeholders, as well as representing the organisation in various European and national forums.

Fred holds a Master Degree in Political Science and International Relations from the Université Catholique de Louvain (Belgium). He also studied at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques (Paris) and University of Wales College (Cardiff), in the framework of the former EU Socrates exchange programme. Prior to EBC, Fred served the European Union of Medical Specialists (UEMS) as Chief Executive Officer, and previously as Director for European Affairs.



Prof. Richard Morris

Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) Past President, Brain Prize Winner 2016

Richard Morris is Professor of Neuroscience at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland and the Caro Almela Catedrático at the Instituto de Neurociencias in Alicante. He studied Natural Sciences at the University of Cambridge and did his D.Phil at the University of Sussex. His early career included a period helping to build an exhibition at the Natural History Museum and working for BBC Television, both in London, before taking up a Lectureship in Scotland. He remains active in university teaching, with his longstanding research interest being the neurobiology of cognition, particularly the role synaptic plasticity in memory formation, and how disorders in plasticity contribute to neurological disease. Beyond the lab, he set up Edinburgh Neuroscience in 2005 jointly with the clinical neurologist Charles Warlow which they directed together for its first 5 years, now one of the largest groups of neuroscientists in the United Kingdom. Outside Edinburgh, he served, by secondment, as Head of Neuroscience and Mental Health at the Wellcome Trust from 2007 to 2010, where he helped to set up the new Sainsbury-Wellcome Centre for Neural Circuits and Behaviour at UCL and the research charity MQ:Transforming Mental Health. He was a co-recipient with two prominent physiologists, Tim Bliss and Graham Collingridge, of the The Brain Prize (Lundbeck Foundation, Copenhagen), sometimes considered the "noble Prize" in neuroscience. He is an elected Fellow of the Royal Society in 1997, the Academy of Medical Sciences (1999), the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters (2007) and of the National Academy of Sciences (USA, 2020). He was appointed a Commander of the British Empire (CBE) by the Queen in 2007. He lives in Chinchilla de Montearagón in Castilla-La-Mancha.



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Rosa Montero

Novelist

Rosa Montero was born in Madrid (Spain).

She holds a degree in Journalism from the Official School of Journalism in Madrid, and she studied psychology at the Complutense University of Madrid.

She has worked as a journalist since 1970 in television, newspapers, and magazines. Since 1977 she has worked in exclusivity for El País, Spain's best-selling newspaper. She has served as special correspondent for El País in various countries (India, Australia, USA, Latin America, etc.) and as editor-in-chief of the Sunday Magazine of El País from 1981 to 1982. Currently her journalism appears regularly in El País and in several major Latin American newspapers and magazines.

She published her first novel, *La crónica del desamor*, in 1979. Since then, she has published 16 novels, two collections of biographies, three interview compilations, one short story collection, and several books for children. Her books have been translated into more than twenty languages. Her most recent novels are *El peligro de estar cuerda* (2022) and *La desconocida*, a short novel written with Olivier Truc (2023).

Some of the many awards she has won for her writing are:

- National Prize for Journalism, 1980
- Primavera Prize for best novel for *La Hija del Canibal*, 1997
- Qué Leer Prize for best book of the year for *La loca de la casa*, 2003
- Grinzane Cavour Prize for best foreign book published in Italy for *La loca de la casa*, 2004
- Qué Leer Prize for best book of the year for *Historia del rey transparente*, 2006
- Cognac European Literature Festival Readers' Prize (France) for *Instrucciones para salvar el mundo*, 2011
- Madrid Critics' Prize for *La ridícula idea de no volver a verte*, 2014

She has been a visiting professor in the United States at both Wellesley College (Boston), and the University of Virginia. She has participated in hundreds of symposiums and conferences all over the world. She has received an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Puerto Rico.

In 2017, she was awarded the prestigious National Prize for Spanish Literature for career achievement.

In 2018, she was appointed Honorary Professor of Humanities at the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and she is an Honorary Member of the University of Málaga.

In 2019, a lecture hall was named in her honor in the School of Journalism at the Miguel Hernandez University of Elche (Alicante, Spain).

(Translation by Lisa Sagrati)



Speakers



Asier de la Iglesia

Professional Basketball Player

I was born in 1983 in Zumárraga, Guipúzcoa. Surrounded by green mountains.

From the first time I picked up a basketball I felt that it would accompany me all my life. So, from being a game, at the age of 19 it became my profession. The cities I lived in, the bond that is created with a team, the frustrations and the achievements... From my youth I keep the best experiences and memories that this passion has given me.

The day I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, all the opportunities I had taken for granted I would have gradually faded away. Teams didn't want to sign me, they put more and more obstacles in my way to continue doing what I loved so much. The only one who had no barriers for me was myself. Despite having to leave the professional league, I decided to continue with what made me so happy and to prove to myself how far I could go. No fears. No limits.

Multiple sclerosis is a neurological, degenerative and incurable disease. This definition, which may seem devastating to many, gave me a mission in life. I felt that in my heart and in my hands was the need to improve the situation of people who, like me, had the same disease. I started selling solidarity bracelets with the phrase that helped me to face each day with a smile: "Don't wait for the storm to pass, learn to dance in the rain".

They quickly began to sell. It was the springboard to start dreaming big. Charity matches, conferences, charity events... I then decided to found the association Baila con EM, with which we have proudly and gratefully donated more than 100,000 euros to research in 2020. My dream is to make the number grow, and maybe one day, reach one million to continue sowing hope.

Today, I pick up a ball and I feel alive. Being able to continue helping makes me feel good. Having new illusions makes me smile.

That's what I think life is all about, remembering every day the wonderful reasons I have to be happy.



Speakers



Dr. Usman Khan

Chair, Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association

Usman is a health policy and management professional with more than 25 years experience. In the last decade he has held senior leadership roles in the UK and abroad including that as Executive Director of the European Health Management Association and the European Patients Forum. He is currently a Senior Advisor at the Good Governance Institute, a UK based consultancy and at FIPRA International, a Brussels based European public affairs consultancy. Usman holds three non-executive positions being the Chair of the Motor Neurone Disease Association, an Independent Governor at London Metropolitan University, and an NHS Independent Non-Executive Director at North Central London Integrated Care Board. Usman is also Visiting Professor in Health Management and Policy at KU Leuven, Belgium and teaches at New York University (London). He is a regular public speaker and writer on health policy matters and author most recently of Health Management 2.0 (Emerald Publishing).



Tineke Mollema

Board Member, GAMIAN-Europe

Tineke Mollema has been the coordinator of plusminus young since March 2017. She combines direct contact with fellow sufferers with contributions to national policy via the MIND Young platform. The ideal way for Tineke to work on a better future for young people with bipolar disorder. Through a recording, she became active in her own recovery process and decided to be open about her disorder and make the transition from politics to plusminus. Early detection and the prevention of stigmatization are important reasons for Tineke to actively engage young people with bipolar disorder.



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Prof. Rodrigo Quian Quiroga

ICREA Research Professor , Hospital del Mar Research Institute

Rodrigo Quian Quiroga is an ICREA Research Professor working at the Hospital del Mar Research Institute in Barcelona. He studied Physics at University of Buenos Aires and did a PhD in Applied Mathematics at the University of Luebeck, Germany. Before joining ICREA he was the director of the Centre for Systems Neuroscience and the Head of Bioengineering at the University of Leicester, UK. He has published more than 120 papers and 5 books (Borges and memory, The forgetting machine, Neurocience Fiction, Imaging brain function with EEG, and Principles of neural coding). He is a fellow of the UK Academy of Medical Sciences and was selected as one of the 10 UK leaders in Science and Engineering by the Royal Academy of Engineering and the Engineering and Physics Research Council.



Dr. Mara Parellada

Coordinator, AMITEA Programme

Psychiatrist. University Specialist in Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. Assistant Psychiatrist at the Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service of the Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón since 2000, she is the coordinator of AMITEA, a programme of comprehensive medical care for ASD for the entire Community of Madrid, initiated as a pilot programme and incorporated into the healthcare services of the Community, a unit declared by the Ministry of Health to be a Good Healthcare Practice Unit. Co-creator of the Dr.Tea website to familiarise patients with ASD with the healthcare environment.

Coordinator of the Regional Unit of Complex Diagnosis of ASD, in the Hospital GU Gregorio Marañón. Coordinator of the autism line of the Mental Health Strategy of the Ministry of Health and the Mental Health Plan of the Community of Madrid. She has been a trainer in ADOS-2 since 2013, and holds the position of Full Professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the Complutense University of Madrid and a visiting associate professorship at the University of California in San Francisco, USA.

A member of CIBERSAM, Centro de Investigaciones Nacionales en Salud Mental, through the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, Instituto de Investigación Sanitaria Gregorio Marañón, at HGUGM, for the past 18 years she has been leader of the group's autism research line to study the biological basis of autism spectrum disorders.

She has published over 250 articles in peer-reviewed journals and is principal investigator of several national and European public and privately funded grants studying the biological basis of autism and the overlap between autism and early onset schizophrenia.



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Prof. Giancarlo Comi

President, European Charcot Foundation

Giancarlo Comi, chairman of "Human Brains" scientific committee, is honorary professor of neurology at the Università Vita Salute San Raffaele and founder and director of the Institute of Experimental Neurology at the Scientific Institute San Raffaele, Milan, Italy. He is the President of the European Charcot Foundation (ECF), and since 2013 has served as vice chair of the Progressive Multiple Sclerosis Alliance and co-chair of the Industry Forum, global alliance of pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies focused on the field of multiple sclerosis. He has been holding the office of president of the European Neurology Society, of the Italian Society of Neurology and of the Italian Society of Clinical Neurophysiology. He is fellow of the European Academy of Neurology (EAN).

In recent years, Professor Comi has received the 'Gh. Marinescu' honorary award from the Romanian Society of Neurology, and has been awarded honorary memberships of the Russian Neurological Academic Society, the European Committee for Treatment and Research in Multiple Sclerosis (ECTRIMS), the European Neurological Society (ENS), the Sociedad Espanola de Neurologia, the Société Française de Neurologie. He also received in 2015 the Charcot Award for MS Research from the MS International Federation (MSIF). In the past year Professor Comi was awarded the Gold Medal of 'Benemeranza Civica' from the City of Milan and has been recently conferred the honor of merit as Official by the President of Italy.

He has been principal investigator of many phase II and III multiple sclerosis clinical trials.

Prof. Comi has authored and co-authored more than 1000 articles in peer-reviewed journals, and edited several books, with an h-index of 115. He has been organizer and/or invited speaker for more than 500 conferences, both nationally and internationally. He is co-editor of Neurological Sciences and member of the editorial boards of many international journals.



Dr. Paola Zaratini

SSC Co-Chair, PROMS Initiative

Paola Zaratini is the Director of Scientific Research for the Italian MS Society and its Foundation. She has over 30 years' of experience working in Neuroscience research acquired in Public, Private and Patients' Organizations, and over 15 years of experience in drug discovery and development. Doctor Zaratini's professional education is on neuronal plasticity mechanisms underlying Multiple Sclerosis and neurodegenerative diseases. As coordinator (2018- 2021) of the EU Responsible Research Innovation H2020 MULTI-ACT project (<https://www.multiact.eu/>), Paola has led the development of a new research governance model and guidelines to engage patients as key stakeholder in multistakeholder research initiatives. Several international and national multistakeholders initiatives are applying the MULTI-ACT model (<https://www.multiact.eu/partnerships/>). Paola is the co-chair of the global Patient Reported Outcomes Initiative for Multiple Sclerosis (PROMS; <https://proms-initiative.org/>). Paola is author of more than 80 publications (1987-2023).



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Speakers



Stephanie Hoffmann-Gendebien

Head & General Manager, Amylyx Pharmaceuticals EMEA

Stéphanie Hoffmann-Gendebien has extensive biopharma experience in developing and introducing medicines for progressive neurological diseases and other rare diseases in Europe. She has a deep understanding of the inter-connected relationships between passionate patient and medical communities, and with other stakeholders creating policy around diagnosis, support and care, and considering treatments for regulatory authorization and reimbursement. She combines this with emotional engagement and pragmatic strategies to drive positive change around healthcare, informed by an MBA and background in biochemistry. Stéphanie has held leadership roles in multiple organizations, including Genzyme and Alexion, provided consulting services around rare diseases and orphan drug development, and successfully introduced two orphan drugs in Europe. She joined Amylyx in 2021 to establish the company's first presence outside North America, as Head and General Manager for EMEA – the third European biopharma team she has built from the ground up during her career of more than 25 years.



Dr. Mara Dierssen

President, Spanish Brain Council

With a Ph.D. in Neurobiology from the University of Cantabria, she is a research director at the Centre for Genomic Regulation in Barcelona. Her main area of research is inquiring into the neurobiological mechanisms of learning and memory and their alterations in Down syndrome, a field in which she has produced trailblazing internationally recognized research into the genetic bases of intellectual impairment. She discovered impaired structural plasticity and her work was the first to show imbalanced excitatory inhibitory synapses in Down syndrome using electron microscopy. Moreover, her studies in the clinical area have led to new therapeutic avenues for people with Down syndrome.

She has received numerous awards during her career as a researcher, notably the 2008 National Prize for Thought and Science (Generalitat (Government) of Catalonia), and the "Jaime Blanco" "Jerome Lejeune" and "Ramon Trias" awards for her research in Down syndrome. She has published more than 200 peer-reviewed papers with an h index of 51 in Scopus and 63 in Google Scholar. She has also published several books on Down syndrome, and organized courses and scientific meetings, including FENS with 7000 attendants.

She has been president of the Spanish Society of Neuroscience, the International Behavioral and Neural Genetics Society and she is president of the Spanish Brain Council. She was the founder and has been president of the Trisomy 21 Research Society. She is elected member of the Academia Europaea, which brings together leading scientists and university professors from around Europe, and lately of the Royal Academy of Medicine.



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Dr. José Luis Lanciego

President, Pan-European Committee of the International Brain Research Organization (PERC-IBRO)

José L. Lanciego's current research focuses on gene therapy approaches for neurodegenerative diseases using non-human primate models. He is the Chair of the International Brain Research Organization Pan-European Committee, a Board Member of the European Brain Council and the International Basal Ganglia Society Council. He has published 132 papers with an h index of 46. In September 2019, he has co-founded Handl Therapeutics B.V. for pushing forward the development of novel therapies for Parkinson's disease.



Cristina Maragall

President, Pasqual Maragall Foundation

Cristina Maragall has been linked to the Pasqual Maragall Foundation since its establishment in 2008 as a member of the Board of Trustees, then as its spokesperson since 2015, and ultimately as its president since 2020.

She holds a degree in Architecture from the Polytechnic University of Catalonia and a postgraduate degree in Landscape Architecture from the Technical School of Agricultural Engineers of Barcelona. Since 2004 she has operated her architecture studio, having worked on social housing projects and urban landscape projects. She currently balances this activity with a strong commitment to the Pasqual Maragall Foundation, with the aim to change the social perception of Alzheimer's disease to improve the quality of life of affected families and focus efforts on research. Since 2018, she has been co-directing the Brain Film Fest, an international film festival about the brain promoted by the Pasqual Maragall Foundation. Additionally, she holds a position as a board member of the Fundació Catalunya Europa.

The Pasqual Maragall Foundation is a private non-profit organisation that aims to achieve a future without Alzheimer's through research and innovation.



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