

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 • Guillermo Fernández Vara, Vice-President, Senate of Spain • Prof. Suzanne Dickson, President, European Brain Council • Prof. Juan Lerma, Vice-President, European Brain Council • Member of the European Parliament - TBC
9:45-10:05	Keynote Lecture: The Complexity of the Brain • 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
10:45-11:15	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. • Genes, circuits and behaviour, by Prof. Juan Lerma, Instituto de Neurociencias CSIC-UMH. Vice-President, European Brain Council • Prof. Rodrigo Quian Quiroga, ICREA Research Professor, Hospital del Mar Research Institute
11:15-11:30	Break
11:30-11:40	Keynote Lecture • Dr. Mara Parellada, Coordinator, AMITEA Programme
11:40-12:15	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. Panel Discussants: • Dr. Mara Parellada, Coordinator, AMITEA Programme • Prof. Giancarlo Comi, President, European Charcot Foundation • Dr. Paola Zaratin, SSC Co-Chair, PROMS Initiative • Stéphanie Hoffmann-Gendebien, Head & General Manager, Amylyx Pharmaceuticals EMEA
12:15-13:00	Session 4: Addressing brain challenges at the EU level – towards a European Brain Health Partnership Moderated by Frédéric Destrebecq, Executive Director, European Brain Council The last part of this symposium will address the need for political action at European Union level to tackle brain-related challenges. An EU brain action plan would coordinate efforts in basic and clinical research, share best practice and mobilize resources to support research, improve mental health care and promote education and public awareness. By supporting this initiative, EBC and key stakeholders aim to play a leading role in promoting innovative policies and effective programmes to improve brain health across Europe. Panel Discussants: • 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 • European Commission Representative – TBC • Representative from the Ministry of Science and Innovation (MICINN) of Spain – TBC
13:00-13:15	Q&A with the Audience
13:15-13:30	Closing Remarks by Prof. Suzanne Dickson , President, European Brain Council and 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.



SENADO

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.



With thanks to our event supporters