



**FENS Forum 2024**  
**EBC Mini Conference**

**Prioritizing Brain Health  
in Youth: Bringing  
Neuroscience to Society  
and Informing Policy**

**Programme & Speakers**

**25 June | 10:00-12:00**

**Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center, Vienna, Austria**

## **FENS Forum 2024 – Special Interest Session and Networking Event: “Prioritizing Brain Health in Youth: Bringing Neuroscience to Society and Informing Policy”**

### **EBC – FENS Meeting**

**Day:** Tuesday 25 June 2024

**Duration:** 10.00 - 12.00

**Location:** Messe Wien Exhibition & Congress Center, Vienna, Austria

### **Short Description of the Event**

According to OECD half of the population will have to contend with mental health problems at some point in their life. Two-thirds of mental health disorders manifest before age 25. Good brain health plays a significant role in an individual’s well-being and profoundly impacts the collective economy and society. Today there is an urgent action needed on failing youth mental health. Neuroscience and brain development are key to address the situation. Understanding neural circuits is critical for gaining insights into the etiology of mental disorders. Brain development does not stop at birth and some aspects continue throughout infancy, childhood, and adolescence, allowing the full development of cognitive functions. Different determinants related to physical health, healthy environments, safety and security, life-long learning, and social connection as well as access to quality services influence the way our brains develop, adapt, and respond to stress and adversity. Ongoing progress in neurobiology and cognitive neuroscience allow the design of better prevention and intervention strategies to help avoid brain deficits and/or limit their impact and maintain brain health.

Although effective early detection and interventions exist, there are numerous unmet needs along the mental health care pathways. Navigating the mental health services system is often complex for patients and families due to fragmented services and discontinuity of care. Policies and programs to prevent and mitigate the negative impacts on schooling, employment, families, and risky behaviors are also paramount. The European Commission’s communication on a comprehensive approach to mental health released in June 2023 is a step forward but requires more commitment to boost children and young adult’s mental health. The European Brain Council (EBC) and the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) will convene a Mini Conference on 25 June at the upcoming [FENS Forum 2024](#) in Vienna to address these challenges. The event will explore what the opportunities are of incorporating a transdiagnostic and biopsychosocial-informed perspective. The meeting will bring together neuroscientists, clinicians, researchers, policymakers, patients & caregivers to raise awareness on brain health, bridging the gap between research, policy, and society.

### **Aim:**

The event will aim 1) to look at solutions integrating research & innovation going beyond medicalization; 2) to examine ongoing progress in neurobiology and cognitive neuroscience allowing the design of better prevention and intervention strategies and 3) to address inclusiveness, health, and education challenges. This a follow-up to the special interest session on “Brain capital and the young generation” that took place during FENS Forum 2022.

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## Preliminary programme

### Opening Address

10.00 – 10.10

#### Chair of the meeting

- Suzanne Dickson, President, European Brain Council (EBC)

Introduction by Irene Tracey, President, Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS)

### **Keynote lectures: Brain development and transdiagnostic classification**

**10.10 – 10.20 Brain development and children**

*Francesca Cirulli, Board Member, Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS)*

**10.20 – 10.30 A transdiagnostic classification**

*Martien Kas, European College of NeuroPsychopharmacology (ECNP), President Chair and board member of the network task force*

### **Session 1: Youth and caregiver priorities**

**10.30-10.50 Personal testimonies - Meaningful engagement of young people living with mental health conditions**

*Anastasia Benzahi, Teacher of Physics, French National Education*

#### **Priorities – Insights**

*Åsa Konradsson Geuken, President of the Swedish Society of Schizophrenia and Board member of EUFAMI*

### **Session 2: Brain health clinical innovation in youth: Panel discussion**

**10.50 – 11.20** Moderator: Kevin Rostasy, European Pediatric Neurology Society (EPNS) President

**- Impact of adverse childhood experiences on child and adolescent mental development: current research and future directions**

*Eva Kestens, Child and Adolescent Psychiatrist, Belgium*

**- The value of treatment, the case of autism**

*Celso Arango, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Service at Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, Madrid, Spain*



**- Rethinking the management of brain disorders - the case of schizophrenia**

*Pavel Mohr, Clinical Director, National Institute of Mental Health, Czech Republic*

**- Age transitioning and prevention**

*Judit Balazs, Chair of the Child Psychiatry Section, European Psychiatric Association*

**Session 3: Time to commit to policy change: Open Discussion**

**11.20 – 11.55**

Moderator: *Judit Simon, Department of Health Economics, Center for Public Health, Medical University of Vienna, Austria*

*Karolien Weemaes, Deputy Federal Mental Health Coordinator · Belgian Federal Public Service Public Health*

*Sasa Jenko, Head of Sector for Health Reforms, DG REFORM- Labour Market, Education, Health & Social Services · European Commission*

*Jennifer Hall, WHO Athens Office for Quality of Care and Patient Safety*

Interaction with the audience: Q&A

**Concluding Remarks**

**11.55 – 12.00**

- Vinciane Quoidbach, Research Project Manager, European Brain Council (EBC)
- Suzanne Dickson, President, European Brain Council (EBC)

**More info:**

[Prioritizing Brain Health in Youth: Bringing Neuroscience to Society and Informing Policy | 2024 FENS Forum Mini Conference – European Brain Council \(EBC\)](#)



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This event is organized by the European Brain Council (EBC), a non-profit organization 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 organizations 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 organization to strengthen ties within the broader community at the European and global levels.

# Meet the Speakers



## **Suzanne Dickson, EBC President**

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



## **Francesca Cirulli, FENS Board Member**

Francesca Cirulli is Research Director at the Center for Behavioural Sciences and Mental Health, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy. Her research focuses on the study of biomarkers of risk and resilience for mental disorders with a specific focus on the role of stress and lifestyle factors. She is carrying out preclinical and clinical research investigating shared biomarkers between psychological stress and metabolic stress for the prevention and treatment of mental disorders in a lifelong perspective. She has been the President of the European Brain and Behavior Society (EBBS) and is the Treasurer of the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS). She is Chair-elect of Alba Network promoting diversity and equity in Brain Sciences. She has been recently appointed as Chief Editor of Neuroscience, the IBRO Journal.

# Meet the Speakers



## Martien Kas

Martien Kas is associate professor in the Department of Translational Neuroscience, Brain Center Rudolf Magnus, at the University Medical Center Utrecht, where he leads a work group entitled "Translational Behavioral Genetics" that researches cross-species behavioral genetics to better understand origins and develop treatments for psychiatric disorders. He is president of the Dutch Behavioural Genetics Association, (citation needed) board member and treasurer of the Dutch Neuroscience meeting and the Dutch Neurofederation, and executive committee member of the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology.



## Anastasia Benzahi

Anastasia Benzahi is a professor of physics. She is a Patient Advocate at Positive Minders. Diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Despite initial difficulties obtaining a proper diagnosis in France, her move to Prague proved pivotal in understanding her condition. With the support of her family and dedicated psychiatrist, Anastasia has pursued academic achievements, including a Master's in quantum physics, despite setbacks. Her ongoing battle with mental health challenges hasn't deterred her from striving for stability and pursuing her goals with courage and grace.



# Meet the Speakers



## Åsa Konradsson Geuken

Åsa Konradsson Geuken, an associate professor in pharmacology at Uppsala University, Sweden, has dedicated her life to research and advocacy for severe mental illnesses, particularly schizophrenia and depression, since her brother's diagnosis 36 years ago. She is the president of the Schizophrenia Association and a board member of the Center for Women's Mental Health (WOMHER). She also serves on the steering group for the national network for patients with newly diagnosed psychosis (NNNP) and the European Federation of Associations of People With a Mental Illness (EUFAMI). Through her company, Lecturing Minds Stockholm AB, she shares her knowledge about schizophrenia and is a co-author of two books on the subject.



## Kevin Rostasy

Prof. Kevin Rostasy was trained in General Pediatric and Pediatric Neurology in Göttingen, Germany, Aberdeen, Scotland and Boston, USA. He is currently the Head of Pediatric Neurology at the Children's Hospital Datteln, Germany and President of the European Pediatric Neurology Society. His main research interest is in the field of neuroimmunology in children with a particular focus on antibody-mediated diseases affecting the CNS. In addition, he is involved in many activities addressing the awareness of the emerging challenges in the field of neurology across the ages.



# Meet the Speakers



## Eva Kestens

Dr Eva Kestens works as a Child Psychiatrist at OBC ter Wende - Espero. She studied at KULeuven in Belgium. She obtained her degree in child and adolescent psychiatry in 2007. Since then, she has worked in residential youth care. She also worked for several years in an outpatient therapeutic group practice in Leuven. Besides being a child psychiatrist, she is also a family therapist, took EMDR training both for adults and children and adolescents, she is a certified trainer of the NMT model of dr. B.D. Perry. She is a board member of the VVK: Flemish Association of Child Psychiatrists. She is author of the survival guide: 'Wat als je iets heel ergs meemaakt?', a psycho-educational do-book about trauma for children and young adolescents.



## Celso Arango, MD, PhD

Professor Celso Arango is currently Chair of the Child and Adolescent Department of Psychiatry at Hospital General Universitario Gregorio Marañón, Complutense University in Madrid, Spain, as well as Director of the Gregorio Marañón Psychiatric and Mental Health Institute, Professor of Psychiatry at the Maryland Psychiatric Research Center of the University of Maryland in Baltimore, Adjunct Professor of Psychiatry at UCSF in San Francisco, Visiting Professor of Psychiatry at Kings College London, and Tenured Full Professor at Complutense University in Madrid.

# Meet the Speakers



## Pavel Mohr

Prof. Pavel Mohr, M.D., Ph.D. graduated from the Medical Faculty, Charles University Prague in 1990 (M.D.), in 2001 obtained his Ph.D. in Neurosciences, in 2015 was appointed a Professor of Psychiatry at the Charles University in Prague. Since 1991, prof. Mohr works at the National Institute of Mental Health, Czechia (formerly the Prague Psychiatric Center), currently as the Clinical Director. From 1995 to 1998, he was a visiting scientist at the Nathan Kline Institute for Psychiatric Research in Orangeburg, New York. Dr. Mohr is a Professor of Psychiatry at the 3rd Medical Faculty, Charles University, teaching pre-graduate medical students in psychiatry and postgraduate students in the PhD program of Neurosciences. Between 2006 and 2009 was a Faculty member of the Vienna School of Clinical Research.



## Judit Balazs

Judit Balazs, M.D., Ph.D., DSc, is a Child- and adolescent psychiatrist and Psychiatrist. She is Professor Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest, Hungary, and New University College, Oslo, Norway; Doctor of Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences; head and tutor of the Developmental and Clinical Child Psychology Program at the Doctoral Schools of Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest; tutor of the Semmelweis University, Budapest.

# Meet the Speakers



## Judit Simon

Judit Simon is Professor of Health Economics, Head of the Department of Health Economics, Deputy Head of the Center for Public Health and Coordinator of the Public Health Doctoral programme at the Medical University of Vienna. She is Visiting Professor at the University of Oxford and Corvinus University Budapest. Her main expert areas include applied and methodological health economic evaluation research alongside clinical studies/guidelines/HTAs, evidence synthesis and health services and systems research.



## Karolien Weemaes

Karolien Weemaes is Assistant Federal Coordinator of the Mental Health Care Reform. She has a master in criminological sciences. Since 2016 she has been working for the Federal Public Health Service as assistant national coordinator of the new mental health policy for children & adolescents. In this role, the main objective is to achieve high-quality and accessible mental health care for all children & adolescents struggling with mental health. Intensive cooperation with relevant policy areas and cross-sectoral field actors is carried out for this purpose.

# Meet the Speakers



## Sasa Jenko

Sasa Jenko Kokalj, Ph.D., Head of Sector, European Commission, DG Research & Innovation, E3- Fighting infectious diseases and advancing public health. Sasa holds a Ph.D. in biomedicine from University of Ljubljana, Slovenia. She was an EMBO fellow at Jacobs University Bremen, Germany and a Fulbright Scholar at UC Berkeley, USA. She later turned to a career in science policy and management, working as a Scientific Officer and currently as Head of Sector at the European Commission. Her initial portfolio was structural genomics and high-throughput technologies, then epigenomics and epigenetics, personalised medicine and currently public health research including health systems and services.



## Jennifer Hall

Jennifer Hall is working at UK HCPC Clinical Psychologist as a Technical Officer for the World Health Organization. Currently leading mental health under WHO Athens office on quality of care, including the Programme on Quality of Mental health care for Children and Adolescents at WHO EURO. Previous experience as mental health focal point for the Pacific Islands in WHO WPRO and working on scalable psychological interventions at WHO HQ.



# Meet the Speakers



## Vinciane Quoidbach

Vinciane Quoidbach is Research Project Manager – Public Health and Policy for the Value of Treatment for Brain Disorders Study at the European Brain Council. Vinciane holds a Master Degree in Hospital and Healthcare Management from Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management and a Postgraduate Diploma in Public Health Management from Manchester Business School. She also holds a Master Degree in Political Sciences and European Studies from University of Antwerp. Prior to this position, Vinciane worked in both public and private sector, at national and international level. She served the Belgian Federal Public Service Health, and the Federal Minister of Health Cabinet as Advisor in charge of public health policy and regulations development in the area of Cancer, Chronic Diseases and Rare Diseases as well as the Biopharmaceutical Company AbbVie as Health Initiatives Manager. She also worked for the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland as Technical Officer, Non communicable diseases and mental health cluster and the United Nations Development Programme in Pretoria, South Africa as Technical Officer, Social development department). Vinciane is also a staff member at the Belgian Centre for Evidence-Based Medicine (CEBAM) at KULeuven.