
€150 million for Brain Research Launches EU 'Month of the Brain'



At the start of its 'European Month of the Brain' initiative, the European Commission has earmarked some €150 million of funding for 20 new international brain research projects. It will bring the total EU investment in brain research since 2007 to over €1.9 billion. The 'European Month of the Brain' (#brainmonth) will highlight European research and innovation in the area of neuroscience, cognition and related areas through over 50 events across Europe this May. The initiative aims to showcase the latest achievements in the field, but also to urge a more decisive effort to combat brain diseases. It also aims at highlighting how studying the brain can revolutionise computing. The initiative comes as the profile of brain research has been raised recently with ambitious new projects in the EU (FET Flagship Human Brain Project – IP/13/54 and MEMO/13/36) and the US (BRAIN project).

European Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn said: "Many Europeans are likely to be affected by brain-related disease or illness during their lifetime. Treating those affected is already costing us €1.5 million every minute and this burden on our healthcare systems is likely to rise as our population ages. Brain research could help alleviate the suffering of millions of patients and those that care for them. Unlocking the secrets of how the brain works could also open up a whole new universe of services and products for our economies."

Some 165 million Europeans are likely to experience some form of brain related diseases during their life. As the population ages, with more people affected by Alzheimer's and other neurodegenerative or age-related mental disorders, treatment costs are likely to go up sharply. Finding better ways of preventing and treating brain diseases is therefore becoming urgent. Understanding how the brain works is also important to keep our economies at the forefront of new information technologies and services.

The 'European Month of the Brain' will underline the crucial importance of brain research and healthcare for our societies and economies; showcase EU achievements in these fields; debate the future direction of research and policy; discuss how to improve the allocation of resources within and between individual countries; and lift taboos around mental health. See also MEMO/13/390.

Background

The 20 projects which are shortlisted for EU funding are expected to deliver new insights and innovations in key areas such as traumatic brain injury, mental disorders, pain, epilepsy and paediatric conduct disorders. While the projects cannot be named before the grant agreements are finally concluded, all are expected to start from this summer. Industry and small business partners will have a particularly strong involvement in three of the areas - mental disorders, epilepsy and paediatric conduct disorders – to fuel innovation and real-life solutions.

The EU budget has provided more than €1.9 billion for brain research since the start of the current EU framework programme for research, FP7 (2007-2013). This has funded 1,268 projects with 1,515 participants from the EU and beyond. There will still be opportunities for brain research under all three pillars – 'excellent science', 'industrial leadership' and 'societal challenges' of Horizon 2020, the next EU research and innovation programme. The 'Health, demographic change and well-being' challenge, which will aim to improve the diagnosis, understanding and treatment of diseases, will be particularly relevant.

More than 50 events on the human brain are on the 'European Month of the Brain' programme, from conferences, workshops and meetings to summer schools and teaching courses. Six of these events are being organised by the Irish EU Presidency. The European Commission will organise two major conferences, on 14 May in Brussels and – together with the Irish EU Presidency - on 27/28 May in Dublin.

For more information, please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/research/conferences/2013/brain-month/index_en.cfm

Published on : Thu, 2 May 2013