

# BELGIAN BRAIN COUNCIL



## IN THIS EDITION

The Nobel Prize in Medicine 2023

Belgian Brain Plan Phase 2 with the collaboration of Croatia, France, Greece and Spain.

Advances in Alzheimer's research

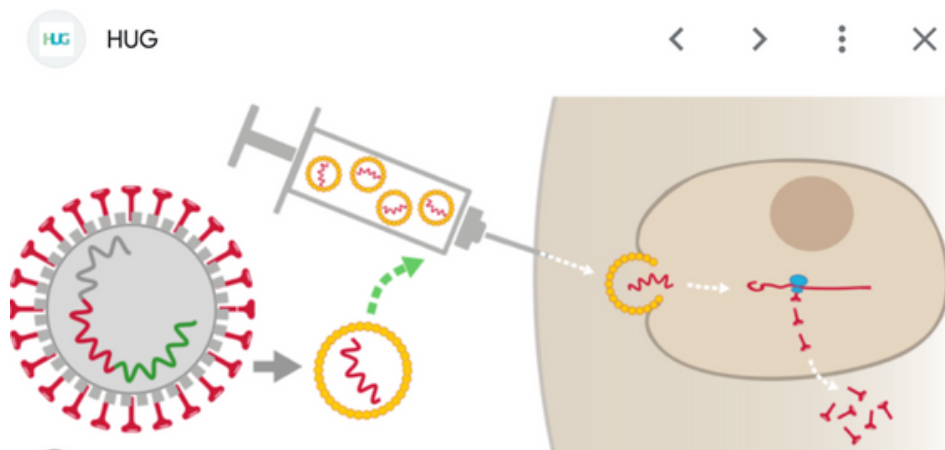
BBC and social media

Croatian Brain Council & 10th Academy of National Brain Councils

News from our members

## 1. mRNA vaccine pioneers win Nobel Prize

The 2023 Nobel Prize for Medicine has been awarded to biochemist Katalin Karikó and immunologist Drew Weissman for discoveries that led to the development of messenger RNA (mRNA) vaccines against COVID-19. **These vaccines have been administered more than 13 billion times, saving millions of lives and preventing serious illness for millions of people.** Karikó and Weissman discovered a way of introducing mRNA into cells without triggering an adverse immune reaction: by replacing a type of molecule, uridine, in the genetic material with a similar molecule called pseudouridine.



This discovery is the fruit of more than 20 years of relentless research into messenger RNA, its synthesis, its stability and how to allow it to enter the cell without being toxic (editor's note).

## 2. Belgian Brain Plan Follow-up

**a.)** A major step forward! The BBC has just obtained the support of several Brain Councils in Europe, marking an important step towards the creation of the Brain Data Hub (BDH), the first altruistic organisation in the field of brain and mental health. France, Croatia, Greece and Spain have already signed a letter of intent to collaborate in setting up the BDH.

**b.)** Keep up the good work! We'll keep you informed of future developments, including the possible accession of Portugal and other Councils!



**c.)** An international symposium on 14 and 15 May 2024, organised by the Belgian Brain Council, will inaugurate this Altruistic Data Association. See the programme below. Block these dates today. The booking form will be available from March 2024.

**The BBC is on the following social networks:**



With the increasing use of smartphones and tablets, more and more people are inclined to consume content on social media. Unlike traditional websites, which are often static, social media allow two-way interaction. Users can comment, share and react to content, which can increase engagement and strengthen the relationship between the BBC, our member associations and other interested parties. For these reasons, the BBC has decided to use LinkedIn, Facebook and X better and more (especially with the help of our young interns).

**Here is a summary of our media traffic to date (15 October 2023)**



1,225 subscribers



410 likes & 417 followers



1,604 followers

# Programme



## BBC symposium

May 14, 15, 2024

Foundation Universitaire, Egmont street 11, 1000 Brussels

Les données sont-elles l'avenir pour une meilleure santé du cerveau et mentale?

Zijn gegevens de toekomst voor een betere van gezondheid en de hersenen en mentaal?

Are data the future for a better Brain and Mental Health?

### May 14

17:30 - Welcome and registration

17:00 or 18:00 - 19:00

- "The Belgian Brain Data Hub and Altruistic Organization" by Gregory Lewkowicz and Roland Pochet
- Political Debate: "Vision for a Belgian Brain Plan and Brain Data Hub". Are invited:
  1. The 12 members of the health commission of the federal parliament
  2. Prof. Dr Sofie Dr Broe, Leading official (a.i.) Health Data Agency Belgium
  3. Journalist as a moderator

19:00 - 19:30: Cocktail

### May 15

08:00 - 08:30: Booth installation (sponsors)

08:30 - 9:00: Welcome & registration

09:00 - 09:30: Welcome by Laurence Ris, Keynote address by Vice-Prime Minister Frank Vandenbroucke, Minister of Social Affairs (TBC)

Rose Bruffaerts  
Guy Nagels  
Isabelle Huys  
Laurent Servais

← 09:30 - 10:30: Panel 1: "Advances in data-driven brain health" - Chaired by Dr. Gianni Franco

10:30 - 11:00: Coffee Break

Giovanni Briganti  
Bernard Dan  
David Novillo-Ortiz  
Elizabeth Steindl

← 11:00 - 12:00: Panel 2: "Advances in data-driven mental health"

12:00 - 13:30: Walking Lunch

13.30 - 14:30: "European Health Data Space and Data Altruism Organization: The way forward" by DG Connect + DG Digit + Belgian Health Data Authority

14:30 - 15:30: Patients' viewpoints and expectations:

"Patients Reported Outcome (PRO) and Patients Reported Experience (PRE) vs the collection and use of people related

15:30 - 15:45: Coffee Break

15:45 - 16:45: Presentations of the European Brain Council and the Brain Data Hub initiative - National Brain Councils (BE, GE, FR, HR, GR)

16:45 - 17:00: Final remarks by Tomislav Sokol, Member of the European Parliament (TO BE CONFIRMED)

17:00 - Closing reception

### 3. Alzheimer's research

The BBC has identified two promising results from fundamental research

#### 1. How brain cells die in Alzheimer's disease

Neurons undergo "cell suicide" in response to amyloid plaques, the tangles of abnormal proteins that accumulate in the brains of people with Alzheimer's disease. This is the first clue to a mechanism that has eluded scientists for decades. In the presence of plaques, brain cells increase the expression of a gene called MEG3, which triggers programmed cell death. When the gene is blocked, the neurons survive.<sup>1</sup>

#### 2. Certain neurons protect against dementia despite signs of Alzheimer's disease

It should be noted that not all people who develop cognitive problems at an advanced stage in their lives have amyloid clusters in their brain, and not all people with an accumulation of amyloids develop Alzheimer's disease.

To investigate this paradox, researchers from the University of Pittsburgh and MIT used data from a vast study that tracks the cognitive and motor abilities of thousands of people throughout their old age. The researchers examined tissue samples from 427 brains of deceased participants. Some of these participants had dementia typical of advanced Alzheimer's disease, others had mild cognitive impairment and the remainder showed no signs of impairment.

The results identified two key cell types which, when present in abundance, protect against the disease. The first type of neuron had active genes encoding reelin, a protein associated with brain disorders such as schizophrenia, and the other had active genes encoding somatostatin, a hormone that regulates processes throughout the body. This suggests that these types of cells protect the brain against the symptoms of the disease.<sup>2</sup>

While up until now, most efforts to develop treatments for Alzheimer's disease have focused on ways of attacking the amyloid plaques in the brain, these results should make it possible to identify ways of protecting vulnerable brain cells.

<sup>1</sup>Science 2023 Sep 15;381(6663):1176-1182. doi: 10.1126/science.abp9556. Epub 2023 Sep 14. MEG3 activates necroptosis in human neuron xenografts modeling Alzheimer's disease

<sup>2</sup>Single-cell atlas reveals correlates of high cognitive function, dementia, and resilience to Alzheimer's disease pathology published in Cell, 2023 Sep 28;186(20):4365-4385.e27

## 4. Croatian Brain Council and 10th Academy of National Brain Councils

**The 10th NBCs Academy will be in Pula (Croatia) on May 8-9, 2024 hosted by Pr. Dinko Mitrećic**

The event will take place in the Brijuni national park, an island located 10 minutes by boat from the town of Pula. As well as being a magnificent place (protected nature, golf club, private zoo, etc.), the park will be visited and a dinner will be organised in Pula. A visit and dinner will be organized in Pula. **The National Brain Councils will discuss important current topics regarding brain disorders.**

## 5. NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS



- The BBC was present at the "Open Mind" forum on October, 14



Ana Ruivo and Lia Leroy (BBC ) and Rebecca Muller (Ups&Downs)



- **The EHA's European Huntington's Congress** will be held from **20 to 22 October** in Blankenberge. **For full details, visit their website by clicking [here](#)**
- Our next **discussion forum** will be held in Liège on **4 November** from 9.30am to 12.30pm at the LUSS offices, quai Churchill 22 - 4000 Liège.

- The **information morning** on end-of-life issues will take place on **Saturday 2 December** at Le Beau Vallon in Namur.

To register, send us an email to [info@huntington.be](mailto:info@huntington.be)



## BCNBP presents its activities:

**23/11/2023** : Dr. Isabelle Maystadt : 'Genetic counseling' - 7.00 pm - 9:00 pm

**14/12/2023** : Prof. Vincent Haufroid : 'Pharmacogenomics and TDM' - 19.00 - 21.00 pm

**07/12/2023** : BCNBP virtual National Day 'Catatonia' and Belgian's Got Talent

For more details click [here](#)



- **On 23 November** Hoofd-Stuk is pleased to invite you to an exciting online conference organised by Hoofd-Stuk vzw. This conference, entitled "**Heart Coherence**", will be presented by Katrien Geeraerts and will take place from 7.30 pm to 9.00 pm.



- **Tuesday 7 November:** Lecture by **Dr Isabelle Capron**, neurologist, on the psychological repercussions of Parkinson's disease, such as depression and mood disorders.



The calendar of events is available [here](#)



**B**elgian  
**A**ssociation for  
**S**leep research and  
**S**leep medicine

- BASS is organising a course on CBT-I, cognitive behavioural therapy for insomnia, in Dutch for psychologists.

**17 November BASS Autumn Meeting in Namur**



Instituut BORN-BUNGE  
Universiteit Antwerpen **IB** v.z.w.

- **University of Antwerp** is organising on 30-31 October the 18th international GEPD (Genetic Epidemiology of Parkinson's Disease consortium) meeting.

See programme [here](#)

- **Belgian Society of Paediatric Neurology, autumn conference.**



**AUTUMN MEETING OF THE BELGIAN SOCIETY OF CHILD NEUROLOGY**

**FRIDAY 17th November 2023**  
**BIP Meeting Center, Brussels**

**NEW INSIGHTS ON NEURO CUTANEOUS SYNDROMES**

**On this occasion, our President, Laurence Ris, was invited to present the BBC and its interactions with member scientific societies. See programme [here](#)**

12 videos about different BBC activities/meetings/webinars are visible on UTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/@BBCBelgianBrainCouncil>



**BBC acts as a host organization for the EU4EU Programme within its Erasmus+ projects**

**BECOME A MEMBER  
DEVENEZ MEMBRE  
LID WORDEN**

30€ at BE87 7512 0194 0094 with name + email

**BBC ACCOUNT : BE87 7512 0194 0094**

**Composition of the Executive Committee for the period  
2021-2022**

**Chairman:** Professor Laurence RIS

**General Secretary:** Professor Roland Pochet

**Vice-Chairmen:** Dr Gianni Franco, Baron Charles van der  
Straten-Waillet

**Treasurer:** Baron Charles van der Straten -Waillet

**Secretary:** Mrs Lia Le Roy

## Dates to remember

**20-22 October**

EHA European Huntington  
Congress

**26-27 October**

Brain Innovation Days: The  
Brain in the 21st Century,  
Brussels

**30-31 October**

18th international GEPD  
meeting. UZ antwerpen

**7 November**

Action Parkinson  
conference

**16-17 November**

Société française de  
mouvements anormaux  
French-Belgium symposium

**17 November**

Belgian Society of Pediatric  
Neurology Congress

**17 November**

BASS Autumn Meeting

**21 November**

Leuven Brain Institute  
Science Day

**16 December**

22th Belgian Stroke Council  
Symposium Leuven

**11-17 March 2024**

Brain Awareness Week

**May 8-9, 2024**

10th NBCs Academy in Pula  
(Croatia)

**May 14-15, 2024**

BBC International Symposium:  
Are data the future for a better  
Brain and Mental Health?