

ACTIVITY REPORT 2022



Presented by Roland Pochet, secretary-general,
at the General Assembly on 23 May 2023 at the University
Foundation, rue Egmont 11, 1000 Brussels

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1. Preface

In 2022, thanks to the leadership of our president, we were able to enjoy collaboration with the collective Science.be. This collective brings together 5 universities: UCLouvain, ULB, ULiège, UMONS, UNAMUR and it coordinated their activities during International Brain Week 2022. To this, the BBC associated the Leuven Brain Institute of KULeuven, a Grande École (Hennalux), a scientific association (EpiC) and a patients' association (Aidants Proches).

In 2022, 8 newsletters (in EN, FR, NL) were published and distributed to a target audience of almost 1,900 people. The guiding principle has always been (and remains) to provide scientifically sound information, and this was particularly exemplified in 2022 by the attention we paid to the validated evidence on the COVID pandemic.

In 2022, the BBC played an important role in the 8th Academy of National Brain Councils (NBCs), held on 10 May at the Permanent Representation of Bavaria to the European Union. This 8th Academy enabled the reactivation of the " Belgian Brain Plan " project, established a lasting dialogue with the federal health minister's office and obtained the agreement of 8 industrial partners to support phase 1 of the project.

In 2022, the BBC continued its partnership with 3 Erasmus-Plus projects and hosted 3 EU4EU trainees.

In 2022, 27 scientific associations, 26 patient associations and 14 industrial partners renewed their membership, showing their confidence in the BBC and thus confirming that the BBC has a composition and legitimacy unique in Belgium and Europe.

The BBC thus weathered the crisis year with resilience and with the confidence of its members, patients, scientists and industry.

2. A word from the President

Thanks to the energy and constant work of our secretary-general, Roland Pochet, the BBC not only continued its activities in 2022 but also launched a long-term project, the Belgian Brain Plan (BBP).

With its actions to realise this plan, the BBC reaffirms its driving role in the dialogue between scientists, patient associations and industrial partners. The BBC also plays a leading role in coordinating the realisation of the BBP with the Belgian authorities.

As numerous as the BBC's actions are, they all contribute to the realisation of its goal: putting the patient at the centre of thinking and concrete actions to better understand and treat brain diseases.

We thank all those who have contributed in any way to the creation of these actions and to all those who support us as members of the BBC.



3. Activities 2022

3.1 BBC and Brain Awareness Week 2022 14-20 March 2022



In the 27 years since its inception, International Brain Week has grown into a global educational initiative involving more than 8,000 partners in 120 countries. During the 2022 campaign, partner activities took place in 45 countries and 33 states.

For Belgium, six universities (KULeuven, UCLouvain, ULB, ULiège, UMONS and UNamur), one Grande Ecole (Hennalux), one scientific association (EpiC) and one patient association (Caregivers) participated in International Brain Week in 2022. A summary of the activities can be found here:

15 March Inter University Conference

Description:

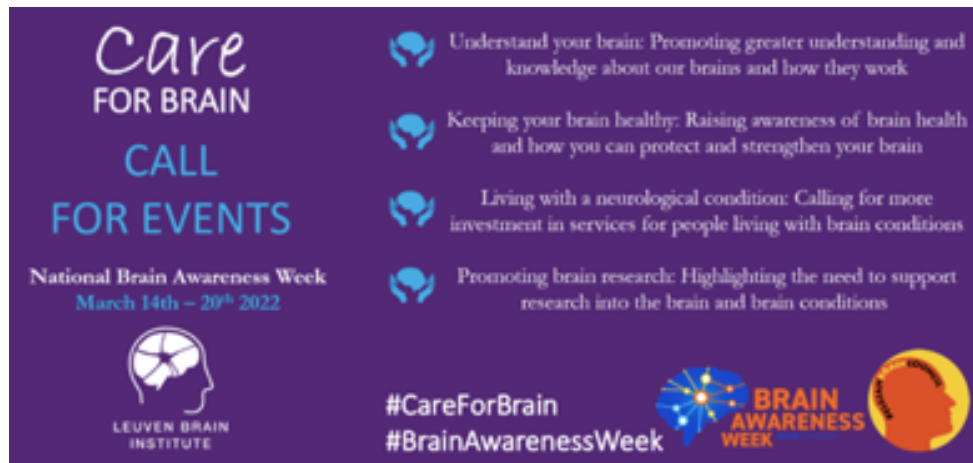
Long-term memory involves unique brains that are subject to constant change under the dual pressures of age and environment. Talking about brain and memory is therefore a problem that is both biological and environmental. We share with animals the preverbal development of the genetic, epigenetic and affective memory that shapes our brains. In the third year of life, however, we enter the world of verblivity, specifically the human world. By the age of six, we emotionally experience stories that evoke feelings of wonder or horror and give meaning to our works on art and wars. As the brain ages, memories return as if they had just appeared.

Speaker: Boris Cyrulnik: French physician, neuropsychiatrist and psychoanalyst.

Organised by:



Leuven Brain Institute



UCLouvain

As part of the 2022 edition of this event, a team of six young researchers from the Institute of Neuroscience at UCLouvain proposes to organise a scientific activity entitled "Touch and pain, neuroscience at the heart of the matter", in connection with the theme of the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology recently awarded to David Julius and Ardem Patapoutian for the discovery of touch and pain receptors.

Workshop 1. The sense of touch and the development of a new generation of touch screens.

Workshop 2. Multisensory haptics and virtual reality

Workshop 3. Pain, thermoception and TRP channels.

UNamur

Thursday 17 March 2022 (19-21 hrs) - Public face-to-face conference.

Artificial intelligence at the service of neurology

UNamur presents a conference entitled "Artificial intelligence in the service of neurology".

Charles Nicaise, neuroscience researcher at UNamur, Benoît Frenay, artificial intelligence researcher at UNamur, Pr. Jean-François Nisole, head of the conference, further moderated by a journalist. The conference has the format of a roundtable discussion between the various speakers, each talking about their specialism.



ULIEGE

- Science Café "Brain" Monday 14 March 2022 - 6.30pm - online
- An evening dedicated to the brain and organised for students and the general public. A presentation by Jean Schoenen following the publication of his book "#Migraine-Too. News et fake news sur une maladie invisible" will precede thematic discussion tables open and animated by clinicians and lecturers.
- Sexual differentiation of brain and behaviour
- Conference "Sport is good for... the brain!" by Boris Jidovtseff (ULiège).
- The human brain - dissection

UMONS

Artificial intelligence and medical diagnosis - Pain, from the brain to the algorithms
17 March at 8 pm (Van Gogh Auditorium), 17 May at 8 pm (Van Gogh Auditorium),
Conference for the general public in hybrid and bilingual mode (French/Dutch):
introduction to AI applications in medicine / pain and brain (UMONS) / contribution
of sensors and databases (KULeuven) / AI and diagnosis of MSDs (Henallux-
CeREF). Interreg project NOMADe

3.2 General meeting 16 May

The meeting was held at the University Foundation, BBC headquarters, physically and online (19 present and 8 represented) on 16 May 2022. The minutes are included in the Belgian Official Gazette.

https://www.braincouncil.be/_files/ugd/41dd6e_80ff1927b6424f26b7e68451342d05c3.pdf



3.3 Belgian Brain Plan

Spurred by the 8th Academy of National Brain Councils, held on 10 May at Bavaria's prestigious Permanent Representation to the EU, the concept of a National Brain Plan was relaunched (see newsletter no 28 of April-May). For Belgium, on 16 July, the BBC task force sent a letter to Dr Ri De Ridder, former president of the NIHDI and currently advisor to the federal health minister, Mr Frank Vandenbroucke, explaining what the BBC, which is particularly concerned about the lack of a registry for neurological and psychiatric diseases, is willing and able to do to meet the urgent need to create such a registry. This letter (available at https://fr.braincouncil.be/_files/ugd/5e315e_ba64f14270dc4e1aadec5997f8bda61a.pdf of https://nl.braincouncil.be/_files/ugd/5e315e_a1a94c0a1ab2473f90e5d8f0bb42fb21.pdf) opened the door of the minister's office and a 60-minute meeting took place on 27 October between 4 members of the task force (Jean Schoenen, Dirk Van Roost, Lia le Roy and Roland Pochet) and Mr Nick Marly, adviser to minister Vandenbroucke on eHealth, mHealth and Health Data (cfr. https://nl.braincouncil.be/_files/ugd/327c04_0507c205e8814110bd37b6d1b955b0b7.pdf). This will be followed by a second meeting in January 2023.

At the same time, building on our partnership with the pharmaceutical industry, the BBC has signed 8 sponsorship contracts of €33,000 to enable the implementation of phase 1 of this Belgian Brain Plan.

The 8 pharmaceutical companies that have signed for this project are:



For this challenge, the BBC's strategy also relies on the publication on 30 May 2022 of REGULATION (EU) 2022/868 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on European data management.



3.4 BBC and Erasmus+

As a reminder, Erasmus+ is the EU programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It has an estimated budget of €26.2 billion. The 2021-2027 programme focuses on social inclusion, green and digital transitions and promoting youth participation in democratic life.

It was instigated by Spyros Zorbas, president of the Greek association EPIONI, a member of the BBC, with which the BBC associated, responding along with other associations from Spain, Italy, Latvia and Serbia to calls under Erasmus+ Key Action 2 (KA2) aimed at small-scale partnerships.

EPIONI is a Greek NPO founded in 2016 by citizens who are informal carers. It aims to support people working as unpaid and informal carers of family members or friends struggling with physical or mental illness, disability or addiction.

Small-scale partnerships are designed to make the programme more accessible to small actors and hard-to-reach people in school education, adult education, vocational education and training. This key activity KA2 should lead to the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices at organisational, local, regional, national or European level. These actions are managed by national agencies, in our case the French-speaking Agency for Lifelong Learning (AEF-Europe).

By 2022, the BBC is active in three Erasmus Plus projects, two as coordinator and one as partner;



In support of the Erasmus Plus programme, the BBC has registered as a host institution for the EU4EU programme, which has created an international community connecting universities, businesses, students and young professionals across Europe.

Editor's note: to be eligible for Erasmus+ and EU4EU calls, the BBC must meet ethics and transparency criteria, which are assessed before being included in the transparency register. The BBC's identification number is 712814020585-47.



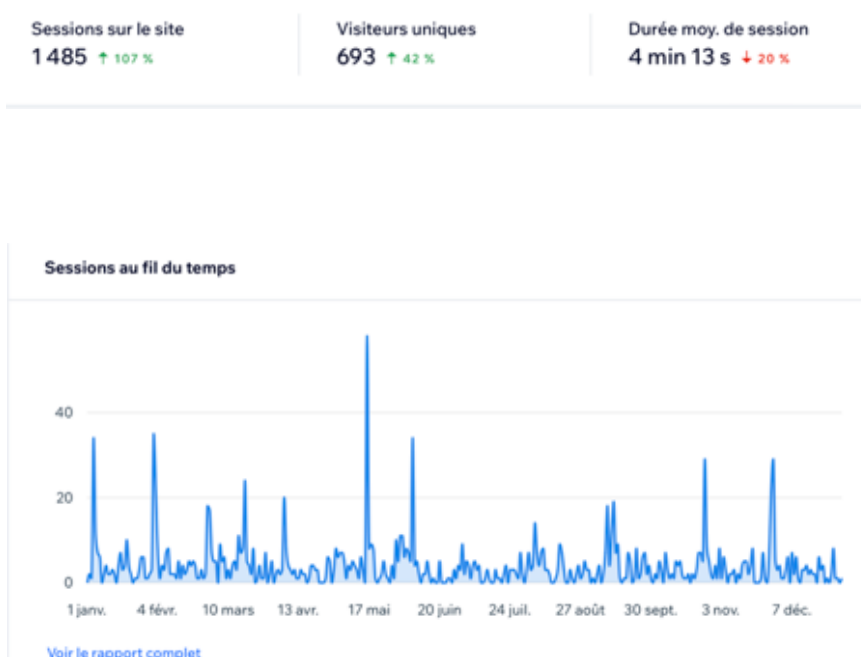
4. EBC-BBC

The new statutes of the EBC (17 pages) were published in the Belgian Official Gazette on 18 December 2022. We highlight three articles in particular: article 8 lays down the conditions for accessibility as a member of the National Brain Councils (NBCs). The BBC meets these conditions, is a member and pays an annual contribution (250€ for 2023) in accordance with Article 14. There are currently 7 NBC members: Belgium, Spain, France, Norway, Portugal, Serbia and Sweden. Article 27(3) states that 2 representatives may participate in the board and be heard, but without voting rights.

5. BBC website

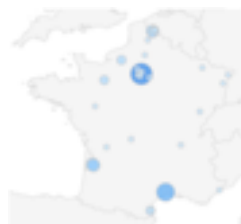
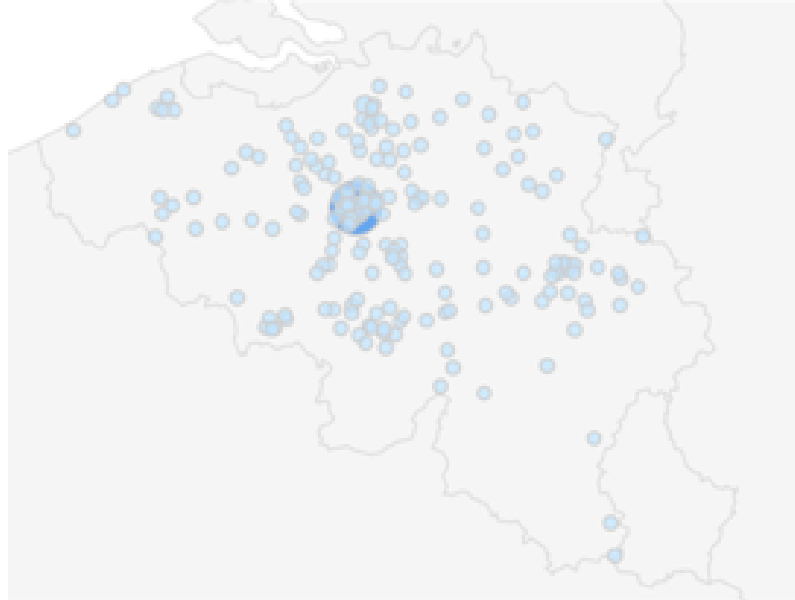
The annual presentation of website traffic is part of the BBC's transparency policy. It gives a picture of its impact and prominence. Moreover, as members are usually spread over a wide geographical area, our site is an essential tool for promoting new opportunities, providing information on membership or renewal of membership and disseminating content and resources intended only for members.

Website statistics 2022

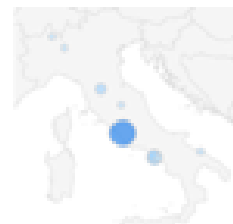


In 2022, the site registered 1,485 visits and for an average duration of 4 min 13 seconds (which is remarkable!).

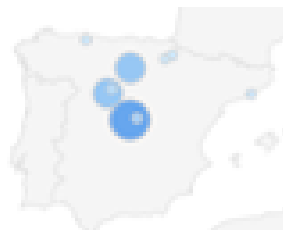
Most visitors are in Belgium (84%), spread across 182 cities. The remaining 16% are spread across 32 countries.



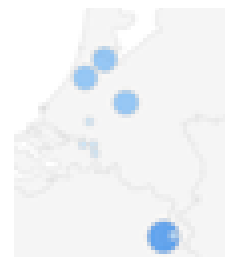
France 74



Italy 22



Spain 18



Netherlands 17



6. Treasury

The 2022 financial statement will be presented by the Treasurer and added as an annex

7. Conclusions

The COVID-19 pandemic has posed unprecedented challenges to organisations like the BBC and its members, especially patient organisations. The BBC was able to adapt by being flexible and seizing opportunities for the future, collaborating with various stakeholders including government agencies, expanding its partnership and better sharing its resources, expertise and knowledge. During the pandemic, the BBC demonstrated a strong organisational culture, clear communication channels and the ability to anticipate and manage risks.

With the support and trust of its partners, the BBC will continue to build on this. We thank our partners without whom we could not move forward.

