

European Dana Alliance for the Brain

History

The European Dana Alliance for the Brain (EDAB) was founded in 1997 at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. It was modelled on the US-based Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives, which, like EDAB, is supported by the Dana Foundation.

On 31 January 1997, 70 leading European neuroscientists signed a Declaration of achievable research goals for the next decade. The research outlined in these goals was to study the normal, healthy brain as well as the causes, diagnosis, treatment and prevention of brain diseases. To achieve EDAB's mission of raising the public profile of brain research by bringing accomplishments in scientific laboratories to the general public and policy makers, the scientists also made a commitment to increase awareness of brain disorders and the importance of neuroscience.

Declaration

To celebrate the European contribution to research on the brain in health and disease, to recognise the achievements of brain research but also the immense challenges that remain; and to acknowledge our responsibility to inform the public about the objectives and progress of brain research; we, the undersigned, establish here the European Dana Alliance for the Brain. We pledge our help to the Alliance in its efforts to promote awareness of the importance of brain research for the enrichment of human life and for the understanding of diseases and disorders of the nervous system, which cause such unhappiness and are so costly to society.

Through the study of the normal brain and its diseases and disorders, brain research can enhance the development of our children and help them to fulfill their potential, can enrich adult life, and can improve the likelihood of successful ageing. In order to achieve these objectives, we propose the following attainable goals for the coming ten years.

1. To advance our understanding of how the brain develops, before and after birth; to design new methods to prevent and treat developmental disorders of seeing, hearing, reading and learning.
2. To identify factors that regulate the growth of nerve cells and nerve fibres; to develop and assess new methods of promoting nerve regeneration after damage to the spinal cord and brain.
3. To identify the genes responsible for familial forms of schizophrenia, and manic-depressive illness, and to discover how the genes cause these disorders.
4. To develop new approaches to the relief of pain and the treatment of drug addiction.

5. To advance knowledge of the genetic regulation and function of molecules that enable nerve cells to communicate, and their role in brain disorders.
6. To identify the agents that cause spongiform encephalopathies (including bovine spongiform encephalopathy and the variant form of Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease) and their modes of transmission; to develop tests for the early detection of infection by these agents.
7. To define how activity in the human brain underlies perception, emotion, thought and language; to elucidate the brain mechanisms of memory and the causes of amnesia.
8. To develop treatments to limit damage after stroke and other forms of brain injury; to design new forms of rehabilitation and aids to enhance recovery.
9. To develop new tests for the early diagnosis of multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, motor neuron disease and Alzheimer's Disease, and new treatments for these conditions.
10. To refine new procedures for the treatment of Parkinson's Disease, including the transplantation of non-foetal cells.

To realise these goals, commitment is needed not only from scientists and clinicians, but also from the public and their governments. The cost of achieving these objectives will be considerable, but the benefits will be incalculable.