

The European Brain Council's Weekly External Environment Update

Week of 16th January 2012

Quote of the week

“We believe that this robust finding will have implications for clinical practice and research strategy in the future.”

Clive Ballard, MD, from King's College, The University of London, commenting on results from the largest randomised controlled trial of patients with cognitive impairment in Down's syndrome, see articles of interest for further details

Agenda Watch

- i) Click [here](#) to view more information on the high level Conference on Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations being held on 18th and 19th January in Copenhagen by the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union
- ii) Click [here](#) to access a factsheet concerning the priorities of the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union, and [here](#) to access an draft calendar of activity for the first half of 2012

Institution Watch

- i) Click [here](#) to view further information on the **ERA 2012 Conference**, to be held in Brussels on 30th January
- ii) Click [here](#) to view the call for proposals under the 2012 work programmes of the Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration activities
- iii) Click [here](#) to view an invitation to a seminar entitled: **Innovation and knowledge driven R&D: key developing in the areas of IT, security and the scope for global collaboration**, taking place on 25th January
- iv) Please click [here](#) to access the updated organisational chart of **DG SANCO**

Key updates this week

Bridging research in ageing and ICT development: Final conference

The final [BRAID Conference](#) will present results achieved by the project, encompassing both roadmap and implementation activities. The one-day meeting, due to take place on May 28th 2012 in Prague, aims to discuss socio-economic aspects in ICT and ageing that influence and shape recreational activities across different life settings and mechanisms, empowering older people to live independent and fulfilled lives. The conference will provide space for stakeholders to exchange and discuss results from practical experiences, including best practice projects and failed approaches in the field of ICT and ageing. The final BRAID Conference will take place alongside the IFA 2012 Conference.

Answer to written question on Demographic ageing and health services

Octavia Sârbu (S&D) recently addressed the Commission, and asked whether they consider it advisable to create a European strategy to adapt national health systems to the challenges posed by demographic ageing. She also asked what type of further steps the Commission is considering in order to respond to the social challenges posed by demographic ageing.

Responding on behalf of the Commission, John Dalli stated that, in light of existing efforts, the Commission does not plan to propose a European strategy to adapt national health systems to the challenges posed by demographic ageing.

However, he continued, the Commission is fully aware of the significance of demographic challenges. The recently launched **Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing** has identified a limited number of actions that can start as early as 2012, which aim to:

- improve the health status and quality of life of European citizens, with a particular focus on older people,
- support the long-term sustainability and efficiency of health and social care systems,
- and enhance the competitiveness of EU industry through an improved business environment

Dalli stated that the wider social challenges posed by demographic ageing, in particular to pension and long-term care systems, are being dealt with in the context of the [Open Method of Coordination on Social Protection and Social Inclusion](#).

More opportunity to contribute to European policy-making

The European Commission has given citizens, businesses and non-governmental organisations at least 12 weeks to comment on plans for new policies and legislation, (compared to 8 weeks previously). This will make it easier for them to get involved in EU policy-making at an early stage. The Commission has also introduced an alert service for upcoming initiatives: Organisations that sign up for the Transparency Register, can subscribe to this alert service to get early information on the roadmaps for new initiatives in their fields of interest about one year before their adoption.

Robots for brain surgery? EU project shows how

An EU-funded team of researchers, led by the Politecnico di Milano in Italy, has developed a robot able to help neurosurgeons in performing keyhole brain surgery. This robot is accurate in performance and has incredible memory, especially since it has 13 types of movement (compared to the 4 available to human hands), as well as 'haptic' feedback – physical cues allowing physicians to assess tissue and perceive the amount of force applied during surgery. The ROBOCAST ('Robot and sensors integration as guidance for enhanced computer assisted surgery and therapy') project received EUR 3.45 million under the 'Information and communication technologies' (ICT) Theme of the EU's Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

Articles of interest

- ✓ *Medscape*, Memantine Misses for Dementia in Down's Syndrome

<http://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/756839>

- ✓ *Huffington Post online*, Keep the ageing brain healthy

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/01/13/keeping-the-aging-brain-health_n_1202899.html#

Dates for your diary

Wednesday, 22nd February 2012 - EBC's first Board Meeting of 2012

Thursday, 23rd February 2012 – Industry Board first Meeting of 2012