

The European Brain Council's Weekly External Environment Update

Week of 4th July 2011

Quote of the week

"We remain strongly committed to addressing the medical needs of patients with multiple sclerosis at the various stages of this devastating disease"

Dr. Bernhard Kirschbaum, Executive Vice President for Global Research and Development at Merck Serono, reflecting on the organisation's application to the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to extend the indication of Rebif, its leading treatment for multiple sclerosis (MS), see articles of interest for further details

Agenda Watch

- i) Please find attached a full programme of council related activity for the Polish Presidency. A focus on actions related to the prevention of brain and neurodegenerative diseases can be found in the **Health** section on page 29. Additionally, the Council of the European Union has published provisional agendas for Council meetings for the Polish Presidency during the period from 1st July 2011 to 31 December 2011. Please click [here](#) to view these
- ii) The International Brain Research Organisation (IBRO) is holding the **8th IBRO World Congress** in Florence between 14th and 18th July 2011. The event has been co-organised with The Italian Society of Neuroscience (SINS) and will promote international collaboration and exchange of scientific information
Please click [here](#) for further information about the event
- iii) Please click [here](#) to access the draft agenda of the **Research Working Party** meeting that will take place on July 4th 2011. Items on the agenda include:
 - Work Programme of the Commission for the 2nd semester of 2011
 - EIT Strategic Innovation agenda
- vi) DG SANCO has published a document highlighting the **Contribution of the EU Health Forum to the future Public Health Programme - post 2013**. Please click [here](#) to view this

Institution Watch

- i) COST (European **Co**-operation in **Science & Technology**) is an intergovernmental network for co-operation in research and technology. As such, the organisation has published its visionary strategy for achieving core objectives by 2020. Please click [here](#) to view this

- ii) The European Commission, DG Enterprise and industry representatives held a seminar entitled **Support for EU SMEs in International Markets** on Monday of last week

- iii) The European Union's **Scientific & Technical Research Committee** has published its latest work programme for 2011 and 2012. Please click [here](#) to view the programme in full

[Key updates this week](#)

Ensuring research remains a priority?

The European Commission has submitted a number of proposed budgetary commitments which, whilst recognising the need for fiscal austerity, are ambitious and cover significant spending on research and development.

Investment in this area will be greatly increased over the next seven years under a €80 billion EU-funding programme for research and innovation called **Horizon 2020**. By supporting and coordinating all projects across member states, the initiative intends to create a stronger foundation for competition and excellence and is a core element of the **Innovation Union Initiative** and the **Europe 2020 Strategy**.

However, EPP Group MEP Salvador Garriga, who drafted The European Parliament's proposal on the budget, stated that the solutions proposed by the Commission surmounted to "creative accounting" in terms of the shifting of available finance from existing areas in order to fund the **proposed** measures. This, states Garriga, "continues the bad habit of accepting political commitments at European level and then denying their financing".

"We will examine the details, but the will of the Parliament is that freezing resources is not a viable option. We need to (at least) maintain cohesion and agricultural spending and that we also need a substantial increase in fields such as R&D, innovation, energy and transport," he pointed out.

The European Parliament will hold a debate on the Commission's proposal on July 5th, please see further updates for more details.

Please click on the following link for additional background:

[Money where it matters – how the EU budget delivers value to you](#)

Designer drugs: A growing concern across Europe

On June 29th, the EPP Group held a Group Hearing on psychoactive drugs, due to growing concerns about rapidly increasing usage throughout Europe.

Bogusław Sonik MEP, EPP Group Vice-Chairman of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI), called for a specific EU policy in order to protect the public, especially young people.

Oana Antonescu MEP touched on the option of banning drugs on a national basis, but went on to highlight that individuals would still be able to purchase online or in neighbouring countries. This, states Antonescu, is why blanket EU legislation on the matter would be more effective.

Representatives of European institutions and agencies, national governments, scholars and NGOs, went onto examine the possible measures for a uniform solution to this problem. Sonik highlighted the lack of intelligence on the levels of usage and the presence of legal drugs across member states currently available to the group, as a result of the majority of sales taking place online.

[More information on the Hearing](#)

Further strengthening the framework for EU research and development

Please click [here](#) to access BUDG amendments to the draft opinion from Carl Haglund on the **Green Paper: From challenges to opportunities: towards a common strategic framework for EU research and innovation funding**.

[Here](#) to access amendments 1-48 to the IMCO draft opinion from Lara Comi on the aforementioned Green Paper.

And [here](#) to access amendments 1-73 to the REGI draft opinion from Hermann Winkler.

And finally...

The European Research Area Committee (ERAC) has published its draft summary conclusions of the **6th meeting of ERAC**, held in Brussels. Please click [here](#) to view these.

Articles of interest

Forbes, Merck Serono submits application for extension of indication for Rebif(R) in Europe
<http://specials.forbes.com/article/0fClbbl03yaH2>

Science Business, Urgent action is needed over new drugs for mental illness

<http://bulletin.sciencebusiness.net/news/75225/Urgent-action-is-needed-over-new-drugs-for-mental-illness>

The Parliament, Transparency register hailed as 'great step forward'

<http://www.theparliament.com/latest-news/article/newsarticle/transparency-register-hailed-as-great-step-forward/>

New Scientist, Brain trades off illusion spotting and introspection

<http://www.newscientist.com/article/dn20626-brain-balances-illusion-and-introspection.html?DCMP=OTC-rss&nsref=online-news>

Health 24, How the brain takes a joke

http://www.health24.com/news/Brain_Neurological/1-896.63799.asp

Dates for your diary

Meeting of National Branch Councils and National Action Groups, Brussels, October 3rd 2011

Launch of the Cost Study to the European Parliament, Brussels, October 4th 2011

Board meeting and general assembly, Brussels, October 5th 2011

EBC Board Meeting November, Warsaw, November 17th 2011

EBC Polish Presidency Meeting, Warsaw, November 18th 2011