STATEMENTS FROM THE PRESIDENT AND PRESIDENT-ELECT

BREXIT AND NEUROSCIENCE

As a European scientist and as President of FENS, I am deeply concerned about the potential negative consequences for European neuroscience due to the decision of the UK to leave the EU.

Neuroscience - and research in general - has no borders and is by definition collaborative and transnational. It is thanks to this collaborative effort that breakthrough discoveries are made.

The interactions of neuroscientists from all over Europe and worldwide are the strength of our community. The FENS Forum of European Neuroscience now held in Copenhagen (2-6 July) with 6000 attendees and including more than 500 UK-based scientists is the best example of this. This is the way excellent research is done, with no barriers, free mobility and open sharing of knowledge.

Any action that limits this freedom of moving and collaborating between European scientists, which is vividly apparent here at the FENS Forum, is potentially harmful for the continued development of science in Europe.

FENS is committed to supporting neuroscience and encourages the involved responsible parties to ensure that scientist from across Europe may continue to exchange and collaborate freely across Europe.

Monica DiLuca
University of Milan
FENS President

The UK’S decision to leave the EU may have a major impact on neuroscience research both in the UK and through its collaborations across Europe. These collaborations are vividly on display here at the FENS Forum in Copenhagen.

UK neuroscience has been strongly supported by EU funding and the present situation is that the UK remains a member of the EU for at least two years and will continue with full engagement in the Horizon 2020 programme.
Our national academies (the Academy of Medical Sciences, the Royal Society) and heads of institution have been and will continue to work closely with the Government during the negotiations that will follow, with the aim of ensuring freedom to work and to move between European countries to collaborate.

Neuroscience research is a UK, European and, indeed, an international priority that requires the highest level of collaborative and cooperative research effort, and we must work hard to make sure it continues.

Integral to this endeavour, the careers of talented young British and European neuroscientists depend on the ability to work in different European laboratories, providing them with invaluable professional experience.

The conditions of the UK’s departure from the EU will determine the nature of the funding of that collaborative effort in the future. Therefore, the UK’s highest goal in the negotiations must be to remain part of the European Research Council and to preserve the essential freedom of movement for researchers at all stages of their careers. There are existing models that can be aimed for, such as those adopted by Norway and Switzerland which are not members of the EU but are full and active members of the European neuroscience community that come together at the FENS Forum this week.

Professor Barry Everitt
University of Cambridge, UK
FENS President-Elect

The 10th FENS Forum of Neuroscience, the largest basic neuroscience meeting in Europe, organised by FENS and hosted by the Danish Society for Neuroscience will attract an estimated 6000 international delegates. FENS mission is to advance research and education in neuroscience within and outside Europe, to facilitate interaction and coordination between its members. FENS represents 43 national and single discipline neuroscience societies with about 24,000 member scientists from 33 European countries. http://www.fens.org/