Case study: Neuroscience in Serbia-Taking the Road to Advocacy

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Why Advocacy in Serbia?

- Long tradition in neuroscience in Serbia (1956-)
- High-quality researchers and academic staff
- Well established, up to date faculty programs in Neuroscience
- Relatively well equipped laboratories, but not fully exploited (limited funding and know-how)
Projects in neurology/neuroscience

Biology / Biomedicine / Medicine
152 projects / 29 neuro / 457 researchers

- 16% of BBM researchers are in neuroscience
- 3 - 4% of tot. 13 760 researchers in science in SRB

Source: M.Sc. Jasmina Grubin, MESTD
What obstacles do we face?

Constraints of NS progress in Serbia are serious:

- Still a developing country, **0.2% GDP** for research
- MESTD is a **sole** financing source (**no Ministry of Sci**)
- Persistence of legacy of “**per capita financing**”
- Average grant funding **15.000 €/y** (e.g. 10 researchers) – far below European standard
- Limited cooperation with EU and other international scientific institutions

BRAIN DRAIN
Publications in Neuroscience (2011)

- 76 articles in journals indexed in Web of Science (neurological sciences & neuroscience)
- 4 articles with IF>10 (published in collaboration with foreign laboratories)
- Average IF of publications financed and executed in Serbia alone ≤ 3

Source: M.Sc. Jasmina Grubin, MESTD
Serbian cooperation with EU

- FP7 (SSA-WB, RegPot, etc.)
- COST actions (highly utilized)
- Bilateral collaborative projects- Slovenia, Germany, France, Greece, Israel, etc. (supp by MESTD)
- Erasmus Mundus
- NENS, IBRO, schools for young researchers
Perspectives…

- USA grants (Fogarty Award, Fulbright, Foundation-Funded Research Grants, …)
- EU funds
  - Horizon 2020 !!!
  - SCOPES (Switzerland/Eastern Europe)
  - Marie Curie Fellowships
  - …
What can we do to improve situation in Serbia?

We need to learn how to:

- promote our research,
- engage constructively in policy making,
- increase awareness of legislators, stakeholders and the general public about the importance of neuroscience research.

Education and policy in advocacy are strongly needed!
FENS/SfN Award

Creating Advocacy Strategy for Neuroscience in Serbia

**AIM**

to establish a program and develop adequate tools for neuroscience advocacy in Serbia
Structure of the project

I. Workshop:
establishing a strategy adapted to Serbian science and public policy

II. Meeting
presenting proposed strategy to government officials, non-governmental officials, media and general public

III. Ensure means for implementation of adopted Neuroscience Advocacy Policy in Serbia
Workshop:

Federation of European Neuroscience Societies

SNS Advocacy Grant
WP1: Workshop on best practice in advocacy in neuroscience, and outline of the proposal of an advocacy strategy for neuroscience in Serbia

June 19th 2013.
Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts
Knez Mihailova 35, Belgrade
Objectives

I. to learn about advocacy practice in neuroscience in EU countries;

II. to create a task force which would, using the knowledge and information obtained on the workshop, create a proposal of an advocacy strategy for neuroscience in Serbia;

III. to prepare accompanying material about neuroscience in Serbia.
Workshop on best practice in advocacy
Belgrade June 19th 2013

Participants:

- Professional advocates: FENS representatives
  Dr Monica Di Luca, President-elect and
  Dr Fotini Stylianopoulou, Former Secretary General
- Government officials: deputy Minister- Ministry of Education and Science, Dean-Medical faculty and Rector of the University of Belgrade
- Representatives of the Serbian Neuroscience Society, Society of Serbian Neurologists, Serbian Psychiatric Association
- Researchers
- Patients associations
- Center for promotion of science

→ perspective on the advocacy in different area of neuroscience was given
II. Task force meeting:

- main problems in neuroscience research in Serbia are identified
- roadmap for future activities designed
Roadmap for future activities

I. Activities aimed at raising interest of government agencies, industry and NGOs:

- create a database of publications for each of the societies
- mapping of researchers and institutions that do neuroscience research
- provide a list of clinical trials in neuroscience
- create personal approach to important government officials in order to ensure their support
Roadmap for future activities

- initiate step by step approach in identifying partners in pharmaceutical industry
- invite government officials and industry representatives to the neuroscience meetings;
- make patient organizations - oriented segment of the meeting

II. Activities aimed at raising public awareness:

- Centre for promotion of science
- Media
- Involvement of the young researchers in various activities
SNS outreach activities

- Lectures
- DAAD schools ’12, ’13 (regional activities)

Meetings: VI SNS/Society of Serbian Neurologists’ 13
SNS outreach activities

- BAW...since 2000...
- BAW ’12, ’13 (FENS grant awards): exhibitions, workshops, lectures, concerts – EURO/NEURO edutainment

Edutainment (education + entertainment)
SNS outreach activities …

- Researches night ‘13 (FP7, Marie Curie, EU)- Advocacy corner, September 27th, Belgrade
- Science festival (Neuro section, visited by 21 000)
- EMOB-May 2013- Round table: Brainstorming for the brain
Project outcome:

• Adoption of strategy for the Advocacy of Neuroscience in Serbia

• Creation of platform for dissemination of this strategy to relevant governmental and non-governmental institutions

• Dissemination of information to the stakeholders, media and general public, in order to increase overall visibility of neuroscience research in Serbia and in European Research Area
Taking the Road to Advocacy…

FENS/SfN