

**Strategic Plan
July 2020**

Approved by the Governing Council on 15 July 2020

This document serves two purposes - as a radar screen of actions to be undertaken by the FENS governing bodies - as a presentation of FENS policy to member societies and individual membership.



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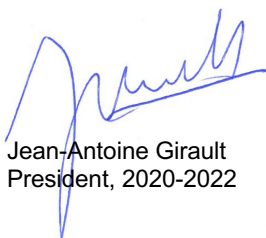
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Message from the FENS Presidents

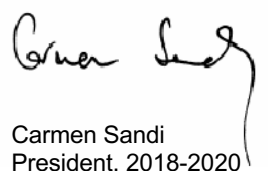
Dear colleagues,

The present Strategic Plan is important, since it provides plans for FENS in a short and a longer time perspective. It is critical for an organisation like FENS to develop clear goals and be able to implement them.

Our task is to promote all aspects of neuroscience and be at the service of the European neuroscience community and all our member societies. During the recent years several new actions in different areas have been started or reorganized, as detailed in the document, and we are starting to see their benefits. These last months, the world has been confronted with an unprecedented situation with global consequences, including, of course, for FENS and its members. We should learn from that and be better prepared in the future. We hope you will share our enthusiasm for the plans and the suggestions for changes that we propose. We look forward to refining and implementing them in interaction with you all.



Jean-Antoine Girault
President, 2020-2022



Carmen Sandi
President, 2018-2020

Brussels, July 2020

I. Introduction to the Strategic Plan

I.1 General overview

A strategic plan embedded in its core mission is an important tool for FENS to ensure the best possible development of the organisation and its activities for the continued benefit and relevance to its member societies and the neuroscience community at large.

The current updated Strategic Plan defines the overall direction for FENS over an 8-10-year period and identifies detailed medium-to long-term objectives within all key domains and activities of the organisation. The updated version of the strategic plan is intended to enable the FENS leadership to distinguish between realistic and less realistic goals, establish priorities and provide a constant overview of FENS activities.

The current plan serves a dual purpose for FENS:

- **Information:** The Strategic Plan enables the transparent dissemination of information about FENS activities, direction and objectives to its member societies, individual neuroscientists, other stakeholders and partners at European and international levels.
- **Framework for action:** The Strategic Plan provides a mechanism for FENS to identify opportunities and challenges within the European Research Area in a timely manner that will provide flexibility to act.

There is a particular need for the FENS Strategic Plan to indicate a structured long-term vision for the organisation in order to meet forthcoming challenges. For each activity, the updated strategic plan therefore outlines the strategic issue, objectives for the activity and summarises the actions that will be taken.

Periodic review of the plan and its implementation ensures that actions where a desired outcome has either been achieved, or are no longer likely to be achieved, are stopped and that objectives and actions may continuously be readjusted. The next in-depth revision of the strategic plan is planned for the term 2020-2022.

The Strategic Plan provides long-term guidelines for FENS to undertake its missions, ensuring continuity of actions despite the ever-changing composition of its committees and leaderships. In the light of the above considerations, the Governing Council enacted the current updated Strategic Plan in July 2020.

Mission of FENS (Articles of Association, Article 2)

- Promote interaction and coordination between its member societies and develop neuroscience research in their respective countries and disciplines;
- Facilitate interactions between neuroscientists and related scientists within and outside Europe by holding scientific meetings and by other appropriate means;
- Facilitate the dissemination of scientific information by publications in journals and through other communication channels;
- Support education and training of young neuroscience researchers by providing information, establishing schools, training programmes and grants to young scientists;
- Promote the understanding of and involvement in neuroscience among the general public and advise decision-makers on the results and the implications of neuroscience research.

I.2 Strategic vision

The present strategic Plan introduces a vision statement to help align and root objectives and activities into one unifying ambition:

In alignment with its member societies and members, FENS shall be a recognisable major force for the promotion of neuroscience research, education and scientific exchange within and beyond the European Research Area, towards the international neuroscience community and its related organisations.

I.3 Organisation of the Strategic Plan

FENS has four main domains, or *operational pillars* that range from its core scientific activities, communication, the ambition to provide policy level advice to major stakeholders within and outside Europe, as well as the organisational administration of FENS (Figure 1). This organisation facilitates monitoring of how effectively the plan is implemented and helps understand the need for new initiatives. Further, it will promote communication about FENS and its activities to FENS members, European and global stakeholders.

All operational pillars, including their underlying activities are separately defined in the present Strategic Plan with definitions of detailed objectives and specific actions.



Figure 1: overview of the four operational pillars of FENS

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I.4 Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan has been conceived to enable monitoring of its implementation through concrete actions.

The overall management of FENS scientific activities and implementation of the linked strategic objectives are achieved through its committees that are comprised of scientists with expertise and interest in the domain of the committee (Executive Committee, Standing - and Special Committees). The Strategic Plan specifies the charges and responsibilities of each committee, whether they act alone or in collaboration, and under which conditions.

Decisions that are taken by FENS committees are as a rule implemented by the administration of FENS. This serves the dual purpose of freeing committee members from the burdensome tasks of implementation and ensures knowledge transfer and continuity in long-term planning and execution. Hence, each proposed action includes an estimation of the support staff needed.

* * *

I.5 Assessing progress

The Strategic Plan undergoes periodic assessment in order to evaluate how specific goals have been implemented and achieved, and also to readjust objectives when necessary. The revision of the Strategic Plan is the responsibility of the Executive Committee following discussions with the various FENS committees. Every second year, the Governing Council discusses and approves the overall direction and implementation of the strategic plan. This periodic evaluation ensures the timely adjustment of the organisation of FENS, helps to redirect actions and objectives and also supports the development of new initiatives.

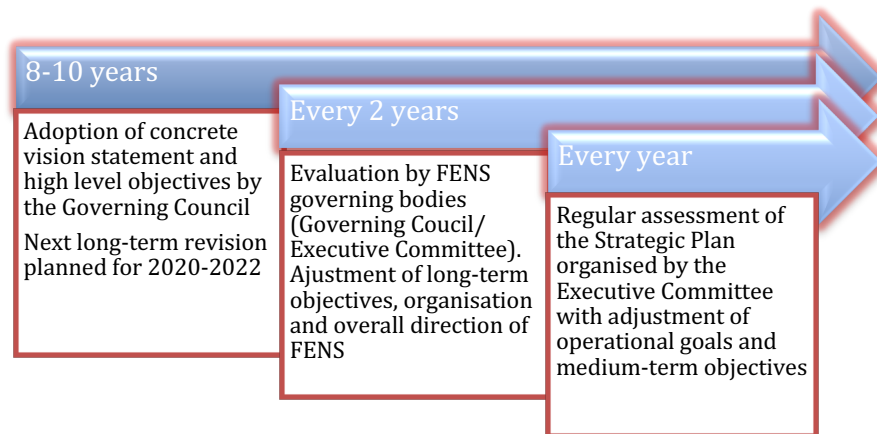


Figure 2: Timeline for periodic revision and updating of the FENS strategic plan

II. Core scientific areas

The FENS mission is to facilitate scientific interaction and exchange between its member societies and individual neuroscientists and to promote education and training in neuroscience across Europe. This is met by diverse actions and initiatives under the Core Scientific Domains of the FENS strategic plan.

It is essential to FENS to secure open and inclusive representation across all of its activities for individual neuroscientists, regardless of their gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, appearance, ethnicity, national origin, age or religion.

II.1 Neuroscience meetings

A core objective for FENS is to promote excellence in neuroscience research and facilitate equal and inclusive access for all neuroscientists to scientific exchange within the European Research Area and towards the European and international neuroscience community. The principal ambition for all FENS scientific meetings therefore is to provide added value for the FENS member societies and for European and international neuroscientists. An additional objective is to use FENS meetings to showcase the excellence of European neuroscience to partners, policy makers, funding bodies and the public. Further, neuroscience meetings provide FENS with a platform for its visibility towards the scientific community and its relevant organisations. It is an important objective for FENS to utilise this exposure to maintain and further strengthen its corporate identity.

FENS alone, or in collaboration with European partners, organises three types of scientific meetings: the biennial FENS Forum, the FENS Regional meetings (FRMs) and the biannual neuroscience conference series “*The Brain Conferences*”. FRMs are organised by collaborating national or regional scientific member organisations, with administrative and technical support and label by FENS.

The FENS Forum is a major, biennial international meeting for all neuroscience disciplines, intended to promote scientific exchange between researchers worldwide. The Forum presents high-level international research and provides an opportunity to promote collaboration in Europe and internationally. The Forum also represents a showcase of European neuroscience for scientists, decision-makers, FENS partners, the public and funding agencies.

Objectives:

1. Further consolidate the Forum as the premier international neuroscience event in Europe.
2. Showcase diversity and excellence in neuroscience, from basic to applied.
3. Promote member societies and reinforce their commitment to FENS.
4. Promote the representation of all neuroscientific domains, applying special actions to incorporate underrepresented fields.
5. Increase attendance, aiming at 8000 by the Forum in Paris, 2022. Generally, the Forum should be perceived as a *must-attend* event for European neuroscientists and be considered a high-priority event by the global neuroscience community.
6. Promote the dialogue between neuroscientists and developments in technology, healthcare and business to advance progress in neuroscientific knowledge and to foster its translation to human applications.
7. Improve cost-effectiveness and increase attendance, sponsorship and commercial exhibitions to ensure that significant income is generated by the Forum, to be used for other FENS activities.
8. Strengthen the perceived position of FENS among European and international scientists as the unifying society for neuroscience in Europe.
9. Professionalise the administrative management of the Forum, manage its suppliers, including the main PCO with an aim to increasingly integrate relevant modules of the Forum administration into the FENS administration.
10. Consolidate the venue selection process and redefine as needed the role of the Host Society in the organisation of future Forums.

Actions:

A focus on diversity and scientific excellence is ensured by the Programme Committee, composed of international experts, which selects the symposia and workshops proposed by scientists from all over the world, and chooses plenary and other main lecturers. The Programme Committee advises FENS on steps necessary to enhance the scientific quality and diversity of the Forum programme. FENS aims to increasingly adapt the Forum programme and events to integrate events and sessions that promote the dialogue between basic neuroscience and technology, healthcare and business developments.

To ensure the most effective professional and financial management, the FENS administration implements the FENS Forum supported by one or several professional conference organiser(s) as required and deemed most beneficial to FENS. A FENS member society in the country of the Forum may be invited to act as host for specific events and initiatives related to the Forum. It is the responsibility of the Executive Committee of FENS to further define and adjust this role in order for it to match the Forum format and specific needs.

Other actions include development of initiatives to broadly showcase FENS member societies at the Forum, increase strategic communication with member societies and neuroscientists at large about the value of FENS. FENS also aims to secure diverse and equal access to and representation within the Forum for underrepresented scientists and scientific topics and groups.

The Brain Conference series is a biannual conference series that is organised and financed through a high-level partnership between FENS and the Lundbeck Foundation. The partners aim to further consolidate this recurrent series of very prestigious neuroscience conferences. The guiding aim for the biannual series is to promote excellence, scientific exchange and visibility for diverse topics in contemporary neuroscience.

Objectives:

1. Focus on the highest degree of scientific excellence worldwide by continuously engaging leading experts as scientific chairs and speakers.
2. Reach a high level of interest from the community with a minimum of 150+ applications per conference.
3. Consolidate the series as a key FENS activity for the global neuroscience audience
4. Use the Brain Conferences to consolidate the position of FENS as the leading member-based organisation for neuroscience in Europe.
5. Secure access and representation for underrepresented scientists at different career stages.

Actions:

A Special Brain Conferences Committee is responsible for the successful implementation of the objectives of the conference series: The committee reports to the Executive Committee of FENS. The overall conference programme is regularly evaluated by the partner organisations.

The FENS Regional Meeting (FRM) is a core activity of FENS, dedicated to supporting member societies in promoting excellence in research, but with a European regional focus. The FRMs, are held in odd years and therefore alternate with FENS Forums (held in even years); they are organised by FENS member societies, alone or in partnership in a geographical region.

FENS supports the programmatic and practical implementation of the FRMs, and provides financial support for specific costs and a number of travel grants for students and young researchers. The high level objective for FENS is in line with its mission to actively promote scientific interaction and open exchange about neuroscience research, while at the same time gaining visibility among its members, in this case at the regional level. In collaboration with the societies, FENS aims to facilitate open and inclusive access and representation of individual scientists across the broadest possible range of scientific domains.

Objectives:

1. Strengthen neuroscience regionally in all European countries
2. Promote scientific exchange within and across European regions
3. Create lasting engagement of member societies and scientists in FENS activities

4. Increase awareness of FENS and its activities
5. Enhance the impact of regional societies and boost membership
6. Facilitate connection with expatriates to the national/regional scientific community
7. Secure representation and access to/in the FRM programme for underrepresented scientists and topics
8. Help local organizers put together a scientific program combining excellence and diversity to increase attractiveness of FRM. Increase involvement of FENS in structuring of the scientific programme, including of the programme committee.

Actions:

Evaluate this activity after each FRM, taking the following issues into account: i) the scientific quality and attendance of the FRM; ii) the impact of the FRM at the regional level in terms of public and political awareness of neuroscience research; iii) a possible increase in the number of members of the organising society/societies; and/or iv) an increase in the number of members of the organising society/societies participating in the FENS Forum. The inclusive representation of diverse topics and active engagement with small and underrepresented scientific areas shall be part of this evaluation. FENS, through its Executive Committee, shall take an increasingly active role as co-organiser of the FRM. The call for 2023 FRM shall reflect this ambition to more strongly engage as organiser of the FRM.

The Executive Committee, the FENS administration as well as the Communication Committee shall be active partners for the organising societies in order to secure the best possible implementation of the FRM as a branded FENS activity.

II.2 Higher education and training in neuroscience

With programmes in higher education and training, FENS aims to actively support continued higher education and training in neuroscience for European and international early career scientists. FENS events and programmes in higher education and training shall provide a secure, harassment-free, open and inclusive format for all participants, irrespective of gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, appearance, ethnicity, national origin, age or religion.

In order to provide added value to the high-level programmes already offered by other institutions at the national and European level, FENS presents a unique scheme for training and education with a focus on excellence and distinctive value towards its member scientists. Thus, activities of this programme will add to the higher education initiatives already existing in European countries. It is an overall aim for FENS to work with reputable partner organisations on the implementation of training and continued education initiatives for all career stages.

A Standing Committee for Higher Education and Training (CHET) is responsible for the governance and implementation of FENS training and education activities. The chair of CHET is a member of and reports to the Executive Committee and the Governing Council.

The initiatives and actions related to higher education and training should develop within the following main areas: a) a schools programme in collaboration with partner organisations, b) providing hands-on training in neuroscience through the continued support of the independent Cajal programme, c) support for national level training courses, and d) student exchange programmes within Europe and with international partner organisations, e) expansion of the reach and impact of the programme for network of neuroscience schools in Europe (NENS), and f) increase development of and member access to material for online training in neuroscience.

II.2.a FENS schools programme:

The overall aim for this programme is to provide distinctive international schools in Europe on timely topics in neuroscience. The programme should clearly provide an added and unique value to the collection of existing European schools in neuroscience.

FENS schools should be recognised as (i) having an outstanding programme, (ii) comprise lectures and assignments for students, (iii) offer a high degree of interaction between students and staff and (iv) provide

an open, safe and inclusive environment for early career scientists including from diverse backgrounds. Participation in these schools (as tutor or student) should be considered a sign of distinction.

Objectives:

1. To continuously develop a concept of prestigious, *state-of-the-art* schools in neuroscience that are based on a unique scheme, providing significant added value to the existing range of national and European programmes in neuroscience
2. Promote scientific exchange and networking among students and between students and faculty
3. Promote the value of FENS and its member organisations towards early career scientists in Europe and beyond
4. Provide an inclusive format that enables the open discussion and scientific exchange among the participants.
5. Facilitate and promote interaction between alumni of FENS training activities

Actions:

Continue to implement a competitive schools programme. A committee consisting of several ex officio-appointed FENS officers, together with input from the scientific community in response to an annual Call for Ideas and Proposals, will select topics for the schools. The programme will be evaluated regularly.

II.2.b Hands-on training in neuroscience:

FENS aims to support the continued presence of prominent *state-of-the-art*, hands-on neuroscience training in Europe. Mainly, this is achieved through significant financial and leadership engagement with the Cajal neuroscience training programme. This programme is carried out in partnership with IBRO, the Gatsby Foundation, Bordeaux University (Bordeaux Neurocampus) and the Champalimaud Foundation at Lisbon as venue institutions.

Objectives:

1. In collaboration with the partner organisations to further brand the Cajal programme as an independently established entity for high level neuroscience training in Europe.
2. Provide advanced hands-on training courses in key topics and emerging techniques that will have a decisive impact on the career of the participants.
3. Offer an annual programme that covers approaches from molecules to the whole brain and from fundamental questions to clinical applications. In its full extent, the programme aims for up to 6 courses per year.

Actions:

Design and implement a competitive training programme for the future and strengthen the organisational structure of the programme, both within the venues and centrally in Brussels. The mission of the Cajal programme shall be continuously evaluated to support new initiatives and engage with new partners and communities of neuroscientists. The Cajal programme shall provide an inclusive format that enables the open discussion and scientific exchange among the participants.

II.2.c Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS) network)

The overall aim for the NENS is to provide a network of all major European neuroscience schools and programmes so that FENS can act at the European level in the best interest of these schools, their students and neuroscience education. Secondly, an important associated aim is for FENS to engage with early career scientists to involve them across FENS activities.

Objectives:

1. To involve as many schools/programmes in neuroscience in Europe in the NENS as possible, thus strengthening the visibility of European neuroscience education programmes and their students
2. To facilitate the exchange of experience and insights into neuroscience training and education among the leadership and students of the NENS schools
3. To strengthen the communication between graduate and undergraduate schools in Europe with FENS

4. To facilitate networking and exchange of European neuroscience students with educational activities in the Asian-Pacific region, and vice versa

Actions:

Through NENS, FENS (and in particular CHET) secure the financial means to maintain a strong exchange programme between NENS member schools. On behalf of the NENS affiliated students, CHET will organise higher educational activities during the FENS Forum and FRM. In alternate years at the Forum, the NENS schools/programmes will convene, to discuss pan-European issues related to higher education and training. The visibility and networking of the NENS affiliated programmes shall be further expanded and supported through FENS. Links with other neuroscience societies will be fostered under this programme, allowing mutual exchange of students. Current partners are the societies in Japan, China and Australasia.

II.2.d Support for national training courses

Higher educational programmes affiliated with the NENS offer courses as part of their educational curriculum. The global aim is to enhance the publicity of these courses and to allow students from less privileged areas to be exposed to some of the most stimulating neuroscience environments in Europe.

Objectives:

1. Stimulate exchange across European neuroscience, particular for early career scientists
2. Support internationalisation of local courses and provide added value to the NENS network
3. Increase dissemination of information about FENS among early career students by providing a platform for international education in neuroscience

Actions:

IBRO-PERC and FENS will provide financial support to European and international students to participate in courses of NENS members in dedicated slots. The support strategy for national training courses shall be further increased, possibly in collaboration with other partners.

II.2.e Online training and e-based learning

The importance and value of online training and networking is high and increasing. FENS has an aim to act as a driver of this development with expanded focus on the development of targeted educational resources towards early career scientists. This strategy shall be supported by concrete actions for the implementation of online training and education initiatives taken by FENS-CHET.

Objectives:

1. Increase availability for members to web-based training and e-learning material
2. Position FENS as a main hub for neuroscience continued education and training
3. Strengthen FENS role in defining the development of online education material
4. Give visibility to FENS activities and training programmes to a global audience, and further establish FENS identity towards its members and member societies

Actions:

Continue the implementation of the partnership with SfN on creation and facilitating access to online training initiatives and secure access for FENS members to high level training events and activities. In collaboration with SfN engage in the structure of the programme and its continued development. Define new training initiatives for a targeted online use alone and in collaboration with partners. These actions are specifically under the supervision of FENS-CHET.

II.3 European Journal of Neuroscience

The European Journal of Neuroscience (EJN) is the official journal of FENS. EJN, which is co-owned by FENS and the publisher Wiley, is managed by the EJN Management Committee in which the two partners are equally represented. The agreement between FENS and Wiley assigns full scientific leadership of EJN to FENS, including all decisions regarding the editorial scientific policy and choice of Editor-in-Chief (EiC).

In accordance with FENS regulations, the selection of the EIC is the responsibility of the Executive Committee and is approved by the EJM Management Committee.

In covering the broad field of neuroscience research, EJM serves the entire neuroscience community.

The Publisher and senior members of the FENS Executive Committee are responsible for renegotiating the EJM ownership contract every 5 years. Additional restructuring of the editorial office, with the provision for direct editorial support for the Editors-in-Chief may be included in these negotiations.

Objectives:

Overall, the objectives for EJM are to be considered as a principal platform for the publication of neuroscience research of high standards. The scientific success of EJM depends primarily on the work of the Editorial Board, under the leadership of the Editor-in-Chief in close collaboration with the team of appointed senior editors. The following scientific, administrative and financial objectives for EJM guide these activities:

1. Enhance EJM's visibility and perception as a contemporary, dynamic, and interactive journal
2. Increase the impact of the journal with the ambition that it is among the top 50% of all neuroscience journals within 5 years
3. Secure a broad representation of neuroscience topics and themes in the journal
4. Continuously monitor and proactively anticipate future technological and policy developments in the publishing arena
5. By enhancing the quality and visibility of EJM, ensure the future stability and growth of income to FENS, thereby enabling FENS to fulfil its core mission. The revenue (in British Pounds) in 2016 following the renegotiated contract between Publisher and FENS will provide the benchmark against which to measure this objective.
6. Promote scientific excellence through the biennial award of the FENS-EJM awards, funded by the Publisher.

Actions:

Support the Editor-in-Chief and the team of senior editors in strengthening the Editorial office management. Undertake a major effort, in concert with this leadership team to increase the visibility of the journal within the scientific community; support the leadership team in their efforts to publish special issues and improve publication procedures, including measures to streamline submission and review; encourage Presidents of constituent FENS societies, as members of the Governing Council, to encourage their individual members to submit high quality papers to EJM. These actions are fully coordinated through the EJM editorial office and are, supported by the senior editors, under the responsibility of the Editor-in-Chief who report to the Executive Committee and the EJM management committee.

Develop new initiatives in addition to existing actions such as the "Best Publication Award" and the "EJM Special Feature" at the FENS Forum in order to further promote the EJM brand as the official scientific journal of FENS towards the European membership base and the global neuroscience community.

The journal's adaptability to new technologies and action plans for meeting new challenges in the publishing arena (open access, etc.) depend on a proactive attitude of the publisher; this topic is included in the regular reports to the EJM Management Committee.

Secure a broad and inclusive representation of scientific domains and themes supported by the global neuroscience community. This shall be secured through a continuous evaluation and development of the Editorial Board and inclusive strategies towards the inclusion of underrepresented fields.

III. Community Building, networking and engagement

The community of scientists and fields involved with neuroscience is expanding rapidly. As this happens, the need for networking and community building will increase. FENS shall continue to engage with the community in various ways and with adequate means with an aim to serve the interests of the community.

As a related objective, FENS shall continue to inform the general public about the value of doing research and how we as a community successfully gain new insights into the functions of the brain. Activities for Community building, networking and engagement are dependent on appropriate strategies for communication as well as initiatives that will bring scientists from different domains together in new formats.

III.1 Communication and outreach

Effective communication by FENS requires a corporate plan for communication that is defined by the Executive Committee and carried out at various levels of FENS in a coordinated manner. It aims at several targets both within FENS (member societies, individual neuroscientists), and outside FENS (public at large, scientific organisations, decision-makers). The strategy for effective communication about FENS may vary and can be based on the use of different tools such as online communication (website, social media, video clips, etc.), targeted emailing, use of traditional media (radio, television), printed material (flyers, posters, publications etc.), Editorials in EJM and presentations by FENS officers.

Objectives for FENS communication

The overriding objective for communication by FENS is to increase its visibility and facilitate efficient exchange of information with FENS member societies and the neuroscience community. At a second level, efforts are made to communicate FENS activities and neuroscience to stakeholders and international organisations. In addition, FENS aims to communicate its efforts to inform the public at large. The latter is achieved either alone or in collaboration with partner organisations including EBC and DANA/EDAB.

1. Increase and maintain FENS visibility within and outside Europe as the unifying European member organisation
2. Ensure optimal information flow between FENS and its member societies as well as with international partners
3. Brand the FENS Forum as the principal European meeting for European and international neuroscientists
4. Enhance public awareness of Neuroscience related issues
5. Advise and help member societies to disseminate activities, including the Brain Awareness Week in collaboration with DANA/EDAB
6. Actively help FRM organising societies to best showcase the FRM at the regional and European level.

Levels of responsibilities

➤ Executive Committee

The Executive Committee, advised by the Governing Council, the Communication committee, the Executive Director as well as other committees, defines the corporate long-term policy of communication for FENS. In addition, the Executive Committee through the President and Secretary General undertakes communication actions at a high level, especially with major stakeholders and assigns other communication tasks to the Communication Committee, or whenever appropriate, to other committees as well as to the FENS administration.

➤ Communication committee

The FENS Communication Committee is especially involved in increasing and maintaining the visibility of FENS and information about FENS activities within the neuroscience community. In this role, the Communication Committee advises the FENS leadership on the corporate communication policy and its objectives as well as defining precise actions, within its sphere of delegation, to implement the strategic policy.

The Communication Committee executes its principal activities within FENS (between FENS and its member societies, with individual scientists and members of societies), at all times but particularly during the FENS Forum and the FRMs. Further, the Communication Committee is responsible for advising on the best strategies for implementation of the current programmes for public outreach.

- Other committees
Within their sphere of activity, other FENS committees provide advice to the FENS Executive Committee and in a coordinated manner execute specific actions of communication.

- Administrative support for FENS Communication
Coordinated communication within FENS involves considerable effort in preparing and effecting any project of communication. The role of the administration at any of the above levels is to ensure the accurate and optimal implementation of decided communication actions.

The Executive Director, as head of the administration, will act as adviser to the Executive Committee and supervise the implementation of its decisions. It is the task of the FENS staff to prepare relevant information necessary to the committees in defining their policy, execute the actions decided and provide publication material, whether electronic or traditional, used by FENS for communication.

Actions:

A comprehensive communications strategy enabling internal communication between committees and offices has been developed. Define targets and initiatives of outreach activities for effective communication with FENS constituencies (individual society members, member societies & programmes) and the general audience (school children, adult public, patients' organisations, decision-makers).

Maintain a continuous flow of information about FENS activities among member societies and the scientific community in general, including through active participation in member societies' annual meetings, FENS schools and training courses, and FENS conferences.

For FENS administration: Maintain the IT platform for the FENS website with integrated multi-functionality and easy to use features that will allow FENS staff to better serve FENS membership and communication outside of FENS.

Continue to launch communication initiatives with partner organisations such as EDAB and EBC.

III.2 Networks and community building

Networks of scientists can be very useful in the development of the potential of individuals' talents and career advancement. FENS will support the formation of such networks at various career levels.

II.3.a Alumni network

Students attending FENS Schools and Advanced Training Courses will be encouraged to build their own network by self-organisation.

Actions:

Each School/Course will elect a Speaker and a Deputy who are delegated to maintain contacts with participants.

The election of Speakers from different FENS schools and courses will be supported by CHET. The Secretary General assisted by the administration of FENS will maintain contacts with the elected Speakers. When appropriate and relevant, these actions could be taken in partnership with IBRO. The implementation of alumni networks for FENS-related training activities is under the authority and specific responsibility of the FENS-CHET.

II.3.b FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence

In order to strengthen the link between FENS and the next generation of leaders in the European neuroscience community FENS, in partnership with the Kavli Foundation, implements an initiative to foster a network of highly talented mid-career neuroscientists. The network consists of ~30 engaged scientific members who are selected on the basis of their individual excellence and motivation to support the neuroscience community in general.

The initiative is designed to enable FENS to engage a core sector of the young established European neuroscience community in its activities. The Network of Excellence is self-organised in its activities and reports directly to the Executive Committee of FENS. It also acts as an advisory body for new initiatives, public relations, and advocacy. It will maintain close contact with the FENS Executive Committee. Practically, the chair of the FKNE is regularly invited to attend meetings of the Executive Committee of FENS.

Objectives:

1. Consolidate the FENS-Kavli network of the most talented and committed European neuroscientists of the 'next generation' of successful PIs
2. Through the initiative provide a platform of recognition for its members and facilitate a format for young neuroscientists in Europe to interact at a high level with peers enabling the opportunity to help shape the future of European neuroscience
3. Create synergistic interactions between promising young neuroscientists in Europe and thereby facilitate strong ties between them and their national societies, as well as with FENS
4. Involve the network in FENS activities, e.g. as speakers during conferences and schools; in outreach and in advocacy, and seek their advice whenever appropriate
5. Through a partnership with the Kavli Foundation, secure long-term financial support for the network.

Actions:

FENS has engaged in a multiple-year agreement with the Kavli Foundation, collectively providing financial support for the FKNE. Having elected the first FENS-Kavli scholars in 2014 the first group of finalised scholars have created an alumni network of past FKNE scholars. FENS is committed to the long-term success of the Network, including of the growing group of FKNE alumni.

II.3.c Network of Ph.D. students; ENCODS (European Neuroscience Conference by Doctoral Students)

Support the implementation of annual meetings of the ENCODS network of Ph.D. students in Europe. FENS-CHET will engage with the network as needed in order to secure that the organisers are well coordinated and receive the appropriate level of support from FENS.

Objectives:

1. Install a sense of belonging to a community of early career European neuroscientists
2. Assist and facilitate scientific exchange on terms that are defined by the students
3. Strengthen contact between FENS and the group of emerging new scholars in neuroscience

Actions:

FENS-CHET will engage in regular contact with the students and organising committees. The administration of FENS supports the annual meetings as defined in the established contracts.

III.3 Virtual community

Virtual communities and online networking are growing in importance for the international neuroscience community. FENS, through its activities, shall continue to be a leader in support of these developments and support the creation of value and engagement through these efforts through its online platforms.

Objectives:

1. Consolidate FENS as a hub for online events and exchange
2. Target online events to development of smaller fields and groups
3. Strengthen link between the European and global neuroscience community with FENS and its member societies

Actions:

FENS shall explore ways to engage the community in online and virtual events, debates and activities. The format shall open for scientific exchange for smaller groups of scientists and bring scientists together in new ways that will stimulate emerging discussions.

IV. Strategic alliances and advocacy

FENS core pillar activities include acting as a strong voice in the policy arena and to advocate for neuroscience research through coordinated actions with its member societies, as well as with European and international partners.

FENS should aim to increase its interactions with relevant European and International policy makers and stakeholders to showcase achievements and advances in neuroscience research.

FENS aims to promote neuroscience and preserve neuroscience funding at the national and European levels. Due to the significant representation of all neuroscience research fields in the membership base of FENS, as well as the large and continuously growing number of young scientists representing the next generation of scientific leaders, the potential policy leverage exerted by FENS at the European and international levels is significant.

The strategy of FENS within this area will be, whenever possible, delivered through collaborative relationships with high-level European and non-European international partners, including the European Brain Council (EBC) of which FENS is a founding member, IBRO and SfN.

Objectives:

1. Coordinate efforts to achieve an increase in political and public support for and understanding of neuroscience, both at European and national levels
2. Increase the engagement of European funding agencies in supporting basic brain research and research on brain related diseases
3. Sustain all disciplines of neuroscience and assist member societies with different tools to advocate for neuroscience at a national level
4. Contribute to an active dialogue with European institutions, the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as other decision-making bodies, also in collaboration with the European Brain Council
5. Promote neuroscience globally and encourage international exchange of best practices, also with key international partners such as IBRO and SfN

Level of responsibility

The overall approach to advocacy initiatives is the responsibility of the Executive Committee. Implementation of these initiatives is mostly carried out by the Executive Committee represented by its President or when relevant by the Executive Director who also acts as an advisor to the Executive Committee.

Actions:

Continue top-down policy activities in collaboration with the EBC. When appropriate the Executive committee will collaborate with the FENS Communication committee and other committees in order to implement advocacy planning and dissemination on its own.

Continue actions to promote bottom-up activities by national societies of neuroscience and national brain councils by sharing best practices between national domains and European institutions and organisations. These actions will partially be coordinated through the collaboration with SfN.

Promote Neuroscience globally through joint actions with international partners such as IBRO and SfN and in particular to be active members of the IBRO Global Advocacy Committee.

Targeted activities for advocacy

IV.1 FENS-CARE

Under the authority of the Executive Committee, FENS has established programme-oriented committees tasked with issues of particular relevance to FENS. The CARE special committee, is focused on issues related to the use of animals for research and works in joint programmes with international partners such as EARA and SfN-CAR, and the EBC on issues related to dissemination and advocacy related to the use of animal experimentation in biomedical research.

IV.2 ALBA Network

The network has been developed in partnership with IBRO and SfN to address issues in neuroscience related to discrimination, bias, and diversity.

Objectives:

- Promote best practices to counteract bias
- Recognise outstanding contributions to science and diversity
- Provide networking and mentoring opportunities to promote careers for members of underrepresented groups

Actions:

- Identify and secure key partnership with other organizations
- Develop networking activities around main conferences in Europe and internationally
- Establish a Declaration of Best Practices
- Curating a centralized resource of available data on bias, underrepresentation, and effective strategies
- Host networking events at major Brain Science conferences
- Establish awards (e.g. Women in Brain Science/ Diversity Award) with partners
- Highlight success stories of individuals and organizations to create role models
- Advocacy with policy makers, funding agencies, institutions
- Create a mentoring community
- Collect a database of scientists as a resource for speaker invitations, award nominations

V. Administration and Finance

V.1 Administration

Running the full range of FENS activities as well as ensuring the management of FENS committees and initiatives requires committed staff. In view of the constantly changing composition of FENS committees, FENS staff provides the collective institutional memory of FENS, ensuring long-term continuity of actions.

The principal objective of the administration of FENS is to ensure reliable and professional execution of decisions, development and implementation of strategic issues, support for actions as defined by FENS committees, management of daily activities, including contacts with committees, online technology and running of core activities such as the Forum and other key events. The FENS administration is an essential tool to actively promote the development of FENS in order to become a major force in a global context.

The Executive Director is the head of the FENS administration and its staff, and reports to the President and the Executive Committee. The Executive Director is responsible for delegating administrative tasks in an optimal way to support all activities of the Federation.

Objectives:

1. Professional support of committees and activities of FENS
2. Proactive support for scientific and policy initiatives

Actions:

To ensure the optimal development of FENS and its activities, the administrative tasks of FENS are integrated into the office in Brussels.

V.2 Finance

FENS is comprised of three legally independent entities; (i) the Federation FENS (FENS-BE); (ii) the FENS Marketing Foundation (FENS-Marketing); (iii) the FENS Trust Foundation (FENS-Trust). While FENS-BE is established with its statutory seat in Belgium, the FENS-Marketing and the FENS-Trust have seats in Utrecht and Groningen in the Netherlands. The governance for each FENS entity is defined in separate statutes. Each FENS entity is affiliated with different bank accounts and as such they implement different activities and exchange funds in a transparent manner between independent organisations.

The FENS-BE implements all committee work and employs the main staff of FENS. FENS-BE is responsible for implementing core activities of FENS in alignment with its mission. Income from FENS-BE is mainly from partner donations, including donations from the FENS Marketing Foundation, as well as income from FENS School registrations. FENS-BE supports the administration and implementation of activities on behalf of all FENS entities.

The FENS-Marketing Foundation organises scientific meetings such as the FENS Forum and the Brain Conferences. Further, FENS-Marketing is the main owner of EJM, the scientific journal of FENS in partnership with the publishing company, Wiley. The FENS-Marketing receives income from its meeting activities and royalty income from EJM. The Past President, Secretary-General-elect and Treasurer-elect of the Federation FENS (FENS-BE) are ex-officio appointed to the positions of president, secretary general and treasurer of the FENS-Marketing Foundation.

The FENS-Trust was established when 50% of the ownership of EJM was sold to Blackwell Publishing (now Wiley) in December 2005. The resulting funds were invested by the FENS-Trust on behalf of the FENS group with a view of generating revenue to support '*research and education in neurological science in Europe*' in accordance with its mission. As main activities, the FENS-Trust supports exchange-training programmes for young scientists, offers a travel grants programme and enacts a number of prestigious neuroscience awards. The FENS-Trust has income from partner donations and from its investments. An important responsibility for the FENS-Trust is therefore the management and control of the investment portfolio of FENS, the profit of which may be used to support other FENS activities that fall in the area of the mission of the FENS-Trust, including areas of training and education. According to the statutes, it is the Executive Committee of FENS-BE that appoints board members of the FENS-Trust.

Globally, FENS receives income from various sources including the EJM, which currently provides approximately 60% of the total annual income of FENS. The sound financial management of FENS income as well as the cost-effective management of all activities must allow FENS to face major risks as well as finance new initiatives. The Treasurer, as adviser to the Executive Committee, has a central role in administering all FENS funds.

Objectives:

1. Maintain a prudent financial administration so as to ensure continuity of FENS activities
2. Adhere to the defined financial reserve plan that aims at establishing 130% annual running costs of all FENS activities as a strategic reserve
3. Establish improved and coordinated collaboration between the FENS entities to secure efficient strategies that support their combined missions
4. Through professional running of the administration, ensure an optimal and cost-effective use of FENS finances
5. Increase revenue from other sources in order to be less reliant on EJM revenue. This includes initiatives that can be supported across a broad range of external grants, donations and

partnerships. Sources of income other than EJN should account for at least 75% of FENS income by 2022

Actions:

Continue to employ a balanced, realistic financial management strategy that plans for moderate revenue growth and careful control over expenses, consistent with fulfilling FENS mission and goals. Establish a buffer within the finances to ensure that FENS can deliver its core mission in times of austerity. Develop an MoU between the different FENS entities that will support coordination and exchange for the future.

Investigate diverse sources of income to enable continued growth of FENS revenues without major reliance on the income from EJN. Monitor the cash flow and move funds on a regular basis to the investment portfolio, and optimise the cash usage by utilising deposit accounts in € and GBP, the latter for the income from EJN. Enable the treasurer to work with the Executive Committee and external financial advisors to FENS to update the reserve strategy based on current investment returns, revenue, spending projections and risk assessment. Impose budget control on all FENS activities.

V.3 Strengthening the links and facilitating interactions with member societies

Because of the sheer number of member societies assembled under the umbrella of FENS, exchanges between the Executive Committee and the Governing Council are limited and the bidirectional flow of information not always sufficiently frequent. Improving this will be an objective for the 2020-2022 period with the aim of preparing the next strategic plan.

Means to move forward along those lines would include setting up an advisory committee of members of the governing council (presidents of member societies) to review current FENS procedures from the members' perspective and make proposals on ways to strengthen the links and improve communication at several levels (e.g., increase visibility of FENS and the benefits brought to individual members at the time of their registration to member societies). These initiatives shall assist with the aim of enhancing membership attractiveness, especially for young scientists, increase partnerships within FENS for the organization and towards member societies' biennial meetings and the visibility of FENS towards the societies' individual members.

FENS aims at implementing faster and more reliable ways to consult with members for important decisions, on any topic that will be found important by FENS and its member societies. The recruitment of a dedicated staff member at FENS for these purposes should be considered.