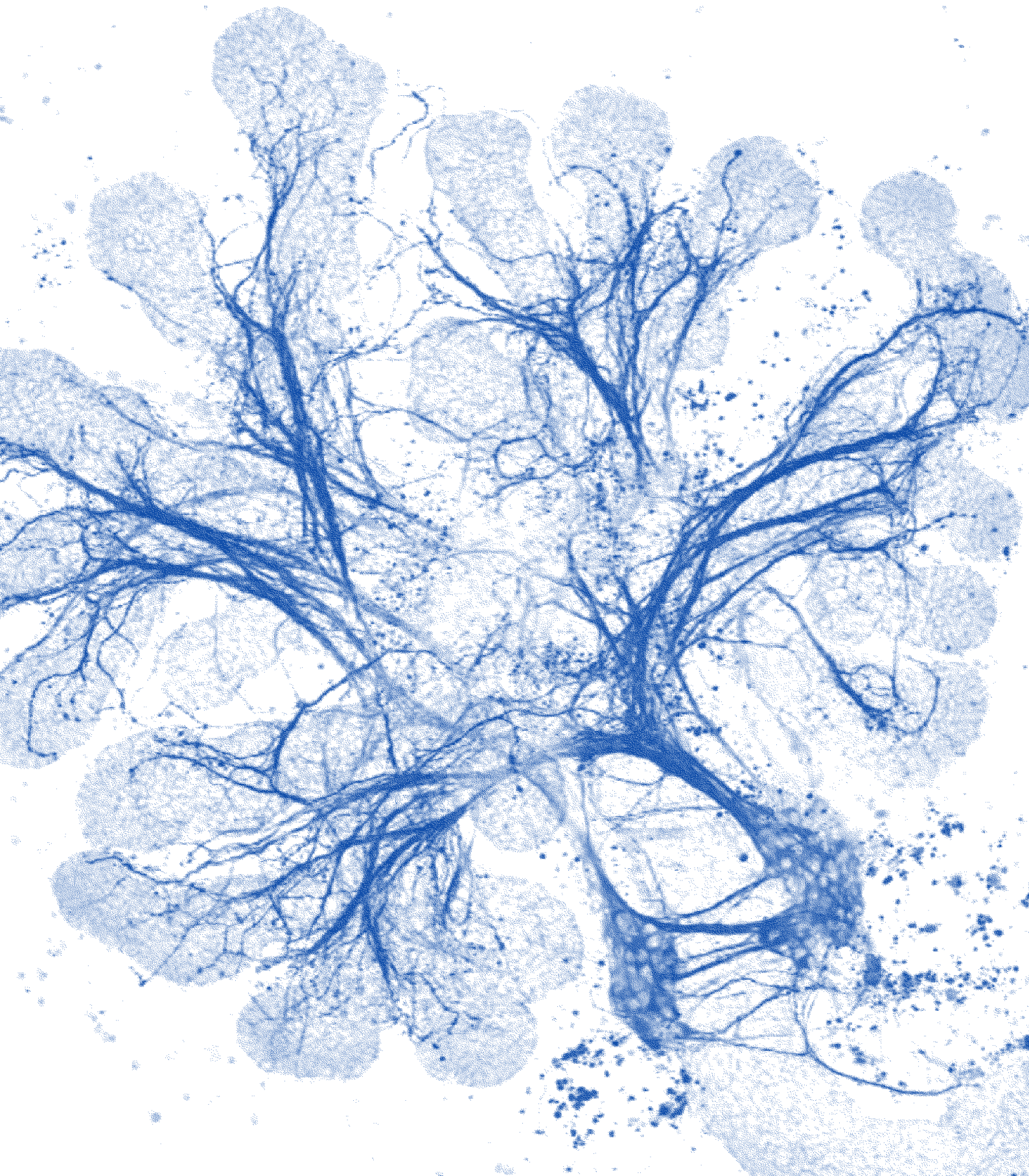
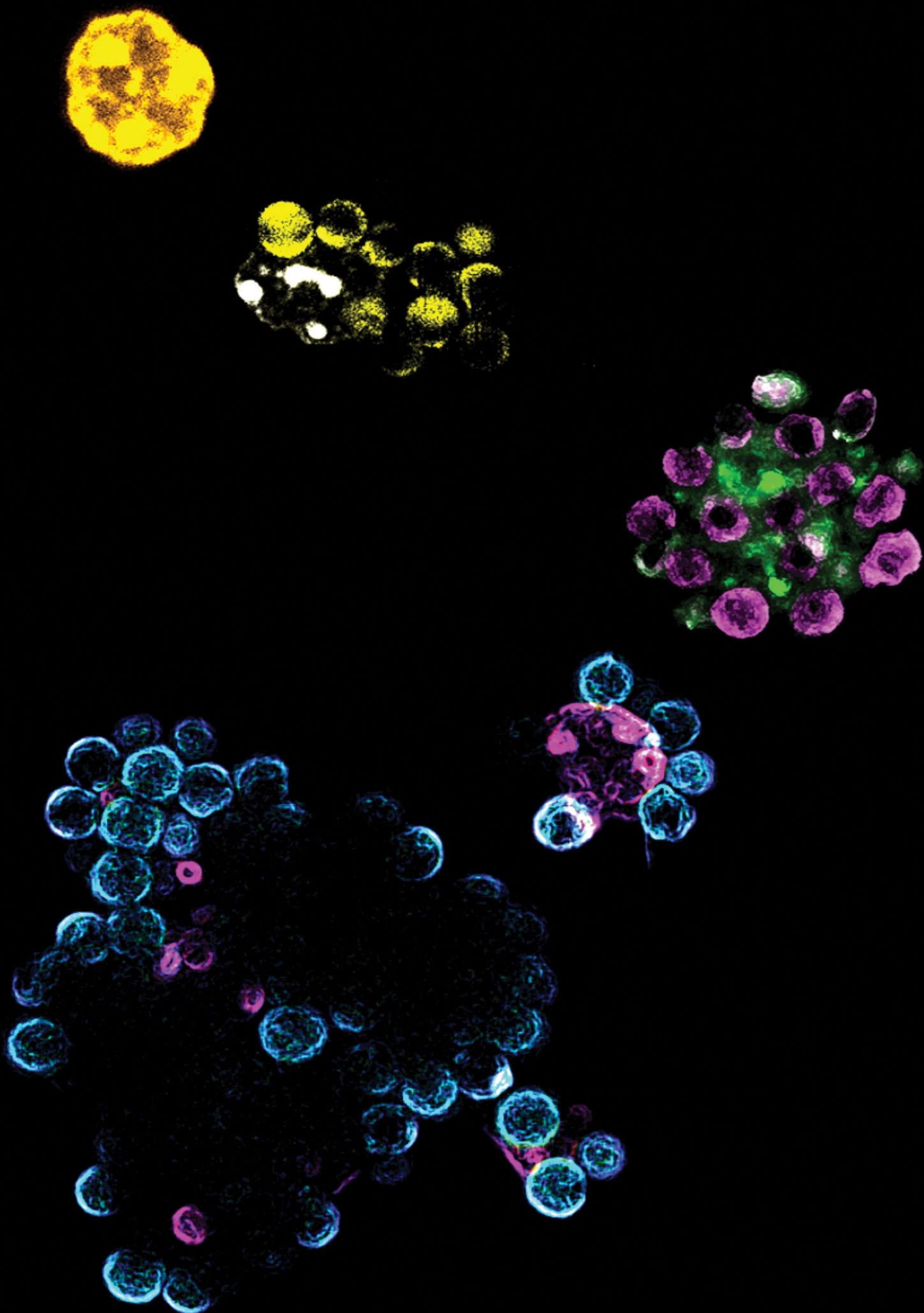


# FENS

Federation of  
European  
Neuroscience  
Societies

## IMPACT REPORT 2021





## FENS in 2021: Rebuilding Community

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# President's Message



Jean-Antoine Girault  
FENS President 2020-2022

On behalf of FENS leadership, it is my great pleasure to welcome readers to the first FENS Impact Report. This publication serves as a celebration and overview of the Federation's activities and service to the neuroscience community over the past year. Although challenging, 2021 provides an ideal time to launch such an initiative. It marks a strategic starting point to reconsider and renew the FENS mission and its commitment to meeting the changing needs of neuroscience in Europe and beyond. The pandemic has proven to us all that we need more than ever to adapt quickly to new conditions by rebuilding our community together.

I am delighted to report that there were many highlights of the year which made a significant impact and reflected this effort. They included the virtual FENS Regional Meeting, jointly organised by the Polish Neuroscience Society and the Lithuanian Neuroscience Association. It offered an excellent scientific programme and attracted more than 1,000 participants worldwide. An in-person Brain Conference, "RNA Mechanisms and Brain Disease", explored how neurons regulate RNA molecules and protein synthesis and hosted over 120 attendees from 22 countries. In addition, the FENS Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE) was once again able to enjoy in-person scientific exchange at their Science Symposium in Austria,

and the ALBA Network launched its Declaration on Equity and Inclusion online, obtaining over 200 signatories.

The year 2021 also allowed FENS to focus on evaluating its overall organisation, operations and strategic planning. Along with the new Executive Director, Tasia Asakawa, FENS leadership began the organisation's first ever internal review as well as a revision of the current Strategic Plan. Input from membership and administration were fully incorporated into the evaluation process which has been very helpful in identifying existing needs, risks and gaps, as well as areas in which FENS has flourished. Both the review and revision will be finalised in 2022, aiming to revitalise the organisation's vision and reshape the future of FENS.

As I look towards the end of my term next year, I would like to express my deep gratitude in being able to serve as FENS President during this exceptionally challenging period. Witnessing the resilience of our community to help each other advance our collective work through these difficult times has been truly inspiring. With such an enduring scientific spirit, I have no doubt that FENS will meet the future with renewed energy and impact that will not only benefit the neuroscience community, but also the health and wellbeing of all those whose lives we ultimately aim to improve.

# From the ground up

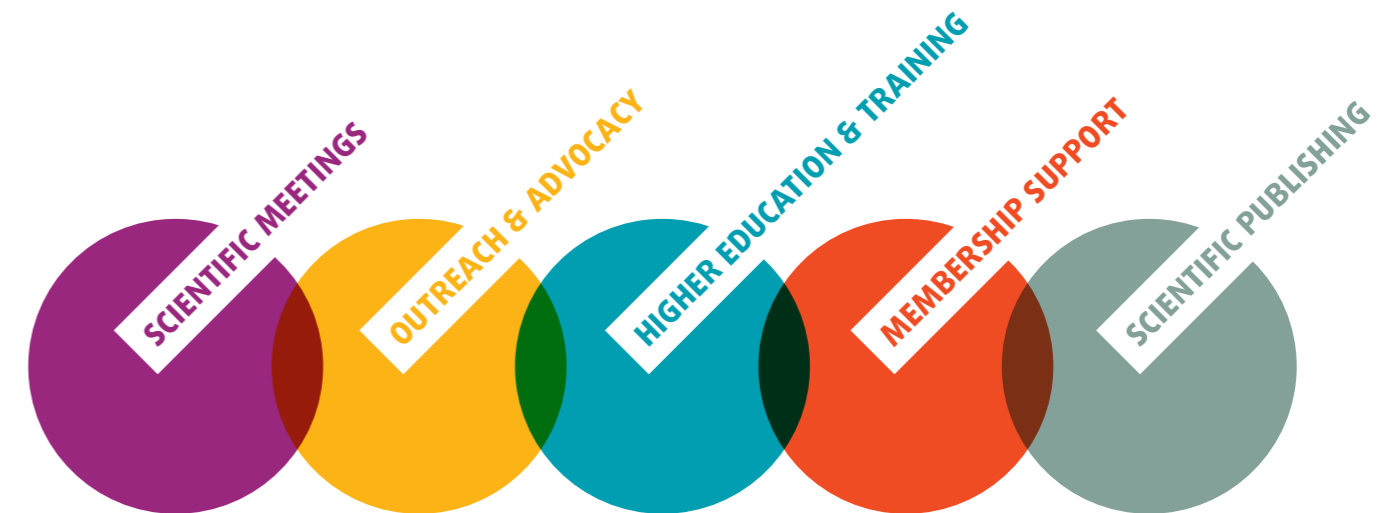
Founded in 1998, the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) is the main organisation representing and serving the neuroscience community in Europe. It aims to advance and promote excellence in neuroscience research by facilitating inclusive exchange and networking between neuroscientists, and engaging with policymakers, funders and the general public at of decision-making to increase awareness, understanding and support for the brain sciences.

## FENS priorities

- Promote interaction and coordination between member societies and develop neuroscience research in their respective countries and disciplines;
- Facilitate inclusion and interaction between neuroscientists and related scientists within and outside Europe by holding scientific meetings and by other appropriate means;
- Disseminate scientific information through the *European Journal of Neuroscience*, the official journal of FENS, and through other channels of communication;
- Deliver education and training to neuroscience researchers by providing relevant resources, schools, courses, programmes, exchanges and grants to early career scientists;
- Promote the understanding of and engagement in neuroscience among the general public and advise decision-makers on the results and the implications of neuroscience research;

“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.”

—FENS STRATEGIC PLAN  
JULY 2020



## FENS pillars of action

Based on its priorities, FENS has five main pillars of action that help focus its support of neuroscience and the neuroscience community: scientific publication, scientific meetings, higher education and training, membership support, and outreach and advocacy.

### Scientific meetings

Learning, networking and professional development through high-level events, such as the FENS Forums, FENS Regional Meetings (FRMs) and The Brain Conference.

### Outreach and advocacy

Increasing public awareness about the benefits of brain research and providing advice to policymakers and stakeholders.

### Higher education and training

Supporting graduate and postgraduate education and training through schools, courses, exchanges, grants and online resources and events

### Membership support

Voicing and representing the needs and importance of the neuroscience community while facilitating collaboration, networking and career development.

### Scientific publishing

Ensuring scientific credibility and relevance through the *European Journal of Neuroscience* (EJN), the official journal of FENS, and other publications.



FENS was created to bring together the scientific community and advance research and education in neuroscience in Europe and beyond. FENS believes in inclusive, responsible science, and takes great pride in its position as the voice of European neuroscience, always striving to structure its activities around the following principles.

## FENS values

### Credibility

FENS acknowledges the responsibility of the scientific community to carry out transparent, reproducible research to support the generation of excellent, credible science.

### Inclusiveness

FENS believes that individual differences should never constitute a barrier to scientific excellence. As such, FENS strives to ensure that all of its activities, both internally and externally, are as inclusive and representative of the neuroscience community as possible, irrespective of gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, appearance, ethnicity, national origin, cultural background, age, political opinions or religion.

### Sustainability

FENS is convinced of the value of bringing together researchers for scientific exchange and progress. Acknowledging the associated environmental impact, FENS continues to take relevant actions to minimise the impact of its activities in collaboration with the scientific community.

## FENS membership

### Core members

The core foundation of FENS is its membership which includes 44 European national and single-discipline neuroscience societies (see full list at the end) across 33 countries and over 21,000 scientists.

FENS serves and represents its members through all of its activities and actions. With the evolving pandemic and its related challenges in 2021, our membership continued to face difficulties in carrying out their work. In order to stay connected and provide support, FENS quickly adapted by sharing relevant research and resources, holding virtual meetings and webinars, and awarding grants and prizes to rebuild and recognise scientific excellence and exchange.

### Serving our community

A member survey was also distributed so FENS could identify short and long-term needs in order to make sure it was responding in useful and impactful ways. This resulted in the creation of an internal membership newsletter, new online resources and activities more easily accessible through a redesigned website, and advocacy training opportunities. In addition, FENS increased accessibility to include an individual membership category in the spring of 2021. This allows independent researchers to become FENS members via their national or single-discipline society or by applying for individual membership by themselves. The pandemic in fact made the expansion of community and communication even more critical since everyone was facing disruptions in interaction and work on a daily basis. FENS will continue to move ahead hand in hand with its membership to renew our collective efforts in fulfilling the FENS mission.

## Member voices

“FENS provides a wide platform for neuroscientists in Europe to communicate and share their expertise, ideas, social interests both at the level of individuals and learned societies. ESN is happy to be a part of FENS.”

—EUROPEAN SOCIETY FOR NEUROCHEMISTRY (ESN)

“FENS members shape European neuroscience!”

—NATIONAL NEUROSCIENCE SOCIETY OF ROMANIA

“Being part of the FENS community allows you to get in touch with other European neuroscience societies. It creates the feeling of having a home and being part of an important force with a strong unified voice that will be heard.”

—EUROPEAN BRAIN AND BEHAVIOUR SOCIETY

“FENS helps our members to develop and get new information on neuroscience.”

—GEORGIAN NEUROSCIENCE ASSOCIATION



# Meeting new expectations

FENS launched several new initiatives in 2021 to bring together scientists from around the world and strengthen the presence of the neuroscience community in the virtual environment. They aimed to increase access and inclusiveness in programmes and ongoing scientific research and exchange. This helped to bridge the distances and divides that continued to separate and isolate scientists from each other.

## #FENSFriday Webinars

Inspired by the #FENSFriday campaign following the FENS 2020 Virtual Forum, the FENS Friday webinar series was launched in 2021 and allowed FENS to strengthen connections with its community worldwide. These monthly events aimed to address timely scientific topics and reinforce the development of skills. Organised by the FENS Committees and the FENS flagship scientific journal, the European Journal of Neuroscience (EJN), all events were free and open to the public. They were also recorded and afterwards made publicly available on the FENS website.

## Grants for virtual meetings

As most society meetings took place online, FENS supported remote attendance of its members at partner society meetings and at the FENS Regional Meeting (FRM) 2021. Originally taking place in Poland, the FRM was converted into a virtual meeting that could be attended for free by all FENS members, thanks to the generous support of the International Brain Research Organization (IBRO).

## Advocacy training for member societies

In 2021, FENS launched a new advocacy training programme for its member societies, facilitated by support from the Society for Neuroscience (SfN). The programme responds to the challenges

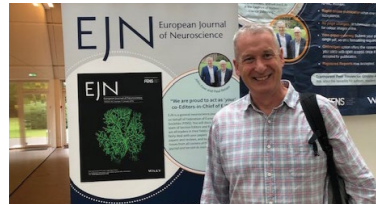
faced by neuroscientists in advocating for the importance of brain research across multi-scale decision-making environments. By providing focused training for members, the programme fills an unmet need to increase the capacity of neuroscientists to highlight their priorities to stakeholders within and outside of the European policy landscape.

## Redesigned website

FENS launched its redesigned website in May 2021. Responding to member feedback, the site is now more user friendly and easier to navigate in order to improve the connection and engagement with the community and public. The [careers](#) section, for instance, now offers researchers funding and professional development opportunities all in one place. Another improvement was the Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS) [directory](#). In map or list form, users can view over 200 NENS graduate neuroscience schools and programmes across 28 European countries. As needs continue to change, FENS will keep reviewing and updating this primary online presence.



# Built by scientists for scientists



EJN approaches publishing science as a duty to improve the field, and that is different for a society journal like EJN. It is not here for trendy science, the latest fad or fashion; it is built by scientists for scientists and is here to improve neuroscience.

—PROF. JOHN FOXE, EJN EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The *European Journal of Neuroscience* (EJN) is the official journal of FENS published by Wiley. It is a hybrid biweekly scientific publication that offers rigorous and transparent peer review, no submission fee or page charges and free access to all FENS members. Led by editor-in-chief, Prof. John Foxe from the University of Rochester (USA), along with a diverse and inclusive team of senior and section editors, the journal provides a vehicle for publication that furthers the understanding of the structure and function of the nervous system in both health and disease and engages with issues of importance to the neuroscience community. Profits from the journal are re-invested into the community through the activities of FENS.

EJN performed well in 2021 and initiated new and important thematic series. There was a steady rise in submissions (1,046 in 2020 to 1,130 in 2021), impact factor (3.386 in 2020 to 3.698 in 2021) and Open Access (OA) articles (66 in 2020 to 170 in 2021), reflecting the increased visibility of the journal and the greater adoption of OA publication across the publishing landscape. Two other highlights included the establishment of the “Diversity matters series” and a new series of short reviews, “The Trailblazers of Neuroscience.” The diversity series was born from vigorous editorial leadership discussions about initiatives to further diversity, equity and inclusion in neuroscience.

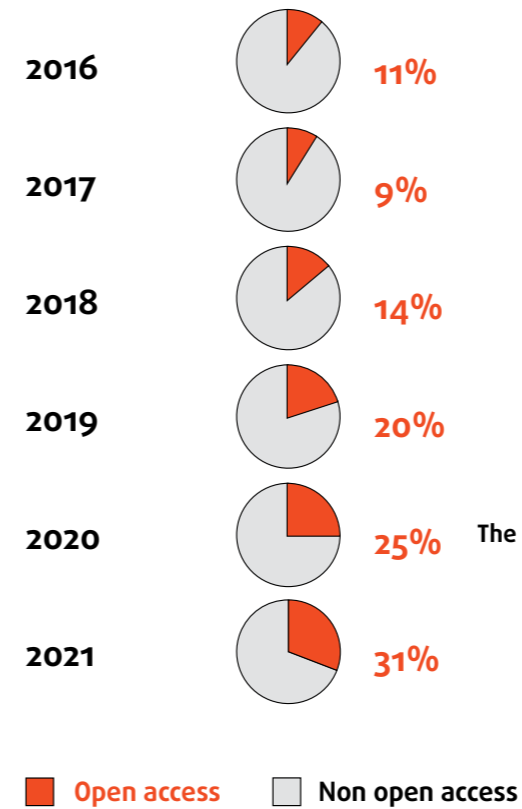
The ALBA Network and BlackInNeuro were the first initiatives to be featured, representing both bottom-up grassroots movements that mobilize and transform communities, as well as top-down efforts from organizations and agencies committed to galvanising change (Helmreich et al., 2021). The “The Trailblazers of Neuroscience” series was established to identify and promote young researchers and provide them a platform to highlight their scientific path and creativity, as well as their ideas and work.

Throughout 2021, EJN continuously published ground-breaking research in neuroscience while embracing innovation to provide a balanced, open and rigorous publishing experience. By recognising new needs and facilitating knowledge exchange during this challenging period, the journal reinforced the scientific community as well as its invaluable impact on society.

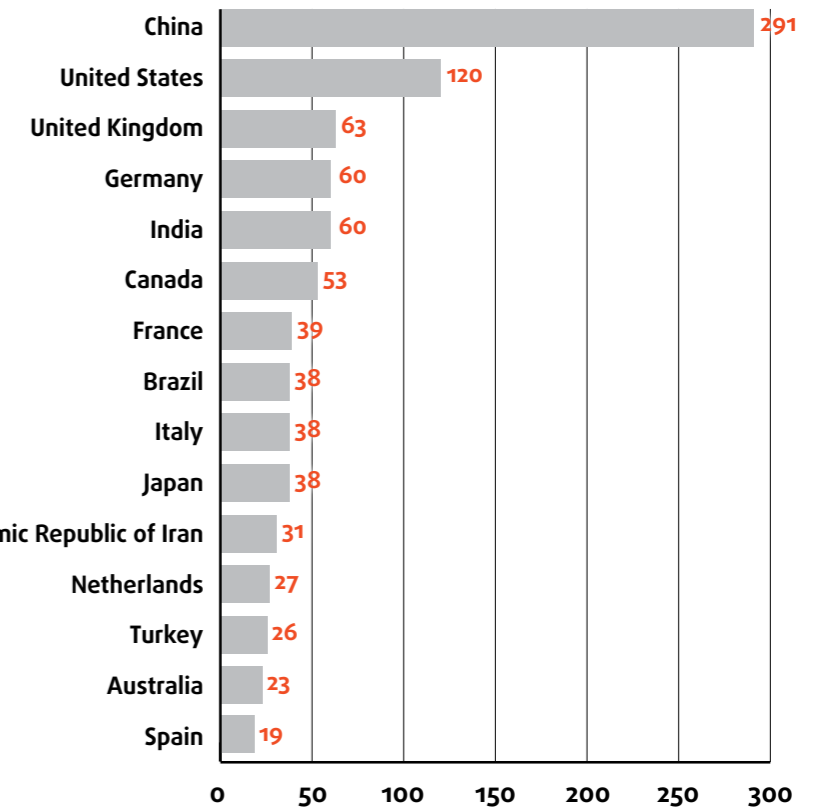
“We are extremely passionate about the *European Journal of Neuroscience*. EJN is your journal and our responsibility is to you. We enjoy interacting with the international neuroscience research community in taking EJN forward, with new publishing initiatives that help maintain and expand upon the scholarly standards of the journal.”

—THE EJN EDITORIAL BOARD

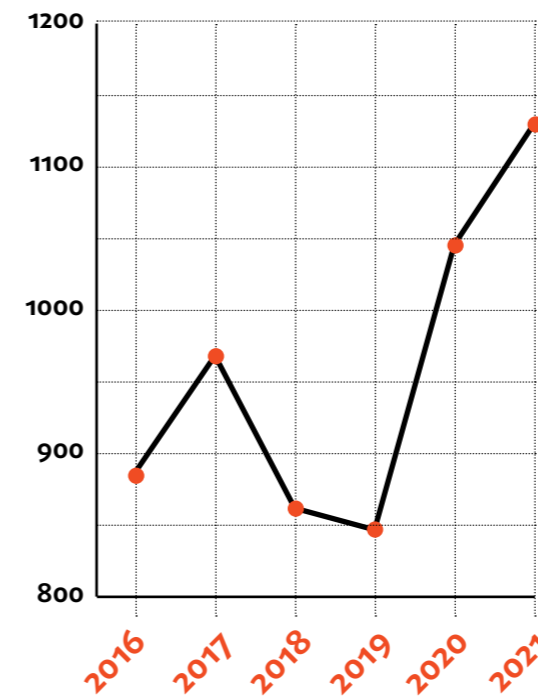
## Open access growth



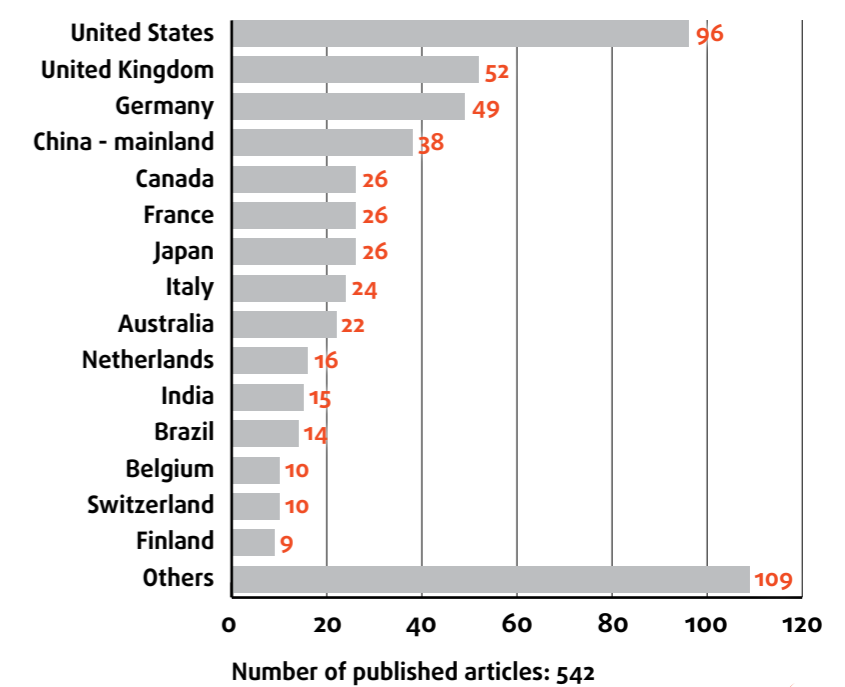
## 2021 Top 15 submissions by country



## Total submissions



## 2021 Top 15 author countries/regions



# Reconnecting research and researchers

## FENS Regional Meeting 2021

FENS Regional Meetings (FRMs) are dedicated to supporting FENS member societies in promoting excellence in research, with a more targeted European regional focus. FRMs aim to strengthen neuroscience in all European countries, promote scientific exchange within and across European regions and secure representation and access to the programme for underrepresented scientists, countries and topics. Organised by FENS member societies, FRMs are held in odd years and alternate with the larger FENS Forums in even years that include broader European and global dimensions.

The FRM 2021, jointly organised by the Polish Neuroscience Society and the Lithuanian Neuroscience Association, took place online from 25-27 August 2021. Soft launches took place beforehand and included a total of 2,221 worldwide logins that allowed access to the high-quality scientific programme comprising of plenary lectures, symposia, live discussions, special interest events and poster sessions. The FRM 2021 hosted 1,034 participants from 63 countries.

During the meeting, 10 plenary lectures were delivered and neuroscientists were able to share with the community their latest findings. Highlights included the IBRO-PERC lecture “Modeling human development and disease in cerebral organoids” by Jürgen Knoblich from the Institute of Molecular Biotechnology OAW (Vienna, Austria), the Lithuanian Neuroscience Association Presidential Lecture, “Repurposing of CRISPR-Cas immunity for targeted genome editing” by Virginijus Šikšnys from the Institute

of Biotechnology, Vilnius University (Lithuania) and the Polish Neuroscience Society Presidential Lecture on “Stem cells in the adult brain: regulation and diversity” by Fiona Doetsch (The Center for Molecular Life Sciences, University of Basel, Switzerland).

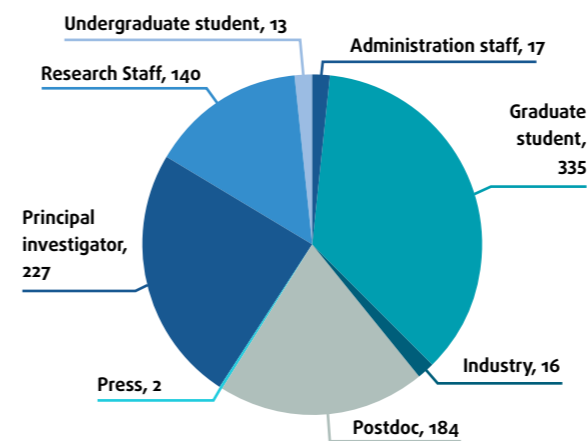
In addition to the plenary lectures, the meeting helped to increase the scientific representation of local researchers through symposia such as “Gut, microbiota and the brain” chaired by Aurelijus Burokas (Vilnius University), and “Circadian clocks: more beyond neurons” chaired by Gabriella Mazzotta (University of Padova) and Milena Damulewicz (Jagiellonian University, Krakow), as well as many others.

## The 2021 Brain Conference

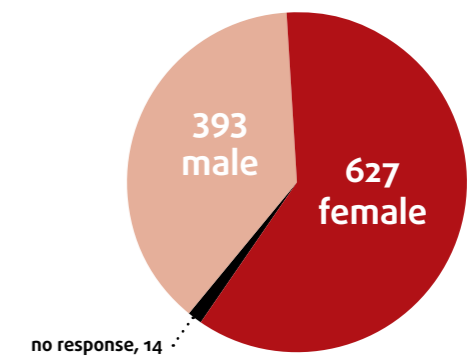
The Brain Conference on “RNA Mechanisms and Brain Disease” organised in October 2021, brought together researchers and featured speakers again in Rungstedgaard, Denmark, for the first since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Organised by FENS in collaboration with Lundbeck Foundation, awardee of The Brain Prize, the conference brought together 121 outstanding researchers from 22 countries to meet, discuss and define challenges for future research. The conference was co-chaired by Giovanna Mallucci (University of Cambridge, United Kingdom) and Erin Schuman (MPI Brain Research, Germany), and explored how neurons regulate RNA molecules and protein synthesis and how these mechanisms represent vulnerabilities for various neurological diseases.

## FRM 2021 participants by position



## FRM 2021 participants by gender



## The 2021 Brain Conference



Image: The 2021 Brain Conference



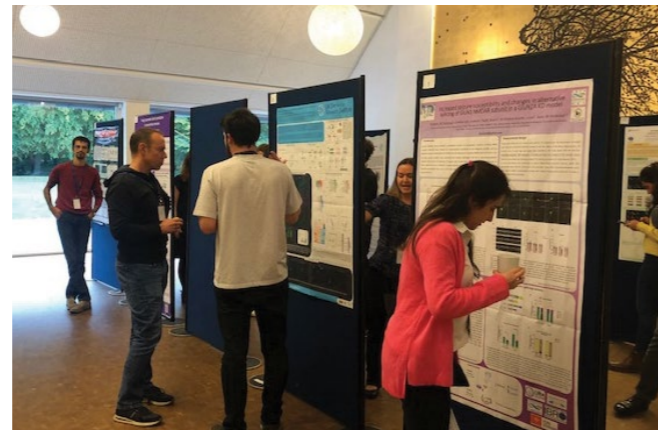
## Committee for Higher Education and Training (CHET)

Aiming to better understand training needs in neuroscience in Europe, the distribution of neuroscience domains in Europe, and to measure the awareness level of current training activities run by FENS, its Committee for Higher Education and Training (CHET) circulated a survey during the summer of 2021 which targeted early career researchers. The survey was completed by 188 respondents, the majority being PhD students, postdocs and MSc students. In terms of location, the highest number of respondents were from the UK, Germany, Switzerland, France, Spain and Italy.

Go to the  
FENS website  
to check  
the survey  
results.

The results of the survey indicated that:

- The most known FENS training activities by the respondents were the schools, travel grants to attend partner meetings, webinars and events dedicated to students and early career researchers at the Forum and FRM.
- The highest number of respondents did not take advantage of FENS training activities in the past.
- The majority of those who did attend a FENS training activity in the past considered that the activity did support their careers.
- Cognition and Neural Networks, Psychiatric and Cognitive Disorders, Motivation, Emotion and Behavior, Neurodegenerative Disorders and Pathological Aging were the fields that best corresponded to the respondents' fields of activity.



## Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS)

Despite the ongoing pandemic, the FENS Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS) showed substantial growth and activity. In 2021, the network brought together over 200 neuroscience graduate schools and programmes across 28 European countries, providing a larger and more cohesive community able to offer increased learning and skill development opportunities for students, as well as improved cooperation and sharing of best practices among programme directors.

Although its scientific exchanges and other in-person activities had to be postponed, NENS took advantage of the summer months to carry out a survey among NENS schools in order to:

- better understand why the funding opportunities offered by the FENS Committee for Higher Education and Training (CHET) and tailored to NENS schools and students were under-utilised
- identify and facilitate ways in which dissemination of CHET funding and training activities among schools and students could be augmented
- check the willingness of the NENS schools to share online training material
- verify whether the profile of the school programmes is sufficiently covered through the scientific domains listed on the NENS Directory collect ideas for programmes or initiatives that CHET could run among the NENS schools community to benefit training in neuroscience at the European level
- gauge the readiness of NENS schools to help curate existing materials in specific neuroscience fields

The response rate to the questionnaire was 20% (40 respondents from 16 countries out of 206 registered NENS schools). The results of CHET's analysis indicated that:

- efforts are needed to improve communication of CHET activities to schools and students
- NENS schools generally agreed on the idea of nominating a student representative to further disseminate the CHET training and funding opportunities
- the scientific domains listed on the NENS Directory sufficiently covered the profiles of NENS schools. However, most schools are not specialized in one domain and they would generally cover most of the domains of neuroscience. This needs to be taken into account on the FENS website where schools are featured, and in the future be included in a comprehensive "Neuromap"
- most NENS schools are reluctant to share their online training materials, but there is some interest in curating existing training materials

# Strengthening outreach and awareness

Having passed through almost two years of the COVID-19 pandemic with the successful development of vaccines, opposition to scientific knowledge and research surprisingly and sadly persisted. It was therefore essential to strengthen outreach and awareness efforts in 2021 to help increase public understanding and appreciation of the contribution and positive impact of brain research and science on human health and wellbeing. FENS supported and promoted several projects that emphasised this, helping to counteract misinformation and also inspire people about scientific discovery and the brain.

## Brain Awareness Week 2021

The annual Brain Awareness Week (BAW) took place in March 2021, celebrated by in-person, hybrid and virtual events all over the world thanks to the support of the Dana Foundation. FENS awarded its BAW grants on behalf of Dana to 33 projects across Europe. They ranged from “The Touchable Brain: an immersion into how the brain senses” in Germany to “multisensory illusions as an educational tool on human perception and brain function” in Greece. For the full list of topics and countries, see the [list of projects](#) on the FENS website. A total of 62 applications from 24 countries were received, demonstrating that the demand for brain awareness activities has not diminished and continues to fulfill a persistent need.

## Communicating science

In 2021, FENS also organised a series of science communication events funded by the Dana Foundation which aimed to strengthen awareness of brain research regionally in all European countries and support the neuroscience community. All were organised as online events to guarantee the widest reach possible and some targeted more specifically early career scientists, who were identified as being particularly challenged because

of the pandemic. All the topics were chosen in response to needs voiced by the community, such as communicating your science to non-scientists or pitching your research in an online environment.

## International Brain Bee

FENS is a founding partner of the International Brain Bee which holds an annual world championship to promote student engagement with neuroscience and to inspire high school students to study and pursue careers in neuroscience. The 2021 International Brain Bee (IBB) was held virtually due to ongoing COVID-related restrictions and awarded winners for both 2020 and 2021. The two IBB World Champions were 16-year-old Viktoriia Vydzhak from Ukraine (2021) and 17-year-old Rahil Patel from the United States (2020). Both second place winners were from Malaysia: Ahmed Adam Bin Razman (17) for 2021 and Yu Cheng Lim (17) for 2020. Two 15-year-old students took third place: Canadian Antoni Klonowski for 2021 and Peter Susanto from Australia for 2020. All champions were awarded monetary prizes and partial scholarships to attend a virtual Leadership Initiatives internship programme. The challenges of 2021 enabled IBB to innovate its competition and keep inspiring the talent of the next generation of scientists.



## Preserving neuroscientific heritage

The FENS History Committee continued to hold its annual call in 2021 for projects documenting the history and development of neuroscience. The best projects were selected for support of up to EUR 1,500. The grants prioritised projects in which historic material such as films, photos, images or histological slides would be showcased online. Projects are expected to be completed within a maximum period of two years and will be posted on the FENS website in the [Resources section](#).

Originally funded by FENS and IBRO, the aim of the Global Brain Museum was to develop an online resource that would list, promote and protect archives relevant to neuroscience history globally [www.globalbrainmuseum.org](http://www.globalbrainmuseum.org). GBM represents a starting point for all those wishing to further delve into key historical moments in the development of neuroscience such as Da Vinci’s drawings of the nervous system, Pierre Marie’s work on growth disorders and Phineas Gage’s tragic but scientifically illuminating accident. The museum is still being developed and refined but remains freely accessible to all those interested.

## The responsible use of animal research

The FENS Committee on Animals in Research (CARE) plays a key role in FENS’ actions to promote and advocate for the responsible use of animals in scientific research. As an advisor to FENS, the committee supports the development of resources, promotes public education and contributes to topical international discussions. Highlights from 2021 included a special interest event on promoting the continuity of international collaboration in animal neuroscience research held during the FENS Regional Meeting, as well as a meeting of member society representatives aiming to pinpoint challenges faced by researchers across FENS membership and identify opportunities for collaboration. Finally, in collaboration with the committee, FENS and SfN continued to advocate for the importance of transparency in animal research by supporting a popular series of workshops on openness and media training organised by the European Association for Animal Research (EARA).

# Empowering inclusive leadership

## The ALBA Network

The ALBA Network was created in 2018 as the unified powerful voice of FENS, IBRO and SfN to promote equity and diversity in brain sciences. The goals of ALBA are to empower brain scientists to be effective Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) advocates and allies, to share best practices to counter bias and discrimination, and to provide better visibility and professional development opportunities to scientists from underrepresented groups in brain research. These goals are achieved through four pillars of action: awareness & advocacy, data & resources, visibility & recognition, networking & mentoring.

## The ALBA Declaration on Equity and Inclusion

The ALBA Network launched the [Declaration on Equity and Inclusion](#) in January 2021, making it a landmark year in ALBA's mission to promote a more diverse, inclusive and equitable neuroscience research culture. Modelled on the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), the ALBA Declaration's goal is to raise awareness and provide a concrete, evidence-based set of actions that individuals and institutions can commit to in order to make their organisations and the brain research community at large fairer and more inclusive. As of now, the Declaration has 216 institutional signatories and 552 individual signatories from 47 countries.

Members of underrepresented groups face persistent barriers to equitable representation in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), particularly at advanced stages. Although the historical basis for and manifestations of underrepresentation vary by group, discipline, and region, there are striking commonalities resulting in the attrition of talent. The cost of this loss of talent is high – for individuals, for research, and for society as a whole. In addition, these baseline inequities were magnified by the differential impact of the recent pandemic which disproportionately

affected the research productivity and career development of underrepresented groups and individuals at the intersection of multiple identities. The Declaration was thus drafted as a resource to coalesce the community into action, focused specifically on two contributing factors to perpetual underrepresentation in STEM: implicit bias and workplace culture. Its highlights include strategies for establishing transparent career structures, best practices for making hiring processes more equitable, and the importance of identifying concrete goals and data-driven approaches to monitoring progress toward them.

## ALBA membership

The network grew considerably in 2021, having over 1000 members from 76 countries worldwide. Community engagement and networking are central to ALBA's mission and help to nurture a positive group identity. Despite the operational disruptions brought about by the recent pandemic, opportunities to connect with ALBA members and global partners were not affected. Digital solutions helped ALBA to not only maintain the momentum around progress with DEI efforts, but also to foster global connectedness and inclusion through a vast array of activities.

## AWARENESS AND ADVOCACY



### Global diversity

Diversity and inequity have a different meaning depending on a country's culture and history. To obtain a multifaceted view of the region and culture-specific issues faced by neuroscientists of different demographics, ALBA launched a global webinar series to identify challenges in six regions and to explore possible context-specific solutions.



### Race and gender discrimination

As issues of racial and gender justice have risen to the fore globally, ALBA recognises that structural racism and gender bias are embedded deep in academia and its history. In this context, ALBA organised various online events to highlight the biased and racialised ways of thinking in research and academia, and solutions to increase the representation and visibility of individuals across the racial, gender and sexual diversity spectrum in neuroscience.

## VISIBILITY AND RECOGNITION



### ALBA Awards

ALBA offers awards to brain scientists in recognition of their outstanding scientific work and their contribution to the advancement of DEI within the community. In 2021, a new award was launched – the ALBA-Elsevier Award Lecture on Brain Sciences, to highlight outstanding research by an active neuroscientist working in any country that is historically underrepresented among neuroscience publications and conferences.



### ALBA Diversity Podcast

The ALBA Diversity Podcast highlights diverse profiles of neuroscientists across different career stages, professional paths and backgrounds, to better understand their personal journeys, and what keeps them going as individuals and as neuroscientists in today's world. In 2021, the focus was on researchers who emigrated from their home country and became a minority in their work country, and they discussed the kinds of barriers they had to overcome while establishing their careers.

## The FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE)

The FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE) is a network of junior and mid-career neuroscientists representing most European countries in a joint effort to shape the future of neuroscience by putting early career researchers in the driving seat. In 2021, FKNE admitted 15 new FKNE Scholars from ten countries. FKNE also managed several events this year, even though the pandemic and related regulations made in-person exchange difficult to organise. Notable activities are highlighted below.

### FKNE scientific exchanges

2021 was about turning crisis into opportunities for FKNE. This is why, to overcome the reduced in-person interaction brought upon the network by the pandemics, we launched a new intramural program to support scientific exchanges among scholars and alumni, with the final purpose of catalysing new scientific collaborations or enhancing existing ones. The program saw either a P.I. or trainee from one current FKNE group visiting another FKNE group, to promote exchanges of technologies, know-hows, and ideas, and push forward innovation at the edges of colliding interests and fields. Out of 9 founded proposals, 3 were completed within 2021, and the others will be carried out in 2022.

### The FKNE Spring Meeting 2021

The meeting took place online on 18 March and centred around informal science “chalk talks” and project initiatives presented by six FKNE Scholars. The meeting accommodated an open consultation led by the new FKNE Alumni (FKNEA) Chair, Johannes Graff (Switzerland), on the Memorandum of Understanding defining the FKNE-FKNEA relationship, and several talks held by external guests on topics such as equity and gender in funding. FKNE is moving towards concrete engagement outcomes on gender equity

in neuroscience funding, environmentally friendly neuroscience, and mentorship.

### FKNE at FRM 2021

At the FENS Regional Meeting (FRM) 2021, the joint ALBA Network/FKNE Diversity Prize was awarded to Marian Joëls for her outstanding efforts in fostering gender equality in neuroscience. In addition, the developing European Network for Sustainable Life Sciences (SELS) was presented by FKNE Scholars Vassiliki Nikolettou (Switzerland) and Jaime de la Rocha (Spain), in collaboration with Marta Rodriguez Martinez, EMBL.

### FKNE Annual Meeting & the FKNE Scientific Symposium

The FKNE Annual Network Meeting and the FKNE Science Meeting took place in Vienna, Austria in October 2021. The meeting was very successful, and represented the first “in-person” meeting for the 2021 FKNE Scholars. The topics included mentorship in European neuroscience in post-COVID times, standards in neuroscience research, coherence across countries in European neuroscience, progressive models for neuroscience funding, gender equity in neuroscience, open science, and environmentally conscious practices in neuroscience.



# Ensuring impact online

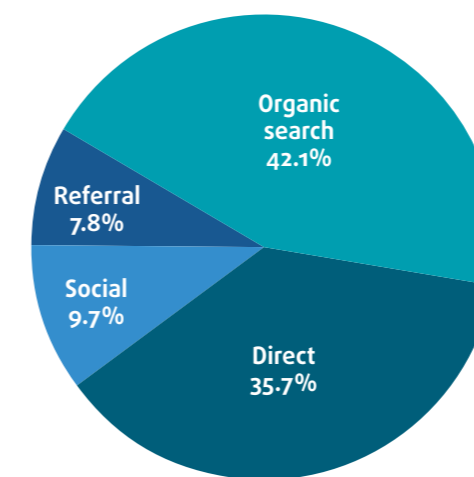
## Website

The website [fens.org](https://fens.org) serves as the main online presence and voice of the FENS community by featuring the organisation's activities, impact and growth. Based on membership feedback, the website was redesigned in 2021 to provide a more user-friendly online platform where early career, established scientists as well as the general public can learn about FENS and neuroscience. It attracted 195,884 visitors this year, with most visitors on a country basis coming from the United States, Germany, UK, France and Italy. Furthermore, the increasing visibility of FENS online was reflected by the fact that 54.9% were returning visitors and 45.1% were new visitors. FENS will continue to meet the needs of this growing community in the next year.

## Social Media Analytics

The FENS social media channels are a powerful tool to disseminate FENS' voice and promote its activities, especially in the current context where most activities are taking place online. FENS is active on all major social media – [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Instagram](#) and [YouTube](#). FENS implemented its strategic communication objectives in 2021 by focusing on amplifying the voices and interactions of our community through LinkedIn, Twitter and Instagram. Based on our key statistical indicators, most viewers reach our content through these platforms. We are continuing to grow organically. These channels are healthy, as shown by the constant increase of the number of followers.

## Top acquisition channels in 2021



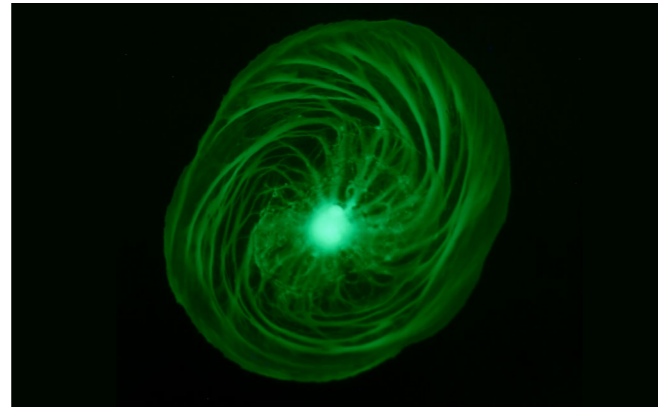
## Social media % increase from 2020-21

	2020	2021	% Increase
	22,269	22,698	+1.92%
	20,671	26,014	+25.84%
	2,600	4,113	+58.19%
	4,201	8,144	+93.85%
	1,189	1,608	+35.23%

# Financial overview 2021

As an international non-profit association, FENS invests its time and resources into supporting and serving the neuroscience community in Europe and beyond. It, therefore, strives to maintain stable growth and sound budget planning in order to support its mission and activities based on transparent reporting, accounting and decision-making.

The publication of FENS' first impact report provides the opportunity to increase transparency with our membership, the broader neuroscience community and the interested public. It also establishes a benchmark to track and strategically plan for future progress based on consistent key performance indicators and annual evaluations.



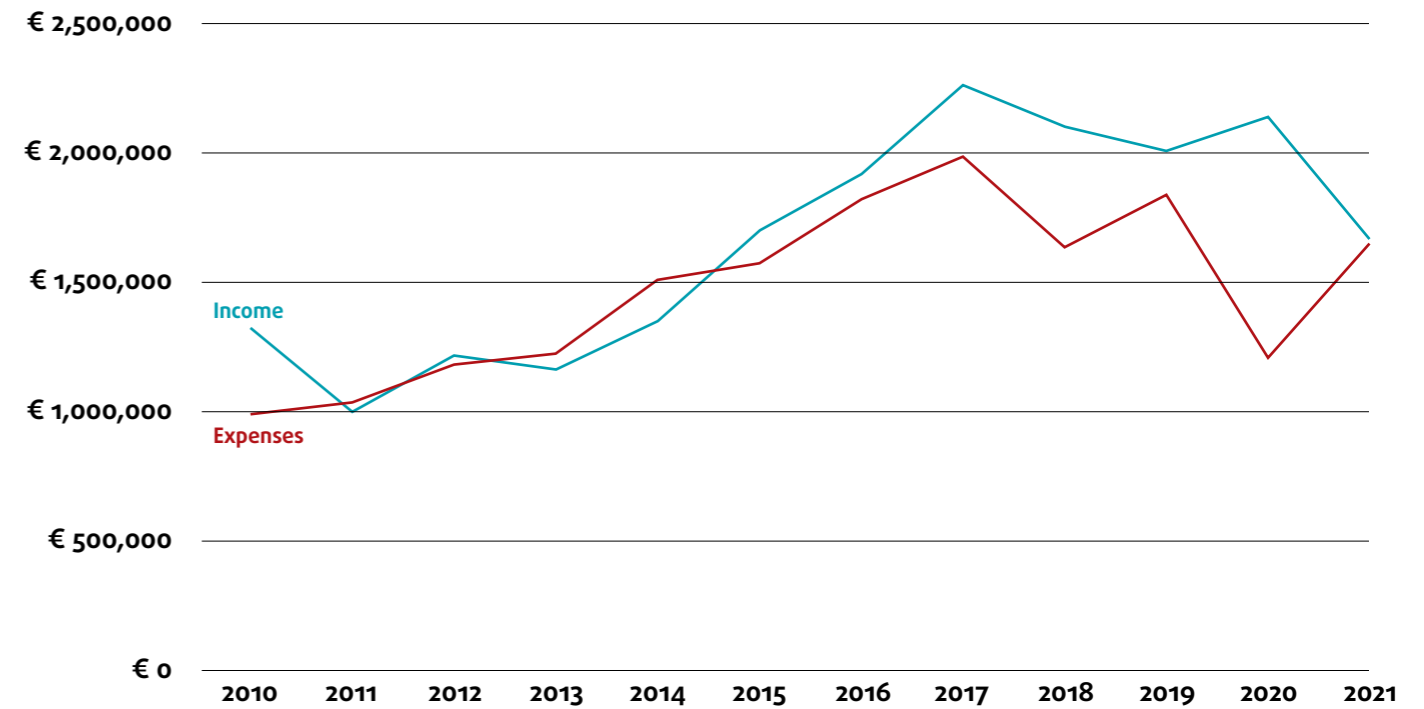
Over the past decade, FENS has shown balanced growth between income and expenditures with an income peak in 2017. Most recently, between 2020 and 2021, there were sharp changes in both income and expenses. While expenses rose, income dropped, and at the end of 2021 the two indicators were almost equivalent, with a small positive end-of-year income result of EUR 25,810.

Covid-related conditions played a large part in influencing this shift. Events and activities with their associated incomes and sponsorships had to be cancelled, postponed or turned into virtual or hybrid experiences due to changing policies and restrictions. In order to adapt, the required work and related expenditures nevertheless forged ahead in order to keep serving the neuroscience community. In addition, this period was difficult across membership, partnerships and scientific publishing so contributions from these areas also declined.

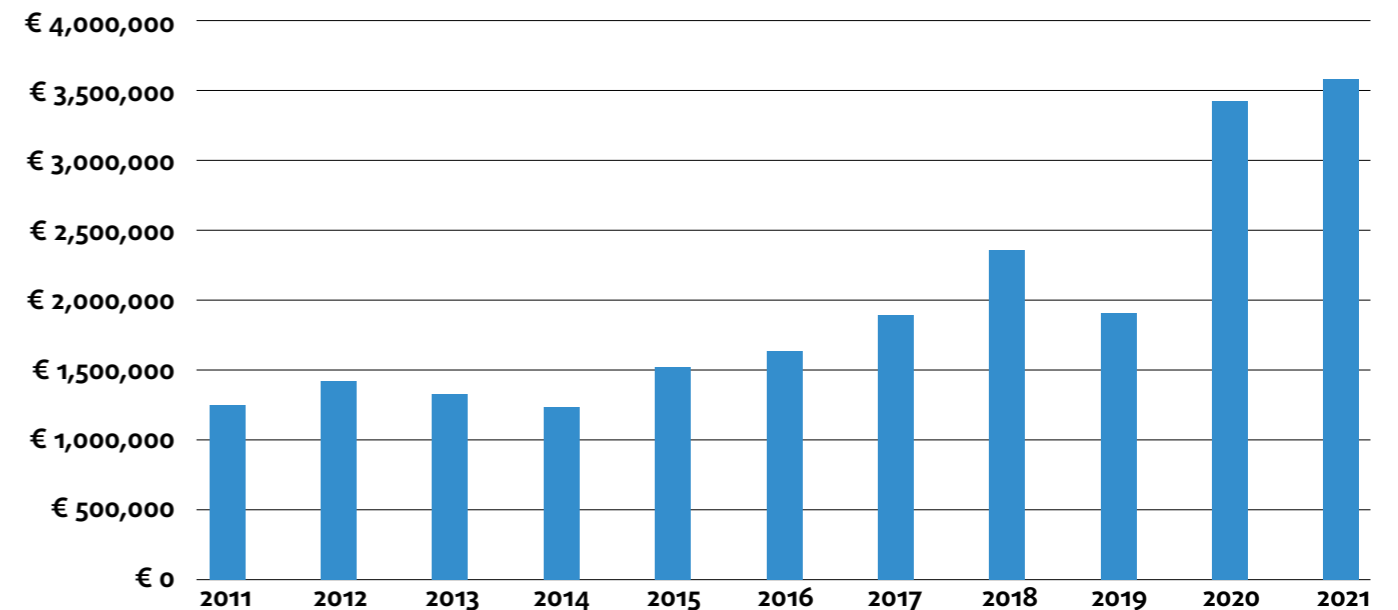
The message at the end of 2021 is clear. Current trends signal the need for FENS to avoid deficit spending and be intentional and strategic in its future financial planning. The Covid-19 variants are still evolving and circulating but conditions are much improved since the beginning of the pandemic. Most activities will be able to go ahead in person over the next year and hopefully continue to increase in this capacity in the future.

FENS is fortunately still in a healthy financial position and has several opportunities to grow through targeted outreach and engagement, fundraising efforts and partnership development based on expert financial advice and recommendations from the FENS Internal Review and Strategic Plan revision. FENS is closely monitoring progress and will meet any expansion in activities and actions with a solid financial growth strategy.

## Income - expenses comparison 2010-2021



## Comparison of accounts 2011-2021



## Message from the President-elect



Irene Tracey  
FENS President-elect 2020-2022

**A**s FENS President-elect, I would like to make a few concluding remarks in thinking about the future ahead for the organisation. After two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that the scientific community has again proven its ability to rapidly adapt and address global health crises through the continuation of vital research and the contribution of new knowledge and treatments. It is also clear that in-person interaction and exchange are not only an invaluable part of the scientific discovery process but also an essential part of human happiness and well-being. This is why I am really looking forward to the FENS activities planned for next year. They will provide wonderful opportunities for us to share experiences and reunite our efforts to advance excellent, inclusive science through friendship and mutual support.

Featured activities include the return of in-person education and training programmes. Schools, NENS courses and clusters, Brain Conferences, travel grants, as well as laboratory exchanges are all on the agenda again. There will also be a number of

outreach and advocacy opportunities like the 2022 Brain Awareness Week grants, advocacy training sessions for our member societies, and a series of ALBA webinars and in-person events to support diversity, equity and inclusion in neuroscience. In addition, FENS and the Kavli Foundation are excited to continue support for junior and mid-career neuroscientists through the activities and exchanges of the FENS Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE).

The biggest event next year will be the FENS Forum in Paris, France, on 9-13 July. I encourage all of you to attend. After two years of restrictions and long periods of isolation, this will be the first time that we'll be able to meet each other again and share our research on a grand scale. Thousands of scientists from Europe and around the world are expected to participate in person. It will be a splendid reunion for our community that will provide a chance to meet old friends, make new ones and celebrate the importance and impact of neuroscience. I can't wait to catch up with everyone and find out how we can work more closely and effectively together. See you next year in Paris!

# FENS Governance

## FENS leadership

FENS leadership is composed of a Governing Council, the Executive Committee and an Advisory Board.

### Governing Council

The Governing Council (GC) is the highest governing body of FENS and is made up of representatives of all FENS member societies, as well as the Executive Committee. It is chaired by the FENS president.

### Executive Committee

The Executive Committee comprises the President, the Secretary General, the Treasurer, the chairpersons of the Standing Committees and the Host Society Committee. It is responsible for establishing priorities and overseeing the activities of the organisation. Members of the Executive Committee and standing committees are elected by the Governing Council for terms of two years.

### Advisory Board

The Advisory Board consists of the Past President, the President-elect, the Secretary General-Elect and the Treasurer-elect.

## Standing Committees

Standing committees support matters considered as central to the mission of FENS. Members of standing committees are elected by the Governing Council while standing committee chairpersons are ex-officio members of the Executive Committee.

### Committee for Higher Education & Training (CHET)

CHET is responsible for the governance and

implementation of FENS training and education activities. Its activities include: coordinating a programme of high-level neuroscience Schools, investing in hands-on training in neuroscience, supporting national level training courses within the FENS Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS), sponsoring student exchange programmes within Europe, expanding the reach and impact of neuroscience training with international partner organisations, and increasing the development of and member access to online training materials in neuroscience.

### Programme Committee

The Programme Committee is composed of 17 elected or appointed members. The Committee's composition takes into account the fields of scientific expertise of its members and gender and geographical diversity. The Committee prepares and independently supervises the scientific programme of the FENS Forum, and selects the plenary lecturers, symposia and technical workshops. The Chair of the Programme Committee is a member of and reports to the FENS Executive Committee and the Governing Council.

### Communication Committee

The Communication Committee is responsible for the oversight, development and implementation of the FENS communication strategy. Its activities fall within the following areas: advising FENS leadership on communication policy and objectives and best strategies for the implementation of current programmes for public outreach.

### Host Society Committee

The Host Society Committee is responsible for delivering a number of activities at the Forum including social events, public engagement, outreach, and opportunities for early career researchers including the Young Investigator Training Programme (YITP).

## Special Committees

Special committees members are appointed by the Executive Committee and focus on specific areas within the realm of interest to FENS.

### The Brain Conferences Committee

Set up in 2012, the Brain Conference Committee is a special Committee responsible for the successful implementation of the Brain Conferences series. This biannual conference series is organised and financed through a partnership between FENS and the Lundbeck Foundation. They aim to promote excellence, scientific exchange and visibility for diverse topics in contemporary neuroscience. It focuses on the highest degree of scientific excellence worldwide by continuously engaging leading experts as scientific chairs and speakers.

### Committee on Animals in Research (CARE)

CARE advises FENS on the responsible use of animals in neuroscience research, supports the development of relevant resources on animals in research and promotes public education in matters related to the use of animals in neuroscience. CARE activities fall within the following areas: monitoring and advice; education and outreach; and training and support. Find out more about

how FENS supports the [responsible use of animal research](#).

### The FENS Regional Meeting Committee

The FENS Regional Meeting Committee (FRM) advises the Executive Committee and the Governing Council on the proposals received from the societies.

### The History Committee

The activities of the History Committee fall within the following areas: Promoting and protecting the heritage of brain sciences globally, with the Global Brain Museum project; fostering discussions on the history of neuroscience, with a focus on the history of the 20th century, through seminars, organised in collaboration with neuroscience institutes throughout Europe; developing resources to document the history and development of neuroscience, through the History of Neuroscience Online Projects and the organisation of a History Corner at major FENS meetings.



# FENS member societies

## National Societies

Austrian Neuroscience Association  
 Armenian Neuroscience Society  
 Belgian Society for Neuroscience  
 Brain Research Society of Finland  
 British Neuroscience Association  
 Croatian Society for Neuroscience  
 Czech Neuroscience Society  
 Danish Society for Neuroscience  
 Dutch Neurofederation  
 Georgian Neuroscience Association  
 German Neuroscience Society  
 Hellenic Society for Neuroscience  
 Hungarian Neuroscience Society  
 Icelandic Society for Neuroscience  
 Israel Society for Neuroscience  
 Italian Society for Neuroscience  
 Lithuanian Neuroscience Association  
 Malta Neuroscience Network  
 National Neuroscience Society of Romania  
 Neuroscience Ireland  
 Neuroscience Society of Turkey  
 Norwegian Neuroscience Society  
 Polish Neuroscience Society  
 Russian Neuroscience Society  
 Serbian Neuroscience Society  
 Slovak Society for Neuroscience  
 Slovenian Neuroscience Association  
 Sociedad Española de Neurociencia  
 Sociedade Portuguesa de Neurociências  
 Société des Neurosciences  
 Swedish Society for Neuroscience  
 Swiss Society for Neuroscience  
 Ukrainian Society for Neuroscience

## Single-Discipline Societies

European Behavioural Pharmacology Society  
 European Brain and Behaviour Society  
 European College of Neuropsychopharmacology  
 European Confederation of Neuropathological Societies  
 European Molecular and Cellular Cognition Society  
 European Sleep Research Society  
 European Society for Neurochemistry  
 Federation of European Physiological Societies  
 International Neuroinformatics Coordinating Facility  
 Society for Research on Nicotine and Tobacco - Europe Chapter  
 The International Behavioural and Neural Genetics Society

## FENS partners

Boehringer Ingelheim  
 Chica and Heinz Schaller Foundation  
 Dana Foundation  
 ERA-Net Neuron  
 European Animal Research Association  
 International Brain Research Organization

Lundbeck Foundation  
 European Brain Council  
 The Hertie Foundation  
 The Kavli Foundation  
 Society for Neuroscience  
 Wiley

## FENS administration

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 Natasha Slater, Executive Office Manager, Director of Staff  
 Louise Aupetit, Communications and Community Outreach Manager  
 Victoria Bech Herrero, Communications Officer  
 Mihaela Vincze, Project Manager

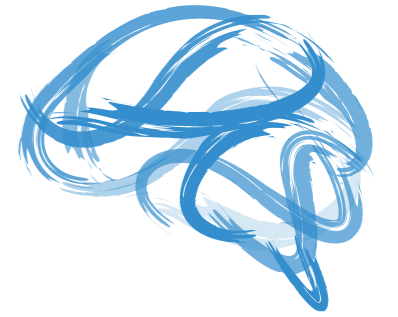
Marion Holl, Meetings Coordinator  
 Andreea Marginean, Programme Officer  
 Mathilde Maughan, ALBA Project and Network Manager  
 Keerthana Iyer, ALBA Grants & Outreach Manager  
 Lauriane Nallet, ALBA Project Administrator  
 Inbar Caspi, FENS Forum Manager

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# FENS Forum 2022



9-13 July 2022 | Paris, France



fens.org/2022 | #FENS2022



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