

**EASD**

**EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY OF DIABETES**

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## **Major European Societies join in new Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe**

Following its first official meeting at Brussels in December 2010, the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe (Biomed Alliance) is gathering pace and recruiting European biomedical societies across a range of disciplines. The Biomed Alliance aims to boost funding for biomedical research and improve the interaction between scientists and policy makers in Europe by more directly advocating research priorities. As well as the society represented by this journal (The European Association for the Study of Diabetes, EASD) the other founding members are the European Cancer Organisation (ECCO), the European Society of Cardiology (ESC) and the European Respiratory Society. Europe's biomedical research and development (R & D) funding still languishes at 1.8% of GDP, despite EU commitments back in 2002 to raise this to 3% by 2010. Meanwhile its major competitors such as the USA (2.7%) and Japan (3.4%) devote much higher proportions of their economy to this vital area. New threats to Europe's competitiveness are also emerging from China and India. Recent UNESCO data suggests that, while China's R & D spending was one third that of Europe in 2007, it could quadruple by 2020. "Unless Europe steps up to this challenge, we risk being left behind," says Professor Ulf Smith, President of EASD. "This new alliance aims to give a single powerful voice to the European biomedical research community, boosting overall funding and ensuring all levels of interaction with EU policy makers are improved."

"A common complaint is that the current procedures are too complicated and too heavily burdened by administration," says Professor Karin Sipido, inaugural Vice-President of the Biomed Alliance and representing ESC. "The alliance will aim to establish continuity of project funding by the EU, since under the current system successful collaborations given EU funding cease to exist when their projects reach their deadlines."

The Brussels meeting was hailed a great success, with attendance by high level executives from 28 European Biomedical Research Societies, representing some 400,000 researchers across the continent. In addition to the four founding members, a further 11 societies have formally joined the Alliance: the European Association for the Study of the Liver (EASL),

the European College of Neuropsychopharmacology (ECNP), the European Hematology Association (EHA), the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology (ESHRE), the European Association of Nuclear Medicine (EANM), the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS), the European Society of Radiology (ESR), the European Society of Hypertension (ESH), the European Society for Paediatric Research (ESPR), the European Society of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases (ESCMID) and the European Federation of Immunological Societies (EFIS). Other societies are in the process of joining. The new alliance has been welcomed by Dr Ruxandra Draghia-Akli, director of the health directorate at the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation in the European Commission (EC). The EC is in the process of formalising processes for its next funding cycle (Framework Programme), covering the years 2014-2020. "Input from the learned societies is vital for the content of future programmes, so the new alliance has a great opportunity here," she says, adding that she foresees regular consultation with the alliance on future projects and priorities. The Biomed Alliance is currently providing input for a green paper published by the EU regarding a new common strategic framework.

Smith adds that three other aims will be crucial to the success of the Biomed Alliance. Firstly, boosting the contribution of individual member states (that provide 90% of total European biomedical research funding), as well as the EU (that provides the other 10%). Second, helping the general public to understand the significance of biomedical research, and third, developing a framework for better training and mobility of researchers. "Many EU scientists are reluctant to relocate to other EU countries after age 40 years, due to concerns about loss of pension entitlements," he says. He concludes: "With the expertise and resolve of our members, we intend to change the landscape and improve the conditions for innovative European biomedical research, covering all health disciplines, for improved health of all European citizens."

Ulf Smith  
President, Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe