



# Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

**Jose Mariano Gago - Science and Europe**

The European Parliament

Brussels

June 29, 2016

I am speaking on behalf of the Alliance for Biomedical research which I was involved in establishing in 2010 and where I was President for the first 3 years. The Biomed Alliance includes 22 of the major European scientific societies and represents over 400000 scientists. It was established because all scientific societies felt the urgent need of scientists coming together, speaking with one voice and to be more involved in the strategic planning of health research and innovation in the Horizon 2020 program and other research programs.

When we in the Alliance for Biomedical Research optimistically described our thoughts and plans with different stakeholders, we became increasingly aware that having a vision and a dream is not the same as having it implemented in the complex world of the European Union. It is fair to say that we increasingly became aware of the difficulties in implementing our visions and had it not been for the suggestion that we should consult Jose Mariano Gago I am sure that we would have failed. His knowledge and strategic advice gradually made us realize what we needed to do and how it should be done. Thanks to the support from Mariano, the EUP and the EC we now have the Scientific Panel for Health established and the recent document "Better Research for Better Health" describes plans and visions for the SPH. The SPH is a pilot for the concept, and in our views the urgent need, of a co-ordinated science-led European Health Research Council or Institute. Certainly a vision that Mariano Gago also would have agreed with. We all very much look forward to the results which will be gradually presented and consultations invited.

Mariano Gago was unique in both having political expertise as a former Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education in Portugal as well as a prominent physicist/scientist. He made us realize that we as scientists need to understand the quite complex EU political world better and he gently ushered us forward in that process. He also helped us in communicating with the EUP and, in particular, with the Rapporteurs of Horizon 2020; Theresa Riera Madurell and Maria de Graca Carvalho as well as other MEPs and national representatives. Without his strong support and encouraging kindness, we would probably still be discussing how to make an impact in the political world and have our voices as scientists heard! Mariano participated in the Alliance for Biomedical Research General Assembly in 2014 and also gave a presentation where he emphasized the need of thinking



## Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

broader and to have more cross-disciplines scientific interactions since this can facilitate and speed up the innovation cycle! The last I heard from Mariano was him sending me Christmas greetings in 2014.

With Mariano's death in 2015, I can clearly say that all of us in the Alliance for Biomedical Research felt a great loss of a person with whom we had established close relations both as a friend, an advisor and as a very wise and knowledgeable person. We will always remember him and continue to build on his legacy.