

First meeting of european consortium to investigate neuropsychiatric diseases

On the coming 26 and 27 of September, a group of european neuroscientists will meet in Coimbra, Portugal, to start the Project Syn2Psy (on synapse pathology and neuropsychiatry disorders), an innovative training network funded by Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions – European Commission H2020. Syn2psy aims to train researchers to become top level scientists in the field of neuropsychiatric research.

The Syn2Psy consortium includes researchers from the United Kingdom (Imperial College London and Edinburgh University), France (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), Portugal (Center of Neurosciences and Cell Biology) and Switzerland (École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne) and additionally a Danish Pharmaceutical Company (H. Lundbeck A/S).

A group of 14 international early stage researchers will be trained to contribute to the knowledge on the biological basis of neuropsychiatric diseases (e.g. autism, schizophrenia, depression). The young researchers investigate the genetic mutations associated with neuropsychiatric diseases, which result in disrupted neuronal synaptic communication, alteration of neuronal networks and changes in behaviour. The results from this project may lead to the development of new methods of prevention, diagnostic and treatment of neuropsychiatric disorders.

The project includes non-academic partners like CTI (a clinical trials company) and Coimbra University Hospital, which will allow the researchers to take part in preclinical and clinical research. A neuropsychiatric clinic (PIN) and a theatre company (Marionet) will also partner with the researchers to help them understand the impact of these diseases in patients and their families. The young scientists will produce communication material on neuropsychiatric disorders in various formats to be shared with the general public with the aims of educating and reducing the stigma associated with neuropsychiatric diseases.

During the meeting, Carmen Sandi, the president of FENS (Federation of European Neuroscience Societies) and a researcher in the project, will give a talk on stress, vulnerability to neurological diseases and communities of neuroscientists. The meeting will be followed by the Syn2psy first network school, co-organised with the Syn2Psy partner ZEISS (world leader in microscopy), in which the researchers will learn and apply new methods of microscopy in neurosciences.

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