

Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

PRESS STATEMENT

Key Opinion Leaders join BioMed Alliance to outline a vision for a European Council for Health Research

22 December 2011

Immediate release

A group of key opinion leaders from both the European scientific and political arena have agreed to work with the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe (BioMed Alliance) to delineate a vision for how future European research in health can be structured.

The BioMed Alliance, a partnership between 17 leading European biomedical and clinical societies representing approx. 200,000 researchers, recently produced a Position Paper in response to discussions at EU level on the future research framework programme, Horizon 2020. BioMed Alliance President, Professor Ulf Smith noted, "We assessed the numerous challenges facing Europe today in terms of health research and innovation: the fragmented research landscape, poor investment in health compared to our international competitors, the need for improved priority-setting of the research agenda and the ageing population. After discussion on these huge obstacles at our General Assembly on 01 December, we knew we had to act."

Alliance members agreed that the creation of a consolidated and interconnected pan-European research platform could help to tackle these huge obstacles. In order to accelerate this ambition, the BioMed Alliance will work with an eminent group of opinion leaders and advisors from across different biomedical disciplines that can provide strategic input on how to shape such a 'Council'. Nobel Laureate, Professor Harald zur Hausen, who will be an Advisor to the BioMed Alliance, stated, "I am happy to engage in the stakeholder debate on how a European Council for Health Research could be structured. This framework will be of great importance if we really want to avail of the many breakthroughs in the biomedical field and compete internationally."

Political leaders are also part of this high-level group. Former Portuguese Minister in charge of science and technology, Professor José Mariano Gago, stressed the need for scientists, clinicians, industry, patient organisations and policymakers to work together on such an initiative: "It is time for the biomedical community in Europe to take the lead by providing evidence-based advice to drive policy-making. We need to bridge the gap between science and policy in order to address the challenges of personalised medicine as well as the burdensome healthcare costs facing modern societies. This requires discovery and innovation at a global scale. Otherwise, Europe will be left behind."

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In the forthcoming months, the BioMed Alliance and its distinguished advisors will collaborate with EU policymakers including Members of the European Parliament (MEPs), the European Commission, national ministries, and other key stakeholders on Horizon 2020 and discuss how a centralised structure in Europe can ensure expert scientific input on policy from the outset, advance innovative discoveries, simplify funding procedures, encourage participation from more researchers across borders and secure savings. Such a structure can ensure that society at large benefits from research outcomes.

Contact: Info@biomedeuropa.org

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