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Opening speech during the European Brain Council
presentation of the report on the Cost of Disorders of the
Brain in Europe
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I would like to welcome you all to this important meeting and especially wholeheartedly Dr Mary Baker, the President of the European Brain Council.

We are here because we care about health challenges Europe is confronted with and would like to support the efforts of European Brain Council. I also hope that with this meeting we begin our campaign to promote 2014 as the European Year of Brain.

Today, we will listen to the presentation of the results of an important new study which has been published in the European Journal of Neuro psycho pharmacology. It was initiated by the European Brain Council as a follow up to a study they had published in 2005. Their original study estimated the cost of disorders of the brain in Europe in 2004 and showed that the total cost in Europe, including the EU member states, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland, was estimated at €386 billion in 2004, distributed over 12 diagnostic groups of important disorders of the brain and that these disorders affected 127 million adult Europeans.

The study was labelled a benchmark study because it was the first ever to attempt to combine the available epidemiologic and economic evidence of disorders of the brain. It was instrumental in demonstrating the large societal cost associated with disorders of the brain and the importance of decisions on comprehensive strategy to address it. The EBC 2005 report had an enormous impact on various levels. Numerous highly listed disorder-specific and country specific reports further exploring the economic consequences of disorders of the brain were important spin-offs of this first report. The 2005 report was presented to the European Commission and to European parliamentarians and has undoubtedly played a role in increasing the focus and shaping the political agenda on brain research and brain diseases at a European and national level. As a consequence, the number of studies exploring different aspects of the cost of disorders of the brain has steadily increased over the last years.

Since 2005, important steps have been taken to strengthen the research focusing on the disorders of the brain in Europe, most importantly the specific mention of mental health and brain research in the seventh framework program of research (FP7).

Funding for brain disorders has significantly increased, though, from a low starting point.

Knowledge lies at the heart of the European Union's Strategy to become a **dynamic, competitive, knowledge-based economy**. The '**knowledge triangle**' - **research, education** and **innovation** - is a core factor in European efforts to meet the ambitious goals. Europe 2020 has the ambition to enhance research and innovation and hopefully the results of today's study will help direct much needed funding towards the very important area of brain research.

Let me also share with you hope that the European health policy will continue to be one of the major interest of all of its stakeholders: the medical community, the patients, the researchers and the companies in the field of medicine. I would explicitly include the policy-makers on the European level, like the Commission and the Parliament, because the health of our societies is, and should be, one of the primary concerns of the lawmakers. The awareness of brain disorders and its societal impact is probably not so much imprinted on our consciousness as other diseases, like cancer, for example. But its impact can be quite staggering.

I would now like to hand over to Dr Mary Baker MBE, President of the European Brain Council to chair the meeting.