**Short description of EBRA and EPICLUSTER**

**EBRA – European Brain Research Area** Brain research in Europe is a rapidly evolving field, and increasingly at the forefront of science. The complexity of understanding physiological brain functions and brain diseases brings responsibilities to develop novel tools and approaches to advance our understanding of unknown basic brain functions, as well as opportunities to generate novel therapeutic approaches, thus confronting with a major societal challenge in Europe and worldwide. Considering the costs of brain diseases for the European society, and that these costs will increase considerably in the coming years due to the ageing of the European population, the EU and its Member States have made considerable investments in brain research leading to a significant increase of initiatives in this area. Although these initiatives have generated considerable amounts of knowledge and innovative approaches, the translation into new health interventions is hindered by the complexity of the challenge and by excessive fragmentation of the efforts. Effective and efficient collaboration and cooperation among the various initiatives are often identified as a key success factor to achieve full impact from brain research. In particular, there is a constant need for strengthening the information flow and accelerating the exchange of experience on the on-going and future projects as well as maintaining continuous dialogue between all the stakeholder groups and initiatives to allow that objectives are aligned and needs are met. EBRA is responding to these needs by bringing together the various stakeholders and major brain research initiatives, at European level and beyond, and creating the conditions for real and effective cross fertilisation, dialogue, building consensus and exploiting research potential to deliver new health interventions in brain disorders. For more information see: [www.ebra.eu](http://www.ebra.eu)

**EPICLUSTER** EPICLUSTER (<https://www.ebra.eu/existing-clusters/>) was funded by EBRA in late 2019 as a two-year networking action to enhance the coordination of epilepsy research in Europe. EPICLUSTER emerged following a major stakeholder meeting in Brussels in 2018 called EpiXchange (<http://www.epixchange2018.eu/>) that brought together the coordinators of multiple EU-funded epilepsy projects and stakeholders from industry and patient representative groups. Altogether, 170 investigators from 18 European countries and 5 non-EU countries. The leadership of EPICLUSTER is below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cluster leadership | Projects/responsibilities |
| David C. Henshall, PhD (Coordinator) | Coordinator, EpimiRNADirector, FutureNeuro SFI Research Centre |
| Renzo Guerrini, MD | Coordinator, DESIRE |
| Sergiusz Jozwiak, MD | Coordinator, EPI-STOP |
| Merab Kokaia, PhD | Coordinator, EPI-TARGET |
| Asla Pitkanen, MD, PhD | Past-Secretary FENS, EPI-TARGET WP leader |
| Sanjay Sisodiya, MD, PhD | Coordinator, Epi-PGX |
| Michele Simonato, MD | Coordinator, EpiXchange IAPP |
| J. Helen Cross, MD, PhD | Coordinator, Epi-CARE, ILAE President-elect |
| Philippe Ryvlin, MD | ILAE Executive Europe, Lancet Commission |
| Martin J. Brodie, MD | President of IBE, EAE member |

The primary objective of EPICLUSTER is to establish a collaborative framework for the coordinated actions of epilepsy research in Europe, based around the partnerships and research priorities described above. EBRA’s support is a mechanism to maintain the ongoing impetus of these projects, the networks established between different healthcare and scientific professionals and the advocacy framework that supports the ongoing research activities of the different groups, while facilitating training and researcher exchange and partnership with other stakeholders. EPICLUSTER aims include:

* **Promoting collaborations at both European and global level and contributing to European Policy:** The coordination and networking activities will leverage the considerable investment of time and resources and greatly accelerate exchange between epilepsy researchers and stakeholders across a number of initiatives. We aim to reduce fragmentation and duplication of research efforts and foster synergies in Europe.
* **Enhance European Epilepsy Training:** EPICLUSTER aims to contribute to informing epilepsy training in Europe by leveraging the expertise and resources assembled by the different projects, their clinical colleagues and previous as well as new industry partners.
* **Increasing translation of project-generated knowledge and innovative approaches into new health interventions:** EPICLUSTER aims to be a supportive ecosystem that accelerates the translation of breakthroughs in epilepsy research into relevant clinical applications.
* **Supporting internationalisation of participating industry partners:** Industry participants in the Cluster will have access to a vibrant European network of Epilepsy researchers, a source of potentially highly skilled graduates with practical research experience in relevant areas, opportunities in new potential products/service/innovations, and a source of new potential collaborators to assist in European expansion.
* **Improve access to and optimise the use of research infrastructures and data sources:** EPICLUSTER will address sharing data, technology platforms and best practices. This includes commissioning expert advice and training for researchers on storage, analysis and re-use of data for research, innovation and educational purposes and to promote public access to scientific results, as well as introducing more people to academic research.
* **Explore possibilities for broader scale cooperation at global level:** EPICLUSTER aims to increase dialogue with researchers outside Europe in coordination with research funders around the world (e.g. NIH). For example, by activating existing international collaborations within the Cluster and by inviting international and national research funders, international experts and policy-makers to events held by the CLUSTER.

**Planned activities of EPICLUSTER**

**Event 1 EPICLUSTER CONSENSUS MEETING (June 17th 2020)**

The objective of this activity is to bring together the leadership of EPICLUSTER with any previously missing important representatives of the European Epilepsy alliances/societies as well as representatives from other major brain initiatives, big data experts and industry, to reach consensus on working together, agreeing main objectives and speaking with a single voice at a European level in alignment with EBRA’s objectives and activities.

**Event 2 EPICLUSTER GENERAL CONFERENCE (Q 3 or 4, 2020)**

This kick-off meeting will comprise a two-day meeting to discuss scientific progress of the various projects and to establish working groups and management structure, mechanisms to ensure that EpiCARE, a growing patient-oriented and permanent EU initiative, has a direct link with existing research initiatives, and the introduction of new (including external to the field) partners and collaborators. The meeting will also include planning for a *European Epilepsy Forum* which will offer a platform for gathering a large number of stakeholders (including industry, lay associations, MEPs, EC representatives from the different DGs, journalists and also EBC and EBRA). This will serve our network’s key objectives by establishing and maintaining the existing partners, providing a forum to bring in new partners, raise our profile and will facilitate collaborative research and resource sharing.

**Event 3 SUSTAINABILITY & POLICY FORUM (Q 2 or 3, 2021)**

This Policy Forum will be hosted by the leadership of our network and bring together key funding agencies and other stakeholders to discuss and agree approaches to secure large-scale European and potentially international funding. This *serves multiple objectives of the network* including building critical mass for large-scale joint funding initiatives between the epilepsy research community in Europe and international agencies and with other brain-related and other research initiatives.

**Event 4 SYNTHESIS FORUM (Q 4, 2021)**

The final planned meeting will review the network achievements, operational effectiveness and future priorities. We will use the meeting to appraise the existing partnership, review the impact of new partners (and identify any remaining gaps) and facilitate ongoing collaborative research and resource sharing.