

Statement of Annamaria Vezzani (ILAE-CEA)

I am honoured to have been invited to contribute to the activities of the ILAE as a member of the CEA. I am a basic scientist who has been working for several years in translational research. During my past leadership of the ILAE Commission on Neurobiology in 2005-2009, and as an active member of the the present Commision on Neurobiology, I worked to promote initiatives for facilitating the transfer of discoveries from the bench to the clinic by close collaboration between basic and clinical investigators.

Education: this activity can be developed at various levels. One level is to facilitate the exchange of scientific information among epilepsy community members, and in particular to foster interactions between basic scientists and clinicians. This goal could be fruitfully achieved by promoting educational initiatives in the main epilepsy meetings by encouraging workshops and symposia where clinically relevant issues can be discussed with representatives of both experimental and clinical areas. This strategy will serve to highlight the major clinical needs and exploit the experimental tools and preexisting knowledge in the basic science field for a faster and more efficient attainment of the still unmet needs. Educational initiatives could also include dedicated courses outside the main meetings, some of which are already regularly organized by the scientific community. Importantly, access to such educational activities should be made available to young scientists and clinicians from countries with restricted resources by providing dedicated fellowships. Promoting web site-posted or paper reports and proceedings of such initiatives would expand the educational potential and benefits by reaching also people who are unable to attend.

Research: Mobility of scientists among EU laboratories and clinical centers becomes often a necessity because of the limited resources available which restricts the possibility to reproduce in every research or clinical center all the competences and technologies required to develop a research project. The complementarity of expertise and technology among research and clinical centers in EU could be further exploited if short term fellowships would be available to facilitate people mobility. This strategy would also implement and foster collaborations within the EU community that could be advantageous also for preparing networks eligible for the upcoming EU collaborative grant proposals, and for joining research initiatives with non-EU Countries.

Advocacy: as a basic scientist I am frequently approached by patients and their families who wish to be updated about the novel discoveries in epilepsy research which might result in new therapies. Epilepsy sufferers and their families want to be aware of the progress of epilepsy research devoted to a better understanding of the causes of unremitting or drug resistant seizures that can devastate their lives. The CEA may provide an updated link to patient organizations and lay people reporting on the emerging knowledge about mechanisms of disease and new treatments opportunities under preclinical or clinical testing. This project could be developed using already available or new communication channels in collaboration with other ILAE Commissions. Concerted actions could be contemplated for press releases of novel discoveries and investigational new drugs to lay people.