

BM1004

ESSEA

Enhancing the Scientific Study of Early Autism

2011 | 2014

Objectives

- To establish an interdisciplinary scientific network to advance the pace of discovery about the earliest signs of autism
- To combine techniques from cognitive neuroscience with those from the clinical sciences
- To co-ordinate European activity amongst groups studying genetically at-risk siblings, screening studies and early intervention studies
- To promote disseminate best-practice guidance on early screening and intervention

Main Achievements

- **Scientific outputs obtained due to networking:**
 - Action-led symposia at the following international conferences:
 - 15th European Conference on Developmental Psychology (ECDP), Bergen, Norway, August 2011.
 - 2nd Innovative Research in Autism (IRIA) Conference, Tours, France, May 2012.
 - 20th World Congress of the International Association for Child and Adolescent Psychiatry and Allied Professions (IACAPAP), Paris, France, July 2012.
 - COST funding named in 5 publications by 3 Action members.
- **Capacity building due to networking:**
 - Participation in the COST Action mentioned in successful national grant applications by 4 members from 4 countries.
 - 6 Action members from 3 countries (UK, Sweden, Netherlands) involved in the successful Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) FP7 funded EU-AIMS consortium. Including support from EFPIA and Autism Speaks (USA) total award is €29.6 million. The COST Action network was a critical part of the infrastructure of this successful bid

www.cost.eu/bmbs**Biomedicine and Molecular Biosciences (BMBS)**

Participating countries

AT, BE, BG, CZ, DE, DK, FI, FR, HU, IE, IL, IS, IT, MK, NL, NO, PL, PT, RO, SK, SE, UK

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A baby scientist undergoing an EEG experiment



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Working Group activities

Working Group 1 – At-risk infants

- Facilitate interactions amongst groups conducting relevant research
- Identify barriers to research and funding
- Compare ethical and clinical management of at-risk samples across Europe and internationally.

Working Group 2 – New technologies

- Map European groups using new technologies with infants and toddlers.
- Improve synergy in research protocols across sites using similar experimental measures (EEG, ERP, NIRS, eye-tracking).
- Facilitate training of junior scientists and sharing of technical expertise via STSMs and a Training School (October 2012).

Working Group 3 – Early screening

- Identify sites who have conducted early screening studies in the past 10 years (> 10 countries).
- Compare screening measures and other clinical measures. Where possible conduct meta-analyses of datasets.
- Write a practice guide to how to establish a screening study, especially in a lower income/resource country

Working Group 4 – Early intervention

- Conduct survey of intervention received by young children with autism in Europe (underway)
- Develop plans for common outcome measures (e.g. of child-adult interaction) to allow meta-analysis from future EU trials.
- Develop a common measure of treatment fidelity to use in future EU trials.

Industry participation

None



An infant undergoing a social communication experiment



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