



FENS Strategic Plan 2024-2028

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Introduction

The FENS Strategic Plan for the period 2024-2028 aims to set priorities, allocate resources and establish a four-year roadmap based on the conclusions and recommendations of the FENS Internal Review completed in 2023 and aligned with the FENS vision and mission. It provides an invaluable mechanism for FENS to ensure the best possible development of the organisation and its activities for the continued benefit of its membership, the neuroscience community at large and broader society in general. This current Strategic Plan defines the overall direction over this four-year period and provides a framework for FENS to undertake its mission within existing budgetary and operational capacities, ensuring continuity of actions through the turnover of its committees, leadership and staff, the changing needs of its community and the constant evolution of the field. The plan also aims to ensure transparency, outcome evaluation and clarity of purpose that will assist the FENS leadership in its decisions to modify, redirect or maintain designated resource allocations and activities in alignment with strategic objectives.

I. FENS vision, mission and strategy

I.1 Strategic vision

The present strategic plan presents a vision statement to help align and root objectives and activities into one unifying ambition:

In alignment with its member societies and members, FENS shall be a recognisable major force for the promotion of neuroscience research, education and training within and beyond Europe, striving to create an inclusive, globally connected European research community that inspires, improves and empowers society through discovery neuroscience research.

FENS consists of fundamental, translational and clinical scientists who have committed their professional careers to discovering more about the brain and nervous system. It is motivated by scientific discovery and the potential to contribute new knowledge that increases collective human understanding about the brain and nervous system across all species, contexts and conditions. Sharing this basic curiosity and drive to increase understanding with others is considered both a privilege and responsibility for the federation. Advancing fundamental knowledge about the brain and nervous system requires constant scientific commitment over generations and the dedicated engagement and investment of all stakeholders. FENS works with its members with a unified purpose to achieve this goal, while inspiring and empowering broader society with the knowledge, education and tools necessary to benefit from new scientific discoveries, always striving towards a greater understanding and quality of life for all.

I.2 Mission

The FENS mission fulfills the organisation's vision by serving, representing and enhancing access to the resources of the neuroscience community in Europe and beyond through four mutually reinforcing and lasting impact areas: fostering knowledge exchange; advancing neuroscience;

empowering community; and investing in the future. These areas are interconnected and interdependent, strengthening each other through intersecting component activities and efforts supported by a unifying core of organisational values, governance and administration. Responsive and inclusive collaboration and cooperation across actions and actors with long-term beneficial scientific and societal impacts are at the heart of the FENS mission. They allow FENS to stay resilient and relevant so it can continue to serve, represent and enhance access to diverse neuroscience communities under constantly evolving contexts, conditions and needs.

I.3 Organisation of the Strategic Plan

FENS organises activities into four primary impact areas (Fig.1). In each of these areas, the Strategic Plan outlines the main directions, the details of which can be defined, prioritised, and adapted every two years at the time of change in leadership. The Strategic Plan utilises the results of an Internal Review, which is organised and carried out every four years, with a timing that allows the integration of its main recommendations into the new Strategic Plan. The current plan takes into account the recommendations of the Internal Review completed in 2023.

FENS Impact Areas

Fostering knowledge exchange

- European Journal of Neuroscience
- FENS Forums
- FENS Regional Meetings
- Brain Conferences

Advancing neuroscience

- Research - exchanges, fellowships
- Education - Schools, webinars
- Training - NENS, ECTP

Core Values

Governance

Administration

Empowering community

- Membership
- ALBA Network - diversity, equity, inclusion
- Advocacy and Outreach
- Recognition - awards, prizes, grants

Investing in the future

- FKNE - early to mid-career scientists
- ENCODS - PhD students
- International Brain Bee - high school students

Figure 1: FENS impact areas

I.4 Implementation of the Strategic Plan

The overall management of FENS scientific activities and implementation of the strategic objectives are achieved through its committees and networks that are comprised of scientists with expertise and interests in the domain of the committee (Executive Committee, Standing and Special Committees). The Strategic Plan specifies the tasks and responsibilities of each committee, whether they act alone or in collaboration, and under which conditions.

Decisions that are taken by FENS committees and governance are implemented by the administration of FENS. This serves the dual purpose of freeing committee members from the burdensome tasks of implementation and ensures knowledge transfer and continuity in long-term planning and execution. Hence, each proposed action includes an estimation of the support staff needed.

I.5 Progress Assessment

The Strategic Plan undergoes periodic assessment in order to evaluate how specific goals have been implemented and achieved, and also to readjust objectives and resources when necessary (Fig. 2). The revision of the Strategic Plan is the responsibility of the Executive Committee following discussions with the various FENS committees. Every second year, the Governing Council discusses and approves the overall direction and implementation of the Strategic Plan. This periodic evaluation ensures the timely adjustment of FENS activities, helps to redirect actions and objectives if needed and also supports the development of new initiatives.

Internal Review

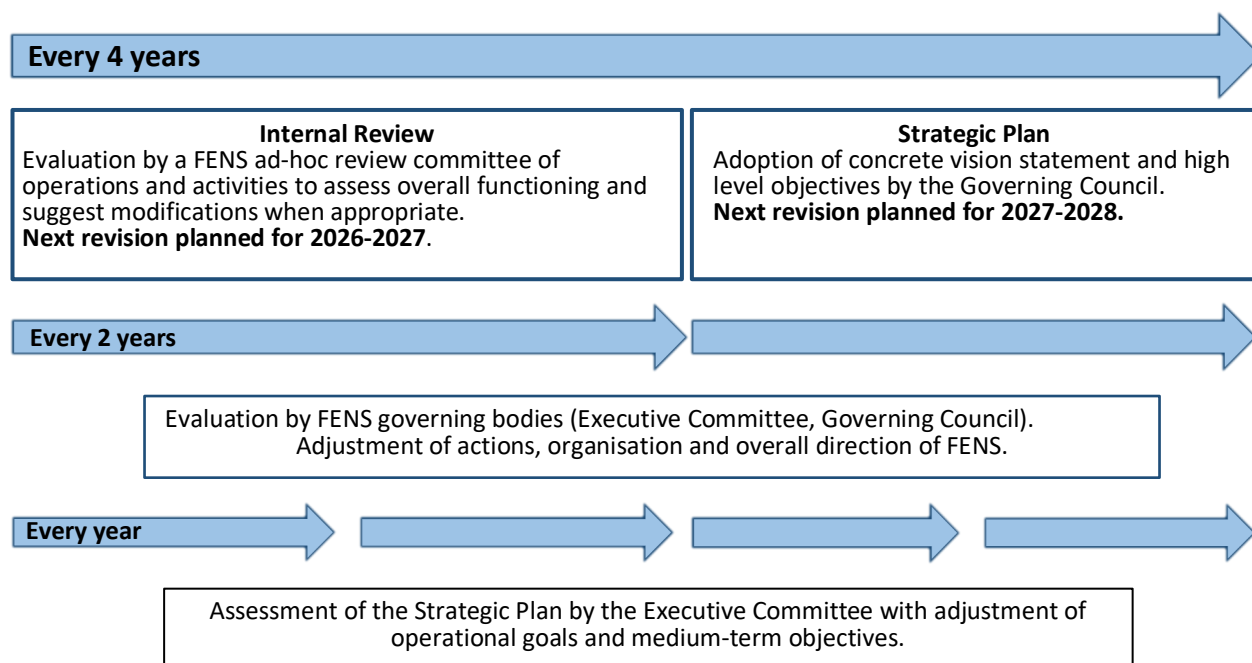


Figure 2: Timeline for periodic revision and updating of the FENS Strategic Plan.

II. Key Impact Areas

II.1 Fostering Knowledge Exchange

A main ambition for FENS is to foster scientific knowledge exchange among scientists in order to increase access to and participation in research on the brain and nervous system within Europe and beyond with the global neuroscience community. Developing new knowledge in any discipline does not occur in a vacuum. Bridging gaps, breaking down silos and creating supportive environments to share experiences and findings with other researchers help to not only advance scientific discovery but also career development, collaboration and networking. An additional benefit to providing opportunities for knowledge exchange is to showcase the excellence of European neuroscience to partners, policymakers, funding bodies, the public and to scientists from around the world. There are four main mechanisms through which FENS strengthens impact in this area: the European Journal of Neuroscience (EJN); FENS Forums; FENS Regional Meetings; and the Brain Conferences.

II.1.1 European Journal of Neuroscience (EJN)

The *European Journal of Neuroscience* (EJN) is the official journal of FENS. It is the federation's principal vehicle for the dissemination and exchange of peer-reviewed research of the highest quality from all fields of neuroscience (basic, translational and clinical), in service to the entire scientific community and to collective human knowledge about the brain and nervous system. It is also committed to showcasing and discussing current topics of critical importance to the scientific community and its connections to society at large.

EJN is an important source of support for FENS since its proceeds are reinvested into the neuroscience community through FENS activities. However, the scientific publishing field is rapidly and unpredictably evolving under opposing pressures. On the one hand, scientists and funding bodies express the legitimate desire to provide open access to high quality scientific publication without duplicating charges. On the other hand, the low online costs and potential benefits attract new for-profit actors with often questionable scientific quality standards and commercial practices (e.g. labeled “predatory” by respected scientists) that destabilise the publication field. As a result, the source of revenue of scientific journals including EJN, which was previously mostly ensured by subscriptions, is constantly decreasing, while the various types of global agreements between publishers, countries and funding bodies are less transparent to the detriment of scientific society journals. This situation results in a real financial risk for FENS and requires constant attention and responsiveness from FENS leadership, the EJN editorial board and the EJN Management Committee.

The scientific success of EJN depends primarily on the work of the Editorial Board, under the leadership of the Editors-in-Chief in close collaboration with the senior editors. FENS works together with the publisher to maintain high scientific standards and supports efforts to reach agreements with countries or consortia to anticipate and respond to evolutions in this area. Unfortunately, the publisher's support team for EJN experienced a complete turnover in 2023 and FENS no longer works with its long-term Wiley representatives, losing much institutional memory on the publisher's side and the benefits of its working relationships that had developed over two

decades. This will require close monitoring and attention by FENS leadership and the EJN Management Committee to ensure the continued success of the journal and its editorial operations.

EJN: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Secure best publishing deal for FENS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renegotiate contract with Wiley and explore options. • Agree on best option for FENS from 2025.
2. Ensure future stability of journal income.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish 4-year financial plan for journal based on future projections and assessments of key performance indicators including open access, subscription and submission rates.
3. Enhance EJN's visibility as a global collective benefit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage broad community networks to amplify message. • Highlight benefits of publishing in EJN with strategic communication campaigns, emphasising longevity of impact, contributions to new knowledge and discussions around critical topics of current importance. • Incorporate EJN editor presentations into FENS activities, especially schools and meetings.
4. Increase sense of ownership and submission rates of FENS membership.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate 'call to action' to FENS members. • Explore possibility to provide preferential rates to FENS members for open access publication. • Editors-in-Chief and/or senior editors to report and increase EJN visibility during FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council meetings. • Editors-in-Chief or senior and section editors should attend FENS member society meetings and FENS activities (such as schools, conferences, meetings, etc.) as much as possible (and within annual EJN travel budgets) to present the journal to the community.
5. Increase impact of journal.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim for the top of quartile Q2 of neuroscience journals as measured by usual impact indicators. • Publish more high quality and relevant special issues, research articles and editorials.
6. Strengthen and broaden diversity and expertise of editorial team and editorial office management.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist EiC and senior editors to find excellent reviewers and section editors. • Anticipate and optimise evolution of Editorial Board to meet future challenges.

Success Assessment

The evolution of EJN is regularly monitored by the EJN Management Committee and FENS governance bodies, including the assessment of key performance indicators such as the number of submissions and publications with the various status of open access/subscription and acceptance rates, turnover time, breadth of topics, evolution of editors, bibliometric indexes and financial balances taking into account costs, subscriptions and share of transitional agreements. Annual reports are prepared by the publisher Editors-in-Chief and presented to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council through the Editors-in-Chief.

II.1.2 FENS Forums

The FENS Forum is the largest neuroscience meeting in Europe. It takes place biennially on even years and features all neuroscience disciplines from basic to applied and is intended to promote scientific exchange between researchers worldwide. Its high-level scientific programme is defined and organised by the FENS Programme Committee and provides an excellent opportunity to promote collaboration and networking in Europe and globally. The Forum also showcases European neuroscience for scientists, policymakers, partners, funders and the public through special interest events, the Brain Debate and networking and satellite events. Social and outreach activities also support exchange and interaction and help to broaden and enrich the 5-day event. Advocacy events with policymakers have not been prioritised previously but should in the future to ensure that the needs of the neuroscience community can be sufficiently heard and met.

The FENS Forum 2022 in Paris, France, experienced the most participation ever with 7,890 delegates, more than 4,800 poster presenters and over 400 international speakers. However, participation was heavily subsidised with 17% of overall participation being complimentary and 53% with reduced student membership rates. Attracting high rates of students and early career researchers should not be compromised as it represents one of the main priorities of the Forum, allowing the next generation of neuroscientists the opportunity to share their research and network with scientists in their fields of interest. Therefore, more travel and accommodation support, especially for those from disadvantaged backgrounds, should be sought to facilitate access and participation for those in need. Furthermore, sponsorship and exhibition should be increased to help increase diversity, visibility and support for increasing costs of event operations. Increasing the profitability of future Forums will also help to mitigate the effects of reduced revenues from EJN.

FENS Forum: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Further consolidate the Forum as the premier international neuroscience event in Europe and a major one worldwide.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make the Forum the go-to event for anyone who wants to know about the current, cutting-edge state of European neuroscience research, education and training. • Refine communication campaigns to ensure the Forum is perceived as a must-attend event for European scientists and high-priority for the global neuroscience community. • Further facilitate activities and events attractive to both European and global audiences.
2. Showcase diversity and excellence in all fields of neuroscience and related disciplines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate more cross-disciplinary dialogues, events and opportunities for scientific exchange between neuroscientists and patients, industry, clinicians and actors involved in developing related technologies and healthcare.
3. Increase inclusion of students, early career and underrepresented researchers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take special action to include active participation of students and scientists from underrepresented and underresourced countries including dedicated events, affordable rates and funding support. • Continue to support the Early Career Training Programme.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase travel grants if possible. • Maintain offering of childcare grants and onsite childcare facilities if possible.
4. Increase promotion and participation of member societies and individual members, reinforcing the FENS service to its membership community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate outreach activities, opportunities and recognition for member societies and individual members. • Continue to offer time and space to member societies to hold their governance meetings during the Forums.
5. Increase positive impact of the Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to explore feasibility of a legacy programme for the local communities and host societies that support FENS Forums. • Implement ways to further minimise the environmental impact of the Forum. • Continue to implement ALBA Network guidelines for diverse, inclusive and equitable scientific meetings. • Increase awareness and visibility of the code of conduct, especially for students and early career researchers, and enforce its rules when necessary. • Establish advocacy and outreach events with local, national and European policymakers and stakeholders.
6. Ensure financial balance is positive and reinvested into FENS activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a 4-year (including at least 2 Forums) financial plan with realistic targets that aim to improve cost-effectiveness, sponsorship and commercial exhibitions to ensure that significant revenue is generated. • Reduce subsidising majority of Forum participants. • Ensure costs of VAT and inflation increases are covered.
7. Ensure professional administrative management of the Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate efficiently and effectively with the Professional Congress Organiser (PCO) and carry out a debriefing at the end of each Forum. • Collect and review post-Forum feedback for next one. • Establish clear guidelines and agreements with the Host Societies that outline roles and responsibilities.

Success Assessment

After each Forum, a report is prepared by the Professional Congress Organiser (PCO) to assess multiple criteria, including attendance (total number, participation of early career scientists and students, geographic origin and diversity of attendance and presenters, etc.), feedback from participants, the number of exhibitors and their comments and the final financial balance. It is presented to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council for leadership feedback and review. This assessment helps to adjust the organisation of future Forums to meet target objectives.

II.1.3 FENS Regional Meeting (FRM)

The FENS Regional Meetings (FRMs) actively promote international scientific interaction and open exchange about neuroscience research, while increasing the visibility of FENS and its members in areas that are underrepresented and/or underresourced in the field. FRMs are normally organised by a group of member societies from the same geographical region who partner together to provide administrative, financial and technical resources to support it. The FRMs are held in odd years, in alternation with FENS Forums which are held in even years. They help support efforts of member societies who do not have the capacity to host a FENS Forum or reach strong international visibility.

FENS supports the programmatic organisation through the advisory role of the Chair of the Programme Committee of the preceding FENS Forum. Together with the FRM Programme Committee they ensure a high quality scientific programme, which is visible and attractive, with a broad, unbiased and inclusive access and representation of individual scientists. The FENS administration as well as the Communication Committee actively support the organising societies in order to advertise the FRM as a branded FENS activity, across its communication media. FENS provides financial support based on current budgetary capacity, usually in the form of travel grants for students and early career researchers.

FENS Regional Meeting: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Strengthen neuroscience in European areas that are underrepresented and underresourced in the field.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate exchanges and collaborations between member societies in neighbouring countries and encourage their collaborative participation in the organisation of FRMs. • Help local organisers put together a scientific programme combining excellence, diversity and inclusion to increase event attractiveness and attendance. • Continue to offer travel grants to students and early career researchers.
2. Increase awareness of FENS, EJP, FENS activities and FRM host societies at the FRM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate and implement effective communication campaigns before and during FRMs with local host societies. • Organise relevant and engaging sessions with EJP editors and FENS committees.
3. Increase positive impact of the FRM.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend ways to minimise the environmental impact. • Require implementation of ALBA Network guidelines for diverse, inclusive and equitable scientific meetings. • Require increased awareness and visibility of the FRM code of conduct, especially for students and early career researchers.
4. Aim to achieve a financial balance that is at minimum neutral for FENS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a financial plan with realistic targets and ensure that overhead costs, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

After each FRM, a report is submitted and presented to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council by the Chair of the FRM host society or societies. Its success is evaluated based on the same criteria as the FENS Forums, adapted to the size of the FRM. In addition, the impact of the FRM at the regional level in terms of public and political awareness of neuroscience research and the increase in the number of participating members of the organising societies should be taken into consideration, as well as diversity of topics and active engagement with small and underrepresented scientific areas.

II.1.4 The Brain Conference Series

The Brain Conference series is a biannual conference series that is organised and financed through a high-level partnership between FENS and The Brain Prize (the Lundbeck Foundation). The partners aim to further consolidate this recurrent series of prestigious neuroscience conferences. The guiding aim for the Brain Conferences is to promote excellence, scientific exchange and visibility for diverse topics in contemporary neuroscience.

A Special Brain Conference Committee is responsible for the successful implementation of the objectives of the conference series. They ensure the variety and relevance of topics, the selection of chairs who are then responsible for the programme, and report progress to the Executive Committee of FENS. Following the Internal Review in 2023, it was found that there was still room to increase participation levels and more attention should be paid to broadening topics of limited interest or expertise. Avoidance of multiple activities around the same Brain Prize topic in the same year as the Brain Conference on a Brain Prize topic could also help participation levels. Finally, FENS has experienced a budget deficit each year in support of this activity. To ensure its long-term financial viability, a cost neutral or positive balance should be achieved in order for FENS to continue its support. A new, more cost-effective location and venue for one of the Brain Conferences will thus be explored and possibly implemented from 2025.

Brain Conferences: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Aim to maintain a high level of community interest with participation levels at 120 and over (maximum 150).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose topics that appeal to broader scientific audiences and avoid duplication of activities around the same topic in the same year. • Increase uptake of Danish slots with coordinated publicity support with Lundbeck Foundation, Danish Neuroscience Society and other interested local entities. • Focus on highest degree of scientific excellence worldwide by continuously engaging leading experts as scientific chairs and speakers, and strong participation of early career researchers.
2. Increase visibility.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver targeted communication campaigns to those interested in the specific topics of the Brain Conferences. • Highlight personal testimonials from students, speakers and organisers through social media, interviews and videos. • Leverage communication channels and community networks of FENS and scientific organisers.

3. Secure access and representation for underrepresented scientists at any career stage and diversity of speakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of stipends for students from underrepresented areas who lack funding support. • As much as possible, ensure gender and geographical diversity of speakers. • Implement ALBA Network guidelines for scientific meetings.
4. Enhance impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure majority of Brain Conference participants fill in feedback survey after each one to identify areas of improvement and impact. • Modify or maintain elements of Brain Conferences based on participant feedback.
5. Ensure long-term financial viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew agreement with the Brain Prize/Lundbeck when necessary. • Identify and possibly implement more cost-effective locations and venues for at least one of the Brain Conferences each year from 2025. • Work within existing administrative capacity of FENS or find additional resources to expand. • The conferences should be at least cost neutral or positive for FENS. • Ensure that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

The overall conference programme is regularly evaluated by the partner organisations, on a yearly basis. A report is produced and presented to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council by the Chair of the Brain Conference Committee. It includes the number, geographic origin, diversity, and career status of all applicants and those selected, the rate of attendance, the number, diversity and duration of stay of lecturers, evaluation by a systematic survey of participant feedback (including suggestions for improvement) and an end-of-year budget report.

II.2 Advancing Neuroscience: Education, Training & Research

FENS is an association of neuroscience societies and scientists who advance the field through discovery and translational research. Scientific investigation that increases understanding of the brain and nervous system through rigorous, peer-reviewed and ethical scientific research practice is the professional focus and expertise of the FENS community. It is therefore a central imperative for FENS to move the field forward. It achieves this through enriching and expanding advanced educational, training and research opportunities for students and scientists in Europe and worldwide. In order to provide added value to the high-level programmes already offered by other institutions at the national and European levels, FENS presents unique programming with a focus on excellence and distinctive value towards its member scientists. FENS works with reputable partner organisations on the implementation of supporting initiatives for all career stages. Current activities include the Schools Programme, NENS activities and Research Fellowships, the Early Career Training Programme (ECTP) and online education and training. The standing Committee for Higher Education and Training (CHET) is responsible for the oversight, implementation and assessment of these activities.

II.2.1 FENS Schools Programme

The overall aim for the FENS Schools programme is to provide distinctive international schools in Europe on timely topics in neuroscience. The programme should clearly provide an added and unique value to the collection of existing European schools in neuroscience. There are currently two FENS schools that constitute this programme, the FENS-Hertie Winter School and the FENS-Chen Institute-NeuroLéman Summer School.

Both schools should continue to be recognised as providing the following: (i) an outstanding programme; (ii) lectures, poster sessions, assignments and social activities for students; (iii) a high degree of interaction between students and staff; and (iv) an open, safe and inclusive environment for early career scientists from diverse backgrounds. Participation in these schools (as lecturer or student) should be considered a sign of distinction.

The topics for the schools are chosen by the Committee on Higher Education and Training (CHET), and if needed, advice is sought from other FENS committee members and external high level scientists. The topics should be chosen based on the development of new areas of research and new methods or approaches. They are assisted by participant feedback surveys and the input from the scientific community in response to an annual Call for Ideas and Proposals. This call should be more proactively promoted and made more visible with a strategic communications campaign. Particular attention should be paid to 'hot topics' and technical approaches at the frontiers of neuroscience.

FENS Schools: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Ensure concept of prestigious, state-of-the-art schools in neuroscience that are based on unique programming, providing significant added value to the	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHET should monitor the Winter and Summer Schools regularly within the overall context of postgraduate educational opportunities in European neuroscience. This will ensure their unique positioning, added value and

existing range of national and European programmes in the field.	cutting-edge topical selection.
2. Secure access and representation for underrepresented students and diversity of speakers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of stipends for students from underrepresented areas who lack funding support. • As much as possible, ensure diversity of speakers and students. • Implement ALBA Network guidelines for scientific activities.
3. Increase visibility and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that schools are promoted to audiences who would be most interested in them by refining the FENS mailing list database to include research interests and career status. • Ensure the majority of participants fill in the feedback surveys to identify areas of improvement and impact. • Ensure a diverse choice of topics, at the forefront of the evolving needs and topics in neuroscience education. • Dedicate time to education on reliability, reproducibility and ethical dimensions of research, grant writing, team building and other ‘survive in science’ skill-building activities.
4. Ensure long-term financial and administrative viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew agreement with the Hertie Foundation and the Chen Institute/NeuroLéman Network for the Schools when needed, and explore other potential partners. • Work within existing administrative capacity of FENS or find additional resources to expand. • Identify and possibly select more cost-effective locations and venues. • The schools should be at least cost neutral or positive for FENS. • Ensure that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

The programme is regularly evaluated on an annual basis by the Committee on Higher Education and Training (CHET). A report is produced and presented by the CHET Chair to the Executive Committee and Governing Council. It includes the number, geographic origin, diversity and career advancement of all applicants and those selected, rate of attendance, diversity and duration of stay of tutors and lecturers, evaluation by a systematic survey of participant feedback (including suggestions for improvement and future topics) and an end-of-year budget report.

II.2.2 Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS) and Fellowships

Founded in 2003, the FENS Network of European Neuroscience Schools (NENS) is the largest network of major neuroscience schools and programmes in Europe, representing over 200 graduate schools and programmes across 28 European countries. It is overseen by CHET and should enable FENS to serve as a powerful voice representing the best interests of neuroscience graduate education in Europe. In this regard, a more cohesive identity, vision and purpose should be

recommended and implemented by CHET during this strategic plan period in order to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

The NENS Exchange Grants were transformed into the FENS/IBRO-PERC Exchange Fellowships in 2023 as a broader scope of student and laboratory participation could be offered. The high number of applications and uptake has indicated a strong interest and need from the community so this programme should continue its development. The NENS Clusters, however, should be discontinued due to lack of interest, focus and demand. The NENS Programme Directory provides the most comprehensive online source of information on neuroscience graduate education, schools and programmes offering MSc, PhD and MD-PhD degrees in neuroscience in Europe. However, with the launch of FENS NEUROPE, a new online platform consolidating information on institutions, graduate programmes, PIs and research labs in Europe, the NENS Programme Directory as a separate resource should be discontinued and integrated into NEUROPE to avoid duplication. There is still much potential growth and valuable community impact for NENS so it should be a focus of attention for CHET in the next four years.

NENS and Fellowships: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Enable FENS to serve as the major voice and in the best interest of neuroscience graduate education, training and research in Europe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHET to establish a more cohesive identity, vision and target objectives for NENS and exchange fellowships to achieve in the next four years. • Issue an annual survey to NENS schools and programmes to monitor the state of neuroscience education in Europe on a systematic basis. • Use the FENS Forums and Regional Meetings as platforms to organise NENS events that involve high-level discussions on the importance, status and direction of neuroscience education in Europe. • Facilitate exchange of best practices, experiences and insights among NENS programme directors/coordinators, CHET and NENS students/alumni.
2. Increase visibility of neuroscience education and training in Europe through updated mapping of existing programmes and information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate NENS Programme Directory information into FENS NEUROPE to avoid duplication, user confusion and excess resource allocation and discontinue the NENS Programme Directory.
3. Secure access and representation for underrepresented scientists at any career stage and diversity of programme faculty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide and, if possible, increase stipends for students attending NENS activities and research exchanges, especially from underrepresented areas who lack resources. • As much as possible, implement ALBA Network guidelines on diversity, equity and inclusion.
4. Ensure long-term financial and administrative viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew agreements with IBRO-PERC and other partners when needed. Seek and expand funding support through partnerships and grants at the European level. • Work within existing administrative capacity of FENS or find additional resources to expand. • NENS activities should be at least cost neutral or positive for FENS.

- Ensure that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

The programme is regularly evaluated on the basis of yearly reports, including updates on activities and feedback from the participating schools and students. The Chair of CHET reports and presents programme evaluations to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings. Relevant key performance indicators include the number, geographic origin, diversity and career status of all applicants and participants of activities, the rate of attendance, the number, diversity and duration of stay of lecturers or organisers, evaluation by a systematic survey of participant feedback (including suggestions for improvement) and an end-of-year budget report.

II.2.3 Early Career Training Programme (ECTP)

The FENS Early Career Training Programme is organised with generous support from the IBRO Pan-European Regional Committee. It provides an opportunity for ambitious, talented early career researchers to undertake a 2-3 week short lab stay preceding the FENS Forum and, in odd years, this may be connected to the FENS Regional Meeting or be delivered as an independent programme. The projects are short and focused, and provide training and networking opportunities for future collaborations. The successful applicants meet with senior and junior scientists in the host lab, learn new techniques and data analysis pipelines, establish collaborations, as well as experience different working cultures and environments.

ECTP: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Provide high quality training to early career researchers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that the programme can be organised by institutions or societies that have the administrative and budgetary capacity.
2. Secure access and representation for underrepresented scientists at any career stage and diversity of programme faculty.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide and, if possible, increase funding, especially for researcher from underrepresented areas who lack funding support. • As much as possible, implement ALBA Network guidelines on diversity, equity and inclusion.
3. Ensure long-term financial viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew agreement with IBRO-PERC when necessary and explore other funding partners, especially during IBRO World Congress years when IBRO-PERC does not provide support. • Increase grant amounts to keep up with inflation and rising costs. • Work within existing administrative capacity of FENS or find additional resources to expand. • ECTP should be at least cost neutral or positive for FENS. • Ensure that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

The programme is regularly evaluated on the basis of yearly reports, including updates on activities and feedback from the participating labs and students. Depending on the year (Forum or non-Forum), Chairs of the HSC and CHET report and present programme evaluations to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings. Key performance indicators to track include the number, geographic origin, diversity and career status of all applicants and participants, the rate of attendance, the number, diversity and duration of laboratories, evaluation by a systematic survey of participant feedback (including suggestions for improvement) and an end-of-year budget report.

II.2.4 Online Education and Training

Due to the continuing importance and value of online education and training, FENS supports and hosts resources and activities in this domain, with expanded focus on the development of educational resources towards early career scientists. This strategy is supported by concrete actions for the implementation of online training and education initiatives taken by CHET, in collaboration with partners involved in similar activities.

Online Education and Training: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Position FENS as a main hub for resources in neuroscience education and training in Europe.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review and centralise existing online resources and materials in a way that is easy to find, navigate and share. • Facilitate exchange of best practices, experiences and insights among e-learning organisers and participants.
2. Ensure value and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain regular feedback from organisers and participants of online webinars and other e-learning activities to monitor and curate actions and resources that meet current educational and training needs and interests. • Increase availability for members of web-based educational activities and materials, as well as recorded lectures. • Continue partnership with Society for Neuroscience (SfN) on creating access to Neuronline and explore new partnerships, including in the field of clinical and translational neuroscience. • Discontinue webinars and e-learning activities that CHET decides no longer hold sufficient value and impact.
3. Ensure administrative and budgetary capacity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CHET should regularly evaluate the impact and resources needed to support FENS online activities and make any changes necessary to maintain quality programming and resources within existing capacity constraints.
3. Ensure long-term financial viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew agreement with SfN when necessary. • Seek additional funding sources to ensure long-term sustainability. • Ensure that activities are at least cost neutral, and that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

Online educational and training resources and activities are regularly evaluated on the basis of annual reports, including updates on activities and feedback from online participants and organisers. The Chair of CHET reports and presents programme evaluations to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings. Key performance indicators include the number, geographic origin, diversity, and career status of all activity participants, the rate of attendance, the number and diversity of speakers or trainers, evaluation by a systematic survey of participant feedback (including suggestions for improvement) and an end-of-year budget report.

II.3. Empowering Community

FENS strives to have a positive and lasting impact on the neuroscience community and on the broader knowledge, experience and engagement with society at large. These two realms constantly interact and shape each other under multiple conditions at different scales. As neuroscience expands to include a diversity of interests and assumes a more public presence, the number of challenges and opportunities have also risen. FENS should meet these challenges and capitalise on opportunities to assume a stronger role in empowering community that would inform the general public about neuroscience, promote scientific approaches and address misinformation and scientific skepticism. It should also maintain its efforts to support initiatives that increase diversity, equity and inclusion through the ALBA Network and continue to facilitate cross-sectoral interactions, outreach and advocacy in service to its membership and society in general.

II.3.1 Membership

FENS was founded in 1998 by and for a group of European neuroscience societies who wanted to coordinate and advance neuroscience research and education across Europe, as well as worldwide through global collaboration. It succeeded the European Neuroscience Association (ENA) and now includes 40 member societies and over 22,000 individual scientists who together represent the field of neuroscience in Europe. FENS aims to unify and empower the diversity of neuroscience societies and interest groups it serves and should continue its efforts to provide programming and resources that will meet and adapt to new challenges, needs and opportunities on behalf of its membership community.

Membership: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Ensure that member society needs and interests are being served.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out an annual membership survey to monitor and maintain awareness of the changing leadership, membership, needs and interests of FENS member societies. • The Executive Committee should regularly evaluate the state of FENS membership based on annual surveys and report to the Governing Council during its annual meeting in the fourth quarter.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide the Members Forum session during Governing Council meetings to ensure a dedicated open platform to discuss Member Society input and concerns.
2. Keep members informed of their roles, benefits and pertinent news and required actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and disseminate welcome packages (including relevant information about roles, guidelines, benefits, responsibilities and timelines) for new member societies and new member society representatives on the Governing Council, associate members and individual members. • Continue distributing the monthly FENS Member Society Updates and explore ways to improve existing flow of information and interaction.
3. Attract other members to join.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create and disseminate a promotional campaign to attract new member societies, associate members and individual members.
4. Increase visibility of FENS at member society meetings and FENS member societies at FENS meetings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FENS should attend member society meetings as much as possible, or at least make sure there is a FENS presence (posters, banners, materials, spokesperson, etc.) onsite and/or online. • Member societies should ensure that FENS has a presence at their meetings, either through information dissemination, actual presentations made by society or FENS representatives, etc. • FENS should facilitate activities that enhance the visibility of membership and member societies at FENS Forums and Regional Meetings. The Membership wall and meet and greet slots have been valuable, and other opportunities may be explored.
5. Review and adjust membership dues annually.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member dues should be reviewed and adjusted if necessary on an annual basis in connection with the approval of the annual budgets by the Governing Council.

Success Assessment

FENS membership has not been systematically evaluated in the past to identify on a regular basis the changing needs and status of member societies. A new annual assessment procedure should be designed and implemented during this current strategic plan period. This should be carried out by the Executive Committee with the assistance of the FENS Administration and conclusions, recommendations and an end-of-year budget report should be reported annually to the Governing Council at their meetings in the fourth quarter of each year.

II.3.2 ALBA Network

The ALBA Network is a division of FENS that addresses issues related to discrimination and bias, and promotes diversity, equity and inclusion in neuroscience around the world. These include gender bias as well as any kinds of discrimination based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation or any other categories. The network is self-organised and has its own membership and leadership structure but is fully integrated as a FENS division under the overall authority of the FENS Executive Committee. Its status is further elaborated in the FENS *By-laws* and a governance and

guidelines document that shall be approved by the Executive Committee in 2024. The network is coordinated by a Chair who reports on progress and updates to the Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings.

ALBA Network: Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Promote best practices to counteract bias.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase visibility and uptake of the ALBA Declaration on Equity and Inclusion. • Curate a enhance the existing centralised resource database on bias, underrepresentation and effective strategies. • Advocate with policymakers, funding agencies, institutions and other relevant stakeholders.
2. Recognise outstanding contributions to science and diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain and increase visibility and uptake of established awards. • Highlight success stories of individuals and organisations to create role models. • Enrich the database of scientists as a resource for speaker invitations and award nominations.
3. Provide networking and mentoring opportunities to promote careers for members of underrepresented groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Host networking events at major brain science conferences. • Create a mentoring community.
4. Ensure long-term financial viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that activities are at least cost neutral, and that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

The ALBA Network is regularly evaluated on an annual basis by the ALBA Network and FENS leadership. An annual report is produced and presented by the ALBA Network Chair to the FENS Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings. It includes the number, geographic origin, diversity and career status of applicants, participants and awardees, rate of attendance, evaluations from surveys of activity participant feedback (including suggestions for improvement and future actions) and an end-of-year budget report.

II.3.3 Advocacy and Outreach

FENS aims to provide a unified voice for European neuroscience in the policy arena and to advocate for neuroscience research through coordinated action with member societies, as well as European and international partners. FENS is especially committed to promoting neuroscience, increasing funding for the field both at the national and European levels and advocating for the responsible use of animals in research on the brain and nervous system. Due to the significant representation of all neuroscience research fields in the membership base of FENS, as well as the growing number of early career investigators representing the next generation of scientific leaders, the potential policy leverage exerted by FENS at the European and global levels is significant. FENS should aim to increase its interactions with relevant European and global policymakers and stakeholders to showcase achievements and advances in neuroscience research and influence related policies, directives, initiatives and funding decisions.

Through its Communication Committee, FENS should continue actions to promote outreach activities that bridge the gap between neuroscience and the public, especially through Brain Awareness Week activities, FENS Forums and FENS Regional Meetings. The committee should continue to play a crucial role in promoting and extending the visibility and impact of FENS actions towards its members, its institutional partners, the scientific community at large and the general public. It should also advise the Executive Committee and Governing Council on all matters concerning the FENS communication policy and develop actions and activities that address emerging science communication, outreach and brain awareness topics of critical importance to the European neuroscience community.

Advocacy and Outreach: Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Establish FENS as the primary voice of neuroscience at the European and national policymaking levels to increase political and public support for and understanding of discovery neuroscience research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a FENS Advocacy Committee as a Special Committee to be responsible for strategic planning, positioning and implementation of member training and actions on an annual basis. Consider incorporating the Committee on Animals in Research (CARE) into one global Advocacy Committee. • Increase engagement of European funding agencies in supporting discovery neuroscience research. • Work in coordination with the EBC, EARA, IBRO, SfN and other advocacy actors to amplify and heighten impact of messaging.
2. Promote neuroscience and its related concerns in Europe and globally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When possible, contribute to active dialogues with national and European institutions, global organisations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) as well as other policy and decision-making bodies.
3. Leverage campaigns such as Brain Awareness Week (BAW) to increase outreach.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to issue BAW grants throughout Europe to increase public understanding of brain research. • Renew Dana Foundation BAW grant when necessary.
4. Ensure FENS addresses critical science communication topics relevant for the European neuroscience community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Committee activities should promote and extend the visibility and impact of FENS actions towards its members, institutional partners, the scientific community at large and the general public through a robust communication policy. • The Communication Committee should also advise the Executive Committee and Governing Council on all matters concerning the FENS communication policy and develop actions and activities that address emerging science communication, outreach and brain awareness topics of critical importance to the European neuroscience community
5. Expand on neuroethics work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a Brain Debate on neuroethics and AI. • Partner with the Dana Foundation and the Institute of Neuroethics to hold a pilot Neuroethics Hackathon at the FENS Forum 2024, and evaluate potential and impact to continue on a longer-term basis.

6. Ensure long-term financial viability.

- Ensure that activities are at least cost neutral, and that overhead, VAT and increased inflation are accounted for, ideally with no cost to FENS.

Success Assessment

FENS advocacy and outreach activities have not been regularly evaluated in the past so a new assessment procedure should be established from the beginning of this strategic plan period. An Advocacy Committee should be formed and approved by the Executive Committee as a special committee responsible for this task, with the possible incorporation of the current Committee on Animals in Research (CARE) to unify and align advocacy efforts. Review and evaluation should be performed on a yearly basis and conclusions and recommendations should be reported to the Executive Committee and Governing Council through the committee Chair. Key performance indicators should include details about policy interactions, follow-up actions, results of actions and an end-of-year budget report.

II.4 Investing in the Future

II.4.1 FENS Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE)

In order to strengthen the link between FENS and the next generation of leaders in the European neuroscience community, FENS established a partnership with the Kavli Foundation in 2014 to implement an initiative that fosters an international network of multidisciplinary early to mid-career principal investigators. The network is now a division of FENS operating under the authority of the Executive Committee. It consists of 30 active scientific members who are selected on the basis of their individual scientific excellence and motivation to support the neuroscience community in general. The initiative enables FENS to engage a core sector of the European neuroscience community in its activities. The network is self-organised in its activities and reports to the Executive Committee and Governing Council of FENS. It is encouraged to interact with and support other early career scientists and independent investigators and initiate actions beneficial for this broader community.

FKNE: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Improve neuroscience in Europe and help shape its future by consolidating position as the voice of early career researchers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help identify and address the challenges and needs of the next generation of neuroscientists throughout Europe. • Increase interaction and exchange between FKNE scholars and the broader FENS membership at the early to mid-career stages. Member societies should appoint a corresponding early to mid-career PI member as an FKNE liaison to help facilitate interaction.
2. Enhance opportunities for scientific exchange.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing scientific exchange programme. • Use FKNE meetings as platforms to generate new ideas and initiatives for scientific exchange and interaction inside and outside of the network.
3. Provide opportunities for early career scientists, and facilitate dialogue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine with members of FENS societies in advocacy training and actions, as well as outreach activities.

between scientists, policymakers and society.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to include other scientists in FKNE meetings and to participate with events and speakers at FENS Forums, Regional Meetings, Schools, Brain Conferences and online activities.
4. Update governance and guidelines document.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update and present governance and guidelines document to the Executive Committee for approval in 2024.
5. Secure long-term financial viability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renew and develop partnership with Kavli Foundation. • Explore other sources of support to ensure sustainability in case Kavli funding is reduced or cut.
6. Ensure continuity/long-term impact via the FKNE Alumni group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate interactions between FKNE Scholars and Alumni to enhance scientific collaboration, mentorship, outreach and advocacy actions across multiple FKNE generations.

Success Assessment

The work of FKNE is regularly evaluated on an annual basis by FKNE and FENS leadership. The network is self-organised and has its own membership and leadership structure but is fully integrated as a FENS division under the overall authority of the FENS Executive Committee. Its status is further elaborated in the FENS *By-laws* and a governance and guidelines document that shall be approved by the Executive Committee in 2024. The network is coordinated by a Chair who reports on progress and updates to the Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings. Key performance indicators to be tracked should continue to include details about FKNE scientific exchanges, scholar applicants and selections, meetings, science policy actions, community and mentoring activities, outreach activities and budget income and spending.

II.4.2 European Neuroscience Conference by Doctoral Students (ENCODS)

The European Neuroscience Conference by Doctoral Students (ENCODS) is an initiative started by graduate students at the Neurocampus Bordeaux in 2013. The main aim of ENCODS is to put PhD students in the driver's seat, providing a safe space for them in which they can share their research in the form of talks and poster presentations, create new collaborations, design their own scientific programme, learn from experts of their choice and network with researchers and students from around the world. FENS CHET has helped to organise and implement the conference since 2015. However, due to the mobile nature of the event, taking place in different European countries for each edition and the related financial complexities that arise as a result, it is no longer viable for FENS to assist in the running of this conference after 2024. However, the critical long-term value of the event is fully acknowledged and aligns perfectly with the FENS priority to invest in the future by supporting the next generation of neuroscientists. FENS will thus transform this into a grant programme so its positive impact can continue to develop based on the changing needs and interests of doctoral students in neuroscience.

ENCODS: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Invest in the next generation of neuroscientists by broadening experience and networks for neuroscience PhD students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a new grant programme open to FENS member societies and/or other European entities who wish to support doctoral students in organising ENCODS. Ideally, this would be connected to a FENS Forum or FRM. • Instill a sense of belonging to an early community of European neuroscientists.

- Strengthen contact between FENS and the group of emerging new scholars in neuroscience.

Success Assessment

CHET shall continue to oversee this grant programme and require a final report from the awarded organising entities that include key performance indicators such as the participation rates, number of registrations, other funding and partnerships secured, geographic and diversity factors and an end-of-year budget report. This report and updates will be included in the overall CHET report presented by the CHET Chair to the Executive Committee and Governing Council during their annual meetings.

II.4.3 International Brain Bee (IBB)

FENS is an active and founding Governing Partner of the International Brain Bee whose mission is to motivate high school students to learn about the brain and to inspire them to pursue careers in neuroscience so they can help treat and find cures for brain disorders. It is a global competition that promotes student engagement with neuroscience through a three-tiered competition - Local Brain Bees, National Brain Bees and the IBB World Championship. Competition sections include neuroanatomy, neurohistology, a written test, patient diagnosis and live judging. FENS has hosted the World Championship at the FENS Forums in Berlin (2018) and Paris (2022). It will host the first ever Champions Event at the FENS Forum 2024 in Vienna.

International Brain Bee: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Inspire, invest in and motivate high school students to become neuroscientists.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue hosting the IBB Champions Event at the FENS Forum and celebrate the students' achievements as an award ceremony just preceding the Opening Ceremony.
2. Increase interactions between IBB Champions and other attendees at the Forum.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate connections with undergraduate, MSc/PhD students, early career researchers, senior scientists and possibly other Brain Bee competitors in the Forum host city. • Reach out to member societies and individual members to explore interest in engaging with IBB champions as well as national competitors in Europe to strengthen ties with high school students.

Success Assessment

The International Brain Bee is governed by six international neuroscience and educational organisations, including FENS, who regularly evaluate the progress of the IBB programme. An annual report is produced and provided to FENS which includes key performance indicators such as the participation rates, geographic and diversity factors, sponsorship, new partnerships, competition outcomes and an end-of-year budget report.

III. Administration and Finance

FENS is currently comprised of three legally independent entities: (i) FENS AISBL (FENS-BE); (ii) FENS Marketing Foundation (FENS-Marketing); and (iii) the FENS Trust Foundation (FENS-Trust).

While FENS-BE is established with its statutory seat in Belgium, the FENS-Marketing and the FENS-Trust have seats in the Netherlands. The governance for each FENS entity is defined in separate statutes. Each FENS entity is affiliated with different bank accounts and as such they implement different activities and exchange funds between independent organisations. In order to determine the optimal overarching structure for FENS, additional legal advice has been sought to make a final determination about the best structure for the three FENS entities in 2024.

III.1 Administration

Running the full range of FENS-BE activities as well as ensuring the management of FENS committees and initiatives requires committed staff. In view of the constantly changing composition of FENS committees and leadership, FENS administration provides the key role of running and preserving the organisation's collective institutional memory, ensuring long-term continuity of actions. The principal objective of the administration of FENS is to ensure reliable and professional execution and implementation of rules, guidelines, decisions and actions as defined by FENS leadership, Governing Council and committees and in accordance with the laws of Belgium and the association's *Articles of Association, By-laws* and *Strategic Plan*.

The FENS administration is responsible for the management and running of daily activities, including contacts with committees and all human resources and accounting procedures. The Executive Director is the head of the administration and its staff, and reports to the President and the Executive Committee. The Executive Director is responsible for delegating administrative tasks in an optimal way to support all activities of the Federation. To ensure the optimal development of FENS and its activities, the administrative tasks of FENS are integrated into the office in Brussels.

FENS Administration: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Preserve institutional memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To preserve institutional memory and inform leadership, committees and staff of their roles, responsibilities, timelines and relationships with others, a shared cloud-based archive and space should be maintained. Welcome packages with related information and an organogram of the whole organisation should also be distributed.
2. Determine the optimal overarching structure for FENS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish agreement between the three FENS entities in 2024 on the optimal structure of FENS moving forward. The new structure should be fully implemented by the end of the current Strategic Plan in 2028.
3. Ensure professional and efficient support of committees, leadership and activities of FENS.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish agreement between the three FENS entities in 2024 on the optimal structure of FENS moving forward.
4. Establish clear, efficient and effective administrative operations and guidelines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish clear procedures, welcome packages for effective onboarding of new staff, internal staff regulations and guidelines and standard operating procedures.

III.2. Finance

Most income that supports FENS activities comes from the FENS Forums and royalties from the European Journal of Neuroscience (EJN), the official journal of FENS. There has been a steady decline in journal income in the recent past and the global economy is volatile so an increase in Forum income or any market investments are not guaranteed. Membership fees make up another area of income that is not regularly increased or evaluated. In consideration of the Internal Review findings, new sources of income should be sought and developed for future sustainability. Fundraising, for example, has never been a priority or action that FENS has pursued in the past either so this is an area of potential growth.

FENS should also establish strategic financial planning with targeted objectives and measurable outputs. The historical practice has been to grow organically and ensure there was enough money to support activities on a year-to-year basis. Clear financial objectives supported by realistic annual budgets and medium-term and/or long-term budgets established by periodical strategic plans should be made. This would also help to evaluate the viability of current and new activities, committee work and partnerships. A Finance Committee of expert advisors should be established to help FENS in this area, providing a more strategic overview of finances and both short, medium and long-term strategies of how to invest time, effort and money effectively in order to support the activities fulfilling the FENS mission.

Compliance issues regarding bookkeeping standards were identified as an area of risk by the Internal Review. The correct and most beneficial VAT status or regimes for the FENS Belgium association and the two Dutch foundations should be addressed and adjusted with the relevant expert legal and accounting advice. The sound financial management of FENS income as well as the cost-effectiveness of all activities must allow FENS to face major risks as well as finance new initiatives.

FENS Finance: Strategic Objectives & Actions

Objectives	Actions
1. Obtain expert advice.	• Establish a Finance Committee of expert financial advisors and FENS officers to improve financial decision-making and strategic planning regarding the best investment of resources.
2. Ensure reserve for operations.	• Establish a defined financial reserve plan to ensure a strategic reserve for running costs.
3. Ensure strategic and prudent financial planning.	• Establish strategic financial planning with targeted objectives and measurable outputs supported by realistic annual budgets and short, medium and long-term outlooks.
4. Ensure compliance.	• The correct and most beneficial VAT status or regimes for FENS Belgium and the two Dutch foundations should be addressed and implemented as soon as possible based on expert legal and accounting advice.
5. Ensure professional administration for optimal and cost-effective use of FENS finances.	• Establish clear, efficient and effective standard operating procedures and guidelines in accounting, payments and agreements with collaborators.
6. Diversify sources of income.	• Increase revenue from other sources in order to be less reliant on EJN revenue.