

THE BRUSSELS BRAIN ECONOMY PLEDGE

Declaration adopted at the European Brain Economy Summit

5 May 2026

The Brain Economy community stands for human flourishing across a range of domains of modern life. Given the remarkable achievements of science – read: the human mind - we must do better in applying our collective intelligence. We have an opportunity to place brain capital at the center: from the way health systems are organised, to the translation of scientific breakthroughs into innovative treatments, and in the establishment of guardrails to protect the essence of our humanity.

Aging populations are placing growing pressures on public finances, driving higher social support costs, worsening dependency ratios, and contributing, particularly in the Global South, to unsustainable sovereign debt burdens. Brain health is not only a public health priority but a fundamental economic imperative - most of the risk factors for brain disorders emerge during working age and, if successfully addressed, improve brain capital, productivity as well as economic and social outcomes. Achieving these advances requires a focused commitment to women's brain health. Better understanding of sex-differentiated genetic, biological and life-course risk factors is essential to unlock the full potential of brain capital across societies.

Having convened at the inaugural European Brain Economy Summit in Brussels on 5 May, we are undertaking to:

- Position **brain health and brain capital as our greatest assets**, recognizing that cognitive skills, and the underlying health of the brain, can become the bedrock of a renewed sense of individual and societal purpose in a rapidly transforming world.
- Raise **awareness of decision-makers globally of the human and economic impact of brain disorders**, estimated at 1.9 trillion euro annually in direct spending and lost income¹, as well as the opportunity, with the global mental health market expected to grow to USD 500 billion by 2028.
- Support **deployment of the Brain Capital Index** to support evidence-based policymaking and accountability. The index would provide a comprehensive framework to measure and track the state of brain health and brain skills across countries and regions,

¹ Data of the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation

integrating indicators related to mental health, cognitive performance, education, innovation capacity, and workforce resilience.

- Prepare **a roadmap of targeted interventions** needed to bend the impact of disease. The roadmap will triage the largest economic impact and the highest DALYs, including by addressing modifiable drivers of disease, which account for a significant part of the health loss.
- Accelerate **a paradigm shift in women's brain health** to close the research and care gap through greater representativeness of data, more inclusive clinical trials, updated clinical guidelines, and stronger practitioner awareness.
- Develop the concept of **Early Intervention Guarantee** to achieve step change in early diagnosis and treatment of both neurological disorders, as well as anxiety, depressions and psychosis, and hence restore the sense of agency in relation to individual and public health.
- Lead **a systemic shift in financing brain health innovation**, not only by contributing to closing the funding gap, estimated at 200 billion USD annually in the field of mental health², but also by adopting models combining public, philanthropic and venture investment to de-risk and grow the pipeline of brain health ventures.
- Ensure **elaboration and adoption of the Brain Lens Investing Approach** by developing a methodology to account for enhancement of brain health and brain capital across investment portfolios.
- Build **a Network of Brain-Positive Cities and Organizations** to build on mutual experience in strengthening the ecosystem for cognitive wellbeing and performance, mental health, and conducive built environment.
- Develop **a Blueprint for Human-Machine Complementarity**, aiming to develop brain skills, and help companies design AI tools to complement human capabilities.
- Develop the **Global Brain Economy Agenda** to ensure that innovations reach everyone, including people in low-income countries. All our initiatives will be accompanied by delivery mechanisms which can ensure global adoption and cost-effectiveness.

² United for Global Mental Health