

National Brain Research Program to be continued

The Hungarian Brain Research Program (NAP), which has produced a number of outstanding results in the first four years, will continue for another four years – the President of the National Research, Development and Innovation (NRDI) Office announced in Pécs, Hungary at the closing conference of the program.

In his keynote speech at the conference held in Kodály Centre on the Day of Hungarian Higher Education, József Pálincás stated: following the previous fund of HUF 12 billion (EUR 39 million), the NRDI Office will contribute to the continued program with HUF 6.5 billion (EUR 21 million).

He also announced the launch of a national quantum technology program which is expected to effectively pull together the relevant research projects currently running in Hungary. There are also plans for further programs which will combine competition and cooperation between researchers – he added.

Tamás Freund brain researcher, president of the NAP, highlighted among the results of the program the discovery of new drug candidate compounds for Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease, a new discovery in the treatment of hereditary Huntington's disease, the contribution to the better understanding of cognitive disorders and several success in bionic research.

He recalled: the reason for launching the brain research program was that in 2010 in Europe EUR 798 billion was spent on curing and treating nervous system diseases – a serious economic and social burden on society and families making brain research an urgent political task.

During the four years of the two NAP sub-programs 89 new research laboratories were established and significant developments were made to the infrastructure including the creation of a functional MRI lab in the HAS Research Centre for Natural Sciences, a Human Brain Tissue Bank and a high resolution EEG equipment at Semmelweis University, a Neuro-Oncology Laboratory at the University of Debrecen and Neurophysiological Biomarker Laboratory at the University of Szeged.

The long-term goal of NAP is to contribute to the reduction of social spending and to promote the sustainable development of the health industry – the president of the NAP said.

In the framework of the program to be closed in November 2017 researchers dealt with brain processes, disorders and treatment-prevention procedures with the involvement of ten research institutions coordinated by the HAS Institute of Experimental Medicine. Research findings have contributed to the treatment and curing of diseases such as multiple sclerosis, autism, schizophrenia or cerebral lesions characteristic of internet addiction disorder.

The research group of the National Institute of Clinical Neurosciences has made a breakthrough in the diagnosis of epilepsy accompanying Alzheimer's disease, making it possible to slow down the progression of the symptoms. Researchers from the University of Pécs dealing with deep brain stimulation (DBS) proved that the "appropriately early" usage of DBS might help preserve working capability of patients with Parkinson's disease.

According to the NRDI Office, 400 researchers were involved in the program in four years, including 126 newly created researcher-developer jobs.