39th ECNP Congress, Munich: press release

Launch of first Europe-wide expert group on AI in mental health

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Munich: The first Europe-wide expert working group on Artificial Intelligence in mental health launches today to the ECNP congress in Munich, where the group will host an open discussion, setting out the potential, the problems, and possible directions for AI in psychiatry and neuroscience. Going forward, the group will set out plans to guide the regulation and development of artificial intelligence (AI) in mental health in Europe.

Group Chair, Dr Paris Alexandros Lalousis (of King's College, London) said.

"AI is developing at a rapid pace. It offers great opportunities in mental health, but the development of AI also needs to be guided, communicated, and regulated, and this is something that is missing at the moment. The group will set out a framework for understanding the risks and benefits of applying AI in mental health, with recommendations on how we take the field forward. We are the first group to undertake such a challenge. We will map the field, so that Europe-wide resources are available for researchers to understand who is doing what, who is regulating AI, and so on. The aim is to produce a level-headed, expert-driven framework which will deal with the major issues".

The group is being established by the ECNP, which is Europe's largest clinical neuroscience organisation, with interests stretching from psychiatry through to drug development, psychology, and neuroscience.

Co-Chair Tim Hahn (from the University of Muenster, Germany) added:

"*Our working group comprises 19 experts, from Europe and the US. We have already developed an initial work plan for the next 3 years, and we are now meeting with the wider psychiatric and neuroscience community to feedback and refine our plans.*

We are aiming for a coordinated AI framework at a European level. There are many talented people across Europe working in the field, but often they work in silos, and we need to enable communication and interaction. So I think my message would be that whether you see AI through a positive lens or a negative lens, we would like to have you engage with us".

The working group currently has 19 members from Europe and the US, who undertake research in a variety of fields, for example using basic machine learning to do drug discovery, patient concerns, basic neuroscience, through to building and evaluating chatbots.

Tim Hahn continued, "*We have a great variety of expertise, but even so the biggest challenge is going to be to really understand what people are doing right now and*

where should we insert ourselves as a group, as a network, to provide guidance. We want to establish a structure for this huge amount of information".

At the Munich congress, the group will also discuss acting as a resource for media enquiries relating to AI in mental health. Immediately after the launch at the ECNP congress, Dr Lalousis will represent the ECNP AI group at a conference at the European Parliament advocating for cross-border validation, regulation, implementation, workforce development and equitable access in precision psychiatry".

Commenting, ECNP President Professor Andreas Reif (Frankfurt, Germany) said:

"AI has manifold implication for mental health, from research to risk factor to therapy; it will certainly change the way we interact with our patients. Therefore, ECNP has decided to make AI in Mental Health one of its priority fields; the AI Network is one of the key structures therein and I am personally very happy that we could put together such an excellent, international team to this end."

Professor David Nutt (Imperial College, London) added:

"I applaud the ECNP for orchestrating this timely and much > needed initiative. I trust it will bring balance and quality control to a rapidly expanding field that so far has little of either".

Professor Nutt is not involved in this group; this is an independent comment.

The introductory session, "*Artificial intelligence in mental health – Progress and perils*" takes place at the 39th ECNP Congress in Munich on 13th October. Session details can be found at: can be found here: ecnp.eu/congress2026/programme/searchable/#!sessiondetails/0000183030_0

Background information

You can find information on the AI in Mental Health Network on the ECNP network, see https://www.ecnp.eu/research/ecnp-networks/list-of-ecnp-networks/ai-in-mental-health/

The working group has set the following Network Outcomes

- European evaluation standards for psychiatric AI
- Regulatory-aligned deployment guidance
- Shared methodological infrastructure
- Multisite validation studies
- Training and capacity building

In the medium term, these will translate into the following three-year deliverables:

- Responsible AI position paper
- AI in Mental Health Roadmap
- Living guideline for evaluation and reporting
- Training programmes across ECNP

- Joint European funding initiatives

Notes for Editors

The formal announcement will take place at the 39th ECNP (European College of Neuropsychopharmacology) Congress, taking place in Munich and online 10th-13th October 2026, see https://www.ecnp.eu/congress2026/ The ECNP Congress is Europe's leading platform for the science and treatment of brain disorders.

Details of the European Parliament meeting, "*A United Europe For Psychiatry: From Research to Care*" can be found at: Conférence au Parlement européen - PEPR-PROPSY