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CENTRE HOSPITALIER UNIVERSITAIRE

Letter of support of the TMBI

We hereby, Professor Olivier Rascol, Professor Bruno Vellas and Professor Roland Liblau, support the creation of the Toulouse Mind and Brain Institute (TMBI), which aims to federate multiple research institutions in Toulouse with a converging interest in matters related to the mind and brain. This initiative represents a unique opportunity to merge some of the fields in which Toulouse has a worldwide renowned expertise, including clinical research, neuroscience and engineering. We have no doubt that the TMBI includes an outstanding selection of top-level researchers that together could work in highly innovative ways to answer some of the unresolved questions pertaining to the mind and brain.

As coordinators of NeuroToul, the newly constituted Centre of Excellence in Neurodegeneration of Toulouse, we have recently been able to witness the exceptional potential of federating locally multi-disciplinary research groups under an overarching structure with common goals. NeuroToul received its label of Excellence in 2015 from the French Ministry of Health following a national competition. This label has enabled us to join the global network of Centers of Excellence in Neurodegeneration (CoEN) in Europe and Canada (www.coen.org). Our center federates all research groups working in the realm of neurodegenerative diseases in Toulouse, including but not limited to Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease and multiple sclerosis (in total 13 "member" and 21 "associated member" groups, aggregating over 291 researchers).

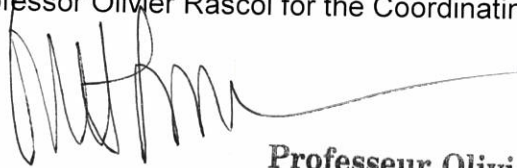
In addition to developing and maintaining high-profile collaborations with other international CoEN, the main objective of NeuroToul is to strengthen the local productive links between its members. To this end, it seeks the identification of synergies between the groups, facilitates the multi-disciplinary cross-talk and promotes the integration of complementary research lines in a continuum spanning from fundamental/pre-clinical research (in vitro and in vivo models of neuroinflammation, prion diseases, Alzheimer's disease etc.) to translational approaches (including innovative proof of concept trials, identification of biomarkers and advanced neuroimaging) and clinical research (large preventive, disease-modifying and symptomatic clinical trials and cohorts). The center also coordinates innovative research on the societal, ethical and economical aspects associated with the medical and informal care of patients suffering from neurodegenerative diseases.

Indeed, NeuroToul gathers a strong transversal expertise in human and social science, including Public Health, Pharmacovigilance, Ethics and Economics, and provides therefore a unique, interdisciplinary approach to investigate the social determinants of chronic neurodegenerative disorders, patients' rights, research ethics, regulatory frameworks, biobanks and the economic challenges raised by long-term care systems.

Finally, by reaching out to pharmaceutical, biotech and health care tech companies, NeuroToul facilitates the transfer of advances in diagnostic and therapeutic approaches thereby supporting the local Silver Economy. In the short period that the Center has been running, we are already starting to see some results in terms of new collaborations and funding.

There are multiple ways in which NeuroToul is willing to support the TMBl. Of course, we would contribute our expertise in neurodegenerative diseases. A substantial number of NeuroToul members have signed up to be TMBl members. We hope to be actively involved in the master's program, both in terms of teaching (in the Clinical Neurosciences Module) and in terms of welcoming students into our labs for research internships. There is no doubt that our common goal to federate and seek multi-disciplinary cross-talk (within academia but also with the industry) would be mutually enriching.

Professor Olivier Rascol for the Coordinating Committee of NeuroToul



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