



ALBA NETWORK
Towards diversity and
equity in brain sciences



FENS KAVLI
NETWORK OF EXCELLENCE

PRESS RELEASE

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ALBA-FKNE DIVERSITY PRIZE 2022 ANNOUNCED AT THE FENS FORUM 2022

Dr Mahmoud Bukar Maina (UK) has been awarded the ALBA-FKNE Diversity Prize 2022 for his contribution to advancing diversity and inclusion in brain research. This edition of the prize highlights a European-based student or researcher (who is not a group leader) who has made outstanding contributions to promoting diversity in brain sciences. A partnership and joint recognition by the ALBA Network and the FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence (FKNE), this prize is supported by the FENS Committee of Higher Education and Training of the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (CHET). The winner will be announced on Monday 11th July 2022 at 5:15 pm CEST at a dedicated awarding ceremony at the FENS Forum 2022, and on ALBA and FENS social media channels.

Dr Laura Andrae (King's College London, UK), Chair of the ALBA network, said: "The idea behind this prize is not just to recognise the incredible contributions to improving diversity by a single individual, but also to help inspire the entire community and remind us of how change is possible by all our actions." "We strive toward diversity in neuroscience to allow the world to benefit from everyone's talents and ideas, regardless of their background or identity, and to allow everyone the opportunity to participate in the exciting process of understanding how the brain works", added Dr Andrew Lin (University of Sheffield, UK), FENS-Kavli Scholar and chair of the ALBA-FKNE Diversity Prize Selection Committee. "Dr Maina is a highly committed individual who has worked tirelessly for a decade to expand science capacity in Africa and promote diversity in basic neuroscience research via multiple organizations. He is more than deserving of the award and will be an excellent role model for our community."

Dr Mahmoud Bukar Maina, a postdoctoral fellow at the University of Sussex, UK and visiting faculty at Yobe State University, Nigeria, received the award and a €2,000 prize for a wide variety of impactful and game-changing outreach efforts. He founded three large-scale international projects – the Outreach Programme in the charity, Teaching and Research in Natural Sciences for Development (TReND) In Africa; Science Communication Hub Nigeria; and the African Science Literacy Network (ASLN) – with the goals of promoting public awareness and understanding of science, increasing the visibility of African scientists by curating a database to facilitate research collaborations, training scientists and journalists in effective science communication, and inspiring the next generation of scientists. In 2021, with support from the Yobe state government, the Wellcome Trust and the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, he founded the Biomedical Science Research and Training Centre (BioRTC) in Yobe State University to serve as a core facility for research and training of African neuroscientists using state-of-the-art laboratory infrastructure. Currently, with funding from Sussex Neuroscience and Alzheimer's Association, he is developing the first sets of induced Pluripotent Stem Cell (iPSC) models from ethnically diverse African donors to increase the

inclusion of African iPSC models in neurodegenerative disease research towards an understanding of the contribution of ancestry and environment on disease mechanisms. “Africa has the greatest genetic diversity, yet African models barely exist in global neuroscience and African neuroscientists, though increasing, are still significantly underrepresented on a global stage. Moreover, awareness and access to advancements in neuroscience are low in Africa. As an early career researcher, I hope that this recognition will facilitate new collaboration opportunities in my research on diversifying stem cell models from African residents for neurologic disease research.”, reaffirmed Dr Maina.

The Selection Committee was overwhelmed by the number and variety of applications received, and applauds the incredible efforts made by all the nominees: “With equity and diversity becoming more recognised as important priorities in the neuroscience community, we look forward to future awards recognising the wide range of initiatives being undertaken to improve all aspects of diversity in neuroscience.”

The ALBA-FKNE Diversity Prize, awarded for the first time in 2020, will be celebrated every year at the FENS Forums of Neuroscience and FENS Regional Meetings.

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The [ALBA Network](#) aims to promote equity and diversity in the brain sciences. The goal of ALBA is to establish a global network in order to share best practices and provide better visibility, networking and mentoring opportunities to scientists from underrepresented groups in brain research.

The [FENS-Kavli Network of Excellence \(FKNE\)](#) is a self-organised and multidisciplinary network comprising 30 outstanding early- to mid-career independent European neuroscientists. Inaugurated in 2014 by FENS and The Kavli Foundation, FKNE aims to improve neuroscience research in Europe and beyond through scientific exchange, providing opportunities for young scientists and facilitating dialogue between scientists, policymakers, and society.

The [FENS Committee of Higher Education and Training \(CHET\)](#) is responsible for the implementation and development of programmes for higher education and training within FENS

The [Federation of European Neuroscience Societies](#) is the main organisation for neuroscience in Europe. FENS mission is to advance research and education in neuroscience within and outside Europe, to facilitate interaction and coordination between its members. It currently represents 44 European national and single discipline neuroscience societies, with 22,000 member scientists from 33 European countries.

The [FENS Forum of Neuroscience](#) is the largest international neuroscience meeting in Europe, covering all fields from basic to translational neuroscience. In 2022, the FENS Forum will be organized in collaboration with the French Society of Neuroscience and will take place on 9-13 July 2022 in Paris, France.