

## European brain initiative mired in too much IT

Launched in October 2013, the Human Brain Project (HBP) was sold by charismatic neurobiologist Henry Markram as a bold new path towards understanding the brain, treating neurological diseases and building information technology.

It is one of two 'flagship' proposals funded by the European Commission's Future and Emerging Technologies programme. Selected after a multiyear competition, the project seemed like an exciting opportunity to bring together neuroscience and IT to generate practical applications for health and medicine.

Contrary to public assumptions that the HBP would generate knowledge about how the brain works, the project is turning into an expensive database-management project with a hunt for new computing architectures.

In recent months, the HBP executive board revealed plans to drastically reduce its experimental and cognitive neuroscience arm, provoking wrath in the European neuroscience community.

The crisis culminated with an open letter from neuroscientists (including one of us, G.L.) to the European Commission on 7 July 2014, which has now gathered more than 750 signatures. Many signatories are scientists in experimental and theoretical fields, and the list includes former HBP participants. The letter incorporates a pledge of non-participation in a planned call for 'partnering projects' that must raise about half of the HBP's total funding. This pledge could seriously lower the quality of the project's final output and leave the planned databases empty.

**Read the full, original story: [Neuroscience: Where is the brain in the Human Brain Project?](#)**