



An ERC grant that bridges the gap between academia and the market



Another European Research Council (ERC) grant for SISSA

September 22, 2016

SISSA's NeuroM iconica project – winner of the Start Cup 2015 regional award and the PNIcCube prize and shortlisted for the Start Cup 2015 national award – has received an ERC Proof of Concept Grant, designed to support ERC grantees with the commercial or societal application of the results of their funded research. The new grant, obtained thanks to the collaboration of multidisciplinary groups working at SISSA, adds to the long list of grants awarded to SISSA by the ERC.

“Working in the field of experimental neuroscience, we have come up against several problems that forced us to think up novel solutions”, explains Mathew Diamond, head of SISSA's Tactile Perception and Learning Lab and deputy director of the School. “At a certain point, we realised



that the solutions we had devised might also be of use to other researchers. This need led to the project 'NeuroMicronica - Modular behavioural neuroscience'. Last year NeuroMicronica won the Friuli Venezia Giulia Start Cup award and was shortlisted in the national competition, as well as being chosen for the prize of the Associazione Italiana degli Incubatori Italiani (PNICube). Now, its success has been further confirmed by the award of ERC Proof of Concept Grant.

"Our project was selected as the winner among a large number of competing proposals. We owe our success to the outstanding teamwork of SISSA's researchers, expert technicians of the Mechatronics lab and administrative staff of the Technological Transfer office who worked side by side on the project", explains Diamond. "This joining of forces had already proved to be a winner on the occasion of the Start Cup and PNICube awards, so we decided to try again".

NeuroMicronica is closely related to another SISSA research project already funded by ECR and called CONCEPT. "Proof of Concept grants are in fact awarded to commercial and societal applications of existing ERC-funded projects", Diamond continues. The study of the neuronal basis of perception, which is the focus of the CONCEPT project, needs sophisticated experimental tools which, thanks to NeuroMicronica, have been refined to the point that we have been able to make them available to other neuroscience labs. "The stimulus we got from last year's Start Cup award and the comments and encouragement received from colleagues who have started to use our tools in beta version persuaded us to persevere in this direction." NeuroMicronica was also selected as one of 4 finalists for the Innovation Radar Prize, a European Commission initiative to identify high-potential innovations and innovators in EU-funded research and ICT. The competition will be held in Bratislava on September 26.

This grant adds to long list of ECR grants awarded to SISSA since 2007, year in which the Council was established.

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