



Rettore

Prof. Massimo Mario Augello

To: Prof. Dr. Dirk Helbing
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Chair of Sociology (Modeling and Simulation)
ETH Zurich
CLU E1
Clausslusstrasse 50
Boga Zurich
Switzerland

Re: Letter of endorsement for the FuturICT FET Flagship initiative

Dear Professor Helbing,

I would like to witness the support of the University of Pisa to the FuturICT Flagship initiative.

In my quality of Rector of the University of Pisa, I became aware of the FuturICT proposal through the scientists of my University involved with many international colleagues in the construction of the program, and I appreciated the high scientific qualification of the initiative, its multi-disciplinary approach, its timeliness and its vast potential impact on society. FuturICT represents an unprecedented attempt to create a novel science for understanding our globalized, hyper-connected society, combining the ICT's, the social sciences and the complexity sciences. If successful, it would become an invaluable knowledge tool for everybody: for social scientists, for policy and decision makers, for ordinary citizens.

The University of Pisa is well positioned for contributing to such ambitious program, given its pioneering role in the international ICT scene. In the 1950's the CEP, one of the first computers, was realized in Pisa on a suggestion by Enrico Fermi, in collaboration between my university, CNR and Olivetti. Later, in 1969, the first Laurea course of studies in information sciences was launched, and then the first Italian PhD program in computer science (1983). The university of Pisa is pursuing many research initiatives connected to the impulse that "big data" and the ICT's are having on science, and the socio-economic sciences in particular. Our researchers are involved in many projects at regional, European and international level, and our departments of computer science and computer engineering maintains strong liaisons with the research centres of the major ICT, Web and telecom corporations. We have a long lasting partnership with CNR, the Italian National Research Council, especially with the ICT institutes located in Pisa, with many common projects and laboratories, including a joint research lab on Knowledge Discovery and Data Mining. We have a tight

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collaboration with the government of Regione Toscana, which has recently established *Knowledge Acceleration* to be one of the 5 strategic pillars for investment of the regional government in innovation and research for the coming years, with a focus on big data, social mining and knowledge discovery. Regione Toscana is funding PhD fellowships at our university, with particular attention to inter-disciplinary programs, such as the Social Data Science track of our PhD in Computer Science.

I would like to express the warmest support to FuturICT on behalf of my university, and our willingness to help in making the proposal stronger and increase the chances of success. Should FuturICT be co-funded by the EC, we will sustain the project with all our available instruments, including support to research staff of the FuturICT partners (early-stage researchers, postdocs and PhD students) and to test-beds, demonstrators, facilities and innovation incubators, in collaboration with our municipal, regional and industrial partners.

We will participate to the creation of a Tuscan FuturICT *research centre on social data mining*, located in Pisa and in collaboration with CNR and the municipal and regional administrations. In our plans, the centre will represent an early concrete contribution towards a Planetary Nervous System, i.e., a platform for sensing and analysing the pulse of society, at the earth of the very idea of FuturICT. The centre will support the deployment of large-scale social experiments of active participation of citizens as producers and consumers of social knowledge within the ecosystem of selected Tuscan cities and their ongoing strategies for becoming smart sustainable cities. Prof. Dino Pedreschi, a designated work package leader of FuturICT, is the scientific contact with the University of Pisa, and will act as a facilitator to integrate into the project the needed multi-disciplinary skills.

With my best wishes for success of FuturICT, best regards,

The Rector

Prof. Massimo Augello