

26 January 2012

Dr Wolfgang Boch
Head of Unit
European Commission
DG INFSO-PI (BU25-05/24)
1049 Bruxelles, Belgium

Dear Dr. Boch,

Re: Letter of support for the FuturICT project

I would like to express the University of Haifa's full support of the FuturICT Flagship Initiative, which is being coordinated by Prof. Dirk Hebling of ETH Zurich, Switzerland.

The University of Haifa is the largest comprehensive research university in northern Israel, with over 18,000 students. The University houses six faculties and seven schools, which comprise 50 departments and 60 research centers. We view the major research areas of the FUTurICT FET flagship proposal as critical to meeting the present and future challenges facing humanity. We fully recognize the potential of this forward-looking effort, and its key role in leading us to global sustainability. We are well aware that proper development and utilization of ICT will bring technological, economic and social benefits to the worldwide community.

Our university eagerly looks ahead to its active involvement in the FurturICT project, both as an institution and through its faculty members and students. Many of our faculty researchers are interested in participating in this project. In addition, we plan to dedicate master's and doctoral students in current and future graduate-level programs to the efforts of FuturICT.

The University of Haifa views research into FuturICT topics as central to its academic mission. The focus on social science and the science of knowledge corresponds to the strategic focus of our university and its traditional strengths. Our researchers are intensively working in areas of information technologies, advances in communication modes and infrastructure, computers and networks, and in particular, social networks.

Our faculty members in departments of Computer Science, Information Systems, Technologies of Education, Information and Knowledge Management, Sociology, Economics, to name a few, and Schools of Law and Management are engaged in ambitious, large-scale research projects related to ICT and the future.

One of our premier research centers, the Sagy Center for Internet Research, is home to the European Union-funded SOCIOS four-year collaboration project that comprises a dozen universities and industries, including Google and IBM, and is generating scholarship related to the interoperability of social networks. The Sagy Center is running a Yahoo! Research-funded project on social networks, is recipient of an IBM Corporation OCR grant for the study of collective intelligence networks, is a leading partner in a European Union Tempus project on e-business and networks, and is running cooperative research projects with all related research centers in Israel and many groups abroad. We see the involvement and funding on the part of industry (including Yahoo, IBM, Intel, SAP, Microsoft,

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Google, Apple, Facebook and more) and government as validation of the centrality and promise of research conducted at the University of Haifa and its research centers.

Studying the information society has been a collaborative focal point for faculty at the University of Haifa for the last dozen years. The leading journal on the subject (**The Journal of Computer Mediated Communication [JCMC]**) was founded and edited by our faculty. Members of our research centers authored several important books in this field and numerous special journal issues were edited here. The University of Haifa has held a string of international conferences on FuturICT topics. We have provided leadership in organizing and sponsoring high visibility interactions on topics such as SNA (Social Network Analysis), net democracy, GWAP (Games with a Purpose), digital publishing, networked learning knowledge support and more. This past year we sponsored the international annual WikiMedia and Wiki-Academy conferences.

The university has invested in computerized infrastructure to support the research activities mentioned above. Further evidence of our focus on FuturICT topics is the fact that the University of Haifa's library is home to Israel's largest and most up-to-date collection on these topics. Over two dozen of our senior faculty members and a large cohort of several dozen advanced graduate students, including doctoral and post doctoral researchers are engaged in studying computerized networks.

The scientific yield of publications of this group is substantial. Among our notable faculty working on this topic are Prof. Michal Yerushalmy, Vice President and Dean of research who specializes in technology and education; Prof. Aharon Kellerman, (former vice president), author of several lead books on the geography of information; Prof. Niva Elkin Koren, dean of the law school and leader of the Law and Technology Research Center; Prof. Azy Barak, whose research focuses on networks and education; Prof. Ilan Talmud; and Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli, who founded and co-edited JCMC, and has written books and numerous articles about networks in organizational and social contexts. Prof. Rafaeli directs the Sagy Center and is co-recipient of many of the aforementioned grants.

I would like to add that my own research has touched on the emotion on the Internet and in particular online love, and as president of the University, I therefore see our participation in the FuturICT project as very favorable and central to our future goals.

For all the reasons described above, the University of Haifa is willing to commit Euro 300,000 per year to the project in matching funds.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that we view this project as one of vital significance, and one in which the University of Haifa can play a major role. I eagerly anticipate our participation in this project, which promises to make such crucial contributions on a global level.

Sincerely,



Prof. Aaron Ben-Ze'ev, President

Cc: Prof. Sheizaf Rafaeli, The Graduate School of Management