

# Report from the Board of Directors meeting 12-12-2014

## Main topics of interest for the students

1. General communications
  - a. *E-learning project*
2. Approval of the code of conduct
3. Interdisciplinary laboratory: activities and perspectives
4. Master degree in Physics and Neuroscience with Trento
5. Contribution to last year students for research expenses
6. Master in Complex Actions. Fellowships for PhD students.
7. Budget 2015: students

## 1. General communications

*a. E-learning Project:* Among the joint projects with University of Trieste and Udine, we realized that SISSA (in fact, the Region itself since we got the money for that) made a huge investment in multimedia devices (among the Main Lecture Hall and the several equipped lecture rooms, ~500k €) that, apart for some experimental recordings, are severely underused if not unused at all. Together with UniTS and UniUD a Committee has been established to exploit our infrastructure and their expertise and personnel to realize a library of lectures for public access and/or a repository of SISSA lectures and seminars for our internal use. The latter opportunity is currently already available and it has also been done for some course (we have also a website with stored lectures, at <http://avcast-web.sissa.it/>)

## 2. Approval of the code of conduct

The code of conduct of SISSA employees has been approved. The code is available, only in Italian and until officially published, on SISSA Forum <https://www.sissa.it/forum/index.php?action=dlattach;topic=133.0;attach=16>  
It is worthy to recall that it is in general not binding for the students, **except** for the ones in the Senate, Board of Directors, Evaluation Unit and the ones appointed in, for instance, tender committees.

## 3. Interdisciplinary laboratory: activities and perspectives

After a request dating back to the last meeting of the Board, prof. Mussardo – Director of the Interdisciplinary Laboratory for Science and Humanities, *aka* ILAS – sent a detailed report of all the activities carried out by it in the last academic year. ILAS is in charge of the administrative organization of the several masters of the school (from Science Communication to HPC) and of a series of conference, seminars, workshops round the year. The reason of the request for a detailed report is the request of an extraordinary contribution for the realization of a film about the concept of symmetry in the modern science, from Galois to nowadays, presented by prof. Mussardo, who already has a quite successful record of scientific documentaries/movies (from Boltzmann's to the most recent Pontecorvo's one). Apart from the 150 hours collaborators that are mainly employed as administrative support for the masters, two students are

reported to collaborate with ILAS activities and projects, Cristiano De Nobili and Riccardo Cristoferi. During the meeting there has been a discussion about the seemingly superposition between some activities organized and carried out by ILAS and other ones that fall under the responsibility of SISSA Medialab. Despite the two “core business” of ILAS and Medialab are very different (the Masters as opposite as the editing and publishing of very important journals), the outreach-dissemination-public involvement activities seem to enjoy some better cooperation and coordination; however, the matter is subtle because we do not want that ILAS 'eat' the good assets of Medialab or Medialab 'seize' the original scope of ILAS, which was not organizing masters but disseminate science and culture.

We granted a contribution of 25k euros for the film (ICTP ~15k, Physics Consortium of Trieste ~7k), but the discussion about the scope of Medialab and ILAS will very likely go on and on.

#### **4. Master degree in Physics and Neuroscience with Trento**

Since some years SISSA is organized, together with University of Trento, a Master Degree programme in Physics and another one in Neuroscience. Generally, this means having during the year up to three students studying and working at SISSA and attending the second year of the Master Degree. University of Trento has recently shown interest in strengthening the collaboration, hence from next year the maximum number of students who will be able to attend SISSA activities will raise to 4 (in principle, for both the courses; in practice, the maximum number of students is not always reached even now).

#### **5. Contribution to last year students for research expenses**

During the ISAC visit of last May, the committee had stressed the need of improving the money allotted for the scientific trips and 'missions' of the students approaching the end of their PhD, to travel more and let them be known by the prospective employers. The School, and we students above everyone else, was extremely glad to take this suggestion and to explore the possible means to achieve this aim. The problem is that there is a law with a threshold on the money allotted for 'missions', that is rather low and – above all – already reached. It should be stressed that the missions to universities with international agreements do not have to respect the limit and can be raised (more or less) at will. On the other hand, the usage of that money to go to missions is quite a subtle dodge (and in particular, the fact that those money can be used to attend conferences organized by some faculties working in universities with an international agreement with SISSA, we learnt yesterday, is acknowledged just by some Areas and not by all, Neuroscience in particular choosing case by case) and it is not completely defensible according to our General Secretary (but it is indeed, according to the Director).

The Administration worked a lot to craft an acceptable form for the contribution, and proposed both to the Senate (that apparently did not raise any objection) and to the Board the following guidelines: each student of the last year (being either the third or the fourth) can access to a contribution up to 1000 euros to be asked and supplied once, and meant to be used to pay the fees for conferences and congresses, the expenses for publications, for special

prints (like non-standard posters etc) and for memory devices, but not at all for the other trip expenses (travel, accommodation, meals...). The money allocated for this sums up to 62-63k euros, while the original idea was to grant to the students just 3-400 euros more than the usual mission fundings.

We immediately stressed that on one hand, it is indeed true that in Neuroscience there are exceptional (compared with Mathematics and Physics) expenses for fees and publications, but on the other hand for all the other students this proposal reduces the possibility to enjoy the contribution, to the point that it makes the contribution pointless at all. We counterproposed, at least, that all the international agreement missions can be paid on this money, since on them there is not an expense threshold and can be raised at will. This proposed solution is not straightforward for administrative rather than legal reasons (but it will still be a 'dodge', hence not completely smooth), but met the strong favour by the Director. We erased from the resolution the explicit mention of the prohibition of using those money for trips expenses, while the regulation drafting and approval is postponed. It goes without saying that until the regulation is not approved, this contribution cannot be asked. However, the huge difference between what asked by the ISAC and originally proposed by the School, and what actually proposed - although the why is understandable but not completely agreeable - seemed more than enough to call from a supplementary time and effort.

## **6. Master in Complex Actions: Fellowships for PhD students**

As stated in the last meeting, as a partial (but substantial) contribution to the fee for enrolling to the Master in Complex Action, the call for applications mentioned the possibility to provide the PhD students with a 4k euros fellowship (on a 5k euros fee) and, if additional funds were available, 2k euros for some other participant. Regretfully, this year the Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, that had always contributed to the master, did not guarantee it. Until now, the master did not cost anything to SISSA because all the costs were covered by fees and contributions. Now, despite it would be theoretically possible not to provide the fellowships, since they were not granted, the fact that most of the attendee are PhD students and asked for the fellowship would put at stake the survival of the master, since almost everyone could quit. The director of the MCA, prof. Treves, thus resolved to ask the School for a 20k euros contribution to cover the fellowships. The Board granted it, provided that the distribution of the fellowships follows the rules of the call (thus, using the money for the PhD students).

## **7. Budgetary framework 2015: students**

A forward-looking managing of the funding in the last years allowed SISSA to close with a positive budget. We have the pleasure to announce that all the fellowships and the benefits for PhD students will be confirmed for the next year. Furthermore, the budget is enough to cover "last-minute" projects, post-master fellowships, reward for the best PhD written dissertation peer reviewed journals and maintenance services.