

Position Announcement - Call for applications



Neo-PRISM-C project **NEurodevelopmental Optimal-Predictors, Risk factors, and Intervention from a Systems approach to Maladjustment in Children**

Early Stage Researcher (ESR) position

Silversky3D Virtual Reality Technologies VRT Ltd is offering **1 position** for an **Early Stage Researcher** (ESR; doctoral student) in Neo-PRISM-C, a project aiming to investigate neurodevelopmental disorders. Neo-PRISM-C project is funded by the European Union under the Horizon 2020 Marie Skłodowska-Curie Innovative Training Network (ITN) action.

Neo-PRISM-C ETN aims to train ESRs in applying the Research Domain Criteria, a novel framework for understanding psychopathology, to the study of the mechanisms and treatments of neurodevelopmental disorders. It will train ESRs from multiple disciplines (e.g., psychology, neuroscience, data science) in state-of-the-art and transferable skills for innovating the study of brain-behavior relationships, in the context of a systems-based, trans-diagnostic theoretical frame. The project will also provide training in designing evidence-based, individualized treatments of learning, behavioral, and social maladjustment, bridging across diagnostic categories.

Applicants from all relevant academic disciplines are encouraged to apply, including Psychology, Neuroscience, Data Science, and related disciplines. The selected candidate will enroll in the graduate school of the University of Cyprus and work towards either a **Ph.D. in Psychology** (for applicants with psychology and non-psychology backgrounds) or a **Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology** (for applicants with a psychology background who can become licensed in Cyprus and EU). Therefore, applicants must regularly follow the process of admission to one of the above Ph.D. programs of the Department of Psychology for Fall Semester 2019/2020, in parallel with the submission of the application for the ESR position, by submitting their applications electronically using the online application system http://ucy.ac.cy/postgraduate_appl_en by Wednesday, 3th April 2019 until 12 noon EET. For more information about the two programs, see <http://www.ucy.ac.cy/psych/en/academicprograms/postgraduate>.

Host Institution: Silversky3D Virtual Reality Technologies Ltd.

Silversky3D is a Cyprus-based SME established in 2014 as a spin-out company from the University of Cyprus following successful funding from the European Research Council (ERC)

and the Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry, and Tourism (Young Entrepreneurship Program). The company focuses on the development of innovative applications in Virtual Reality based on research from Cognitive/Clinical Psychology and Neuroscience, e.g., tools for the training of cognitive processes, for improving social skills etc. In addition, it offers services to professionals and scientists who can benefit from advanced visualization and interaction with virtual environments. It maintains active collaborations with several laboratories around the world for projects that involve evidence-based technology applications.

Study Institution: University of Cyprus – Department of Psychology

The University of Cyprus (www.ucy.ac.cy/en/) is a highly-ranked academic institution whose main objectives are the promotion of scholarship and education through teaching and research, and the enhancement of the cultural, social and economic development of Cyprus. The Department of Psychology was established in 2004 with the mission to educate new scientists in contemporary scientific Psychology, to contribute to the international literature on the understanding of human beings, as well as to transfer knowledge to the local community. In its short history, the Department has been able to offer highly popular and competitive undergraduate and graduate programs of study with international recognition. The Department of Psychology currently ranks in the top 200 psychology departments worldwide (https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/2019/subject-ranking/psychology#!/page/0/length/25/name/cyprus/sort_by/rank/sort_order/asc/cols/stats).

POSITION DETAILS

Fellow: *TREAT-ESR15*

Project Title: Developing and validating VR applications for social skills training.

Host Institution: Silversky3D VRT Ltd.

Supervisors: Kleanthis Neokleous (Silversky3D VRT Ltd), Marios Avraamides (University of Cyprus)

Specific Requirements

ESR15 will (1) develop interventions based on immersive Virtual Reality to improve specific social skills that are typically impaired in certain psychiatric conditions (e.g., eye-contact and emotion-processing in children with autistic traits) as well as in normally-developing children and children with phobias (e.g., emotion regulation, social skills), and (2) validate the efficacy of the interventions in experimental studies with human participants.

Expected results

(1) To develop innovative interventions, based on state-of-the-art immersive VR technology and motion capture, for improving the social and communication skills of individuals in psychiatric conditions like autism and Asperger's syndrome but also in normally-developing children.

(2) To be able to target a variety of social and communication skills that appear in various psychiatric disorders and typical development, including among others contextually inappropriate social behavior, limited understanding of social norms and expectations, eye

gaze abnormalities, joint attention difficulties, difficulties in understanding mental states, emotion regulation to name a few.

OFFER

Silversky3D VRT Ltd will offer the ESR:

- Full-time employment for 3 years with a competitive salary (see Financial Terms below)
- Full tuition coverage for doctoral studies at the University of Cyprus
- Training on using Virtual Reality for cognitive and clinical research
- Training on designing and conducting empirical studies
- Secondments to partner institutions
- Participation to workshops and courses /training on scientific and entrepreneurial skills

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Successful applicants should:

(a) must **not** have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Cyprus **for more than 12 months** in the 3 years immediately prior to the contract commencement date; and

(b) have a proven knowledge on topics that are relevant to the *Neo-PRISM-C* network, as judged by past research involvement, publication activity, teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, and management.

(c) be eligible for admission to one of the PhD programs at the Department of Psychology of the University of Cyprus.

Women and men from all countries are encouraged to apply.

REQUIREMENTS

1. A University degree and Master's degree in Psychology, Neuroscience, Data Science, or related discipline.
2. Excellent written and spoken English skills (applicants are required to provide relevant proof).
3. Knowledge of at least one more European Language represented in the consortium (e.g., French, Finnish, Hungarian) or good knowledge of Greek will be considered as an advantage.
4. A keen interest in Developmental Cognitive Neuroscience and specifically in neurodevelopmental disorders.
5. Computer proficiency in standard software of Social Sciences and Mathematics (e.g., SPSS, R, MATLAB).
6. Knowledge about research methods and experience with experimental research.
7. Expertise with game engines (Unity, Unreal 3D) and the design of graphics for Virtual Reality will be considered an advantage.
8. Knowledge and/or prior involvement in studies using brain imaging methods (e.g., EEG, MRI, fMRI, fNIRS, MEG), data collection, analysis, and interpretation will be considered an advantage.

9. Knowledge and/or prior involvement in studies using psychophysiological experimental techniques (e.g., eye-tracking, electrodermal activity, heart rate variability) will be also considered as an advantage

FINANCIAL TERMS

The *Neo-PRISM-C* consortium comprises eight teams from several European countries and N. America partners and has a total budget of €4 million. The post for the ESR is **a full-time** and fixed term for one year with a possible renewal for another two years, with an expected start date August, 29 2019. Salary will be €32,412 per year and will be supplemented with a Mobility Allowance (€600 per month). Qualified applicants based on family status may receive an additional Family Allowance of €500 per month. A comprehensive health insurance and social security plan will be provided.

How to apply

Candidates are asked to submit the required documents in a single .pdf file via email to the Project Administration Manager of the *Neo-PRISM-C* project, Mrs. Afroditi Stefanou at stefanou.afroditi@ucy.ac.cy until April 3, 2019, 12:00 noon EET and include:

- Letter of motivation (research interests, research career goals, skills, experience, reasons for applying to the program and the specific ESR position)
- A full updated CV (including among other information, personal details with full contact data, work and education history, etc.)
- Certified copies of relevant degrees and English Language proof of proficiency
- The names and e-mail addresses of two referees

For information about this position, please contact Dr. Kleanthis Neokleous, Silversky3D VRT LTD, +357 22 252500, email: kleanthis@silversky3d.com, or Prof. Marios Avraamides, Department of Psychology, University of Cyprus, +357 22892066, Email: mariosav@ucy.ac.cy. For information about Neo-Prism-C, please contact Prof. Timothy C. Papadopoulos, *Neo-PRISM-C* Project Coordinator, at the Center for Applied Neuroscience, University of Cyprus, +357 22 892079, email: papadopoulos.timothy@ucy.ac.cy.

Deadline for applications is **April 3, 2019**.