REPORT OF “Neuroscience and Society”, 11th-13th of March 2013, Rome.

In partnership with:
IRCCS “Fondazione Santa Lucia”, Rome, Italy, and “Sapienza” University of Rome, Italy.

Monday, March the 11th 2013
“Virtual reality and CAVE open house”

The first day of the “Neuroscience and Society” took place at Santa Lucia Foundation and started with the welcome addressed by Carlo Caltagirone, the Scientific Director of FSL, and by Stefano Paolucci, the Director of the Translational Clinical Research Line.

Professor Salvatore Maria Aglioti, director of the Social and Cognitive Neuroscience laboratory (SCN Lab), introduced the programme of the three days explaining the impact of virtual reality in real world. Professor Mel Slater (University of Barcelona and coordinator of the European Project FP7 “VERE”) described his studies on visuo-tactile and proprioceptive illusions in virtual reality. Then, Professor Bergamasco (Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna, Italy) illustrated the technology behind the cave automatic virtual environment (“CAVE” system).

The second part of the morning dealt with topics related to motor disabilities. Vincenzo Falabella, Chair of the FAIP (Italian Federation of the association for paraplegics), talked about the protection for people with disability in daily life and about their real needs to achieve independence. Giorgio Scivoletto, MD and researcher at FSL, illustrated the delicate issue of diagnosis and prognosis communication to patients and their relatives. Finally, Alessandro Piozzi, participant to the experiments of the SCN Lab, talked about his experience of living with tetraplegia and taking part of the experiments of the Lab.

Enea Francesco Pavone and Michele Scandola, two members of the SCN Lab, closed the first part of the day presenting the results of their studies.
In the afternoon, the SCN Labs and the CAVE system were opened to public. Lab members from SCN Lab illustrated aims and use of the facilities present in FSL, while the PercRo Lab (Scuola Superiore Sant’Anna) showed demos about their research.
“Virtual reality in the real world”

The second day of “Neuroscience and society” took place at the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Medicine and Psychology (University of Rome Sapienza) and welcome was addressed by the Director of the Department Gabriella Antonucci and Vice Deputy Dean of the Faculty Cristiano Violani.

The theme of the day was the gender violence and Concita de Gregorio, journalist and writer, illustrated her work and reported the experiences of women she had met. She then introduced Professor Mavi Sanchez Vives (University of Barcelona) who described her study on the use of Virtual reality as a technique of rehabilitation to overcome gender violence. Then, Mariella Nocenzi, from Coordination Women of Sapienza, presented her project on protection for women, with the aim to provide guidelines to prevent domestic violence.

The second part of the morning was organized as a “brainstorming”: suggestions on how virtual reality could be used to create projects to improve social issues were provided by SCN Labmembers and then followed by open discussion with the audience.
Wednesday, March 13th 2013

“It takes two to Tango: actions and emotions in social relations”

The main topic of the last day was the “integration in the difference”. Namely, it dealt with the possibility to struggle for multi-ethnic integration without homologation. Professor Gilberto Corbellini (Sapienza University) did an excursus about the ethics and the issue of “ingroup and outgroup” categorization in science and society. Professor Beatrice de Gelder (University of Tilburg and coordinator of the European Project FP7 “TANGO”) described her studies about the emotion conveyed by body language and on social perception.

Then, a symposium by the SCN Lab described several studies related with the impact of ingroup/outgroup categorization on the ability to simulate others’ action with one’s own motor system.

Finally, a round table took place, coordinated by Armando Massarenti, Director of the Culture section of the daily newspaper “il Sole 24 ore”. Professor Gilberto Corbellini, Valentina Fabbri (Project manager of the association Programma Integra) and Gabriele Sani (psychiatrist and Director of the clinic for transcultural psychiatry at Sant’Andrea Hospital) described their professional experience in the field of multiethnic integration and discussed the role of scientific research in the field. Lastly, suggestions on how Italian policies on immigration could be improved were also examined.
A multiethnic lunch was offered by an association (Laboratorio 53) involved in projects on multiethnic integration.

In the afternoon, we screened the Italian movie on immigration “Ali ha gli occhi azzurri”, and the Director Claudio Giovannesi explained how he prepared the movie and answered to questions from the audience.