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PhD Research Fellowship in Semiotics: “Fake and Conspiracy: Disinformation Dynamics and Radicalization” (VORTEX) – Marie Curie Doctoral Networks, University of Turin

1. ABOUT THE POSITION

The [University of Turin, Department of Philosophy and Education Science \(PhD Programme in Humanities\)](#) is seeking to fill one doctoral student position with a specialization in Semiotics or a related field. The successful applicant will be part of the doctoral network “Coping with Varieties of Radicalization into Terrorism and Extremism (VORTEX)”, which is funded by the EU Horizon Europe’s Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (Grant Agreement n° 101073440). The appointment is for a fixed period of 3 years, starting September-October 2023.

VORTEX represents an innovative and integrative doctoral network of practitioners and academics for training of doctoral candidates in radicalization studies. It brings together eight universities and research institutes who will employ ten doctoral candidates, as well as 14 associated partners (law enforcement, judiciary agencies, providers of welfare services, state security, civil society organizations, and research institutes). The project’s overarching aim is to develop new evidence-based innovative strategies to counter and prevent ideological and behavioural radicalization. VORTEX will provide an integrated and meaningful research programme not only but primarily for doctoral candidates to pursue their research in a fruitful and meaningful dialogue among relevant disciplines and in a dense web of supervision, training, and interaction to jump-start both successful and relevant careers. Practice-based research with the associated partners, connecting doctoral candidates to future job markets and audiences, will offer the opportunity to investigate radicalizations on several levels, ranging from local to global and from cognitive to behavioural. Read more: <https://vortex.uni.mau.se/>

2. ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF TURIN

The [University of Torino \(UniTo\)](#) is one of the largest Italian Universities, with over 81.200 students, 6.2% of which of non-Italian citizenship, around 4.000 employees (academic, administrative, and technical staff), more than 1.100 PhD students and more than 550 research fellows. Research and training are performed in 27 Departments, encompassing all scientific disciplines except engineering and architecture. The University activities are carried out in more than 100 venues in the whole Region, including 71 labs and infrastructures and 22 libraries with full access to the web, the Botanical Garden, and several University Museums. In addition, it offers university accommodation, university canteens and well-situated sports facilities.

Today, the University of Torino offers over 150 undergraduate and graduate degree programmes in almost every field of study involving about 5,000 international students. A growing number of



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programmes are taught in English, and Italian language tuition is available for incoming students. The doctoral school provides 41 doctoral programmes, in addition to be partner in 14 national doctoral programmes

- Useful information about **living and studying in Torino** is available at the following links:
[UniTO Webpage – Living in Turin](#)
[Study in Turin](#)
- More information about the Doctoral Research Programme at UniTo are available at the following link: [Doctoral School](#)

3. THE RESEARCH PROJECT

The topic of the individual research project is “Fake and Conspiracy: Disinformation Dynamics and Radicalization”. The research programme dives deep into the nexus between disinformation dynamics and radicalization. Fake news encourages citizens to vote according to a distorted and radicalized understanding of societies. This project will apply semiotic methods to a series of case studies in which the digital propagation of ‘the fake’ is supposed to play a central role in the construction and diffusion of conspiracy theories and in the spurring of extremism, radicalism, and fundamentalism. The fields of religion and medicine will be particularly focused upon, as well as the blurring of fiction and non-fiction. This qualitative approach will be combined with a quantitative approach based on the automatic or semi-automatic analysis of big data through neural networks and artificial intelligence.

The primary supervisor will be prof. [Massimo Leone](#), full professor at the Department of Philosophy and Education Science (University of Turin).

The doctoral candidate is expected to have her/his primary place of residence in Italy and take part in project and doctoral activities at the University of Turin. There are also planned secondments:

- 2 months in the first year: The Peace Research Institute Frankfurt, PRIF (co-supervisor: Julian Junk). Purpose: co-supervision, research design development, complementary research environment.
- 2 months in the second year: Fondazione Bruno Kessler, FBK. Purpose: on-the-job training, empirical research, presentation of research design and preliminary findings to practitioners.

The doctoral candidate will also be involved in training schools, missions and stages at the other VORTEX member institutions, as well as in fieldtrips and missions related to the specific research project.

The doctoral candidate will be connected to a Europe-wide Doctoral Network and will work in close collaborations with doctoral students and senior researchers therein. The doctoral candidates are expected to spend time at universities and organizations in the project, within and outside Europe. The doctoral candidates will also be closely connected to the multidisciplinary environment at University of Turin.

4. BENEFITS

- Living, mobility and family allowance are available, as defined within the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Doctoral Networks (approximately 3.100-3.500€/month gross salary, including allowance)
- Personal research funds
- A stimulating and international research environment with multiple research groups and seminar series
- A friendly and inclusive workplace allows for a good work-life balance
- Practical support (International office at UniTo)

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

- Applicants must not already be in possession of a doctoral degree or being currently enrolled in a doctoral degree programme at the moment of signing the research contract with VORTEX.
- Applicants must be in their first 4 years of full-time equivalent research experience after completion of their MA; more senior candidates are not eligible.
- Applicants whose MA degree will be awarded after the call deadline, may apply under the condition that their qualification is obtained before the start date of the research contract with VORTEX. Should they not obtain the qualification within the established deadline, they will not be admitted to the PhD Programme, in case a position was offered.
- **Mobility Rule:** Applicants must not have resided or carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Italy for more than 12 months in the last 3 years immediately before the call deadline.

6. REQUIREMENTS AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Formal requirements

- Master Degree or equivalent qualifications in a relevant field
- The Master Degree must include relevant education in research methods

General selection criteria

- Independent analysis and approach in previous work
- Problem formulation and precision in previous work and research plans
- Methodological and scholarly maturity
- Communication and cooperation skills

Doctoral programme-related selection criteria

- Knowledge and skills corresponding to a social science or humanities second-cycle degree in a subject that is relevant to the field of the project. Competence in semiotics will be an asset



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- Ability to express oneself in written and spoken English on an advanced level
- Documented experience of studying or researching any of the themes described in the individual research project above

7. EVALUATION AND SELECTION PROCEDURE

The evaluation and selection procedure is organized into 3 steps.

- **Step 1 - Eligibility check**

The Scientific Selection Committee will assess the eligibility of applicants (see Eligibility criteria).

- **Step 2 - Scientific Evaluation**

The Scientific Selection Committee will evaluate applications against the following criteria:

1. Education and training
2. Research experience and skills
3. Research proposal
4. Motivation

The most promising candidates are invited to an interview.

- **Step 3 - Interview**

Interviews will be conducted remotely. The Scientific Selection Committee will assess applicants against the following criteria:

1. Scientific Knowledge in the selected topic
2. Research Experience in the selected topic
3. Motivation
4. Excellent Command of English

8. APPLICATION

Candidates are invited to complete our application here: <https://forms.gle/SwBgFXs3uRxm57hW7>

Candidates can submit their application filling in all the information requested and uploading all the requested documents in PDF format. Candidates must provide the following documents; application items should be in English or be accompanied by a translation into English.

The only exception applies to the Master Degree Certificate and to Transcripts issued in Italian by an Italian university: any other document and information must be submitted in English.

- Valid PASSPORT/ID
- Master Degree Certificate or equivalent qualification
- Master Degree Transcript of Records
- Curriculum Vitae (Europass format only, max 4 pages)
- Letter of Motivation (Maximum 1000 words)
- Research Proposal (Maximum 2000 words)



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- Letters of Reference (Optional; max 2)
- Publication(s)/Patent(s) (Optional; max 5)

9. DEADLINE

The application deadline is **31st January 2023**

The expected start date is **1st October 2023**

10. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

The whole Evaluation and Selection procedure will emphasize the excellence of candidates.

This Call for Applications does not pose any restriction in terms of the nationality, age, or any other characteristics of candidates. The University of Torino is an equal opportunity committed employer.

The University of Torino strongly encourages applications from women and will ensure that equal opportunities are guaranteed to each applicant during the selection procedure.

For candidates with disabilities and specific learning difficulties, specific arrangements can be made for the interview to guarantee equal treatment. Applicants invited to interview (Step 3) should inform prof. Massimo Leone (massimo.leone@unito.it) of their condition(s) in due time, providing a clinical certificate(s) in English about their condition(s) issued by the appropriate health care authorities or medical practitioners.

11. PROCESSING OF PERSONAL DATA

According to art. 13 of the European General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR), and implementing the Legislative Decree 101/2018, personal data supplied by applicants will be gathered by the University of Torino, for the purposes of management of the selection procedure.

These data must be supplied for the purposes of evaluation of the requisites for participation, on penalty of exclusion from the selection process.

The given data will be also treated for the development of the institutional functions of the University of Torino within the limits established by the laws, regulations and in the respect of the principles of transparency, fairness, discretion, and necessity.

The data are processed, with or without the aid of IT tools, by parties authorized to process personal data under the direct responsibility of the Data Controller for the purposes set out above.

The data may be disclosed to third parties that have specific agreements, contracts, or agreements with the Data Controller.



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The data relating to applicants may be kept for administrative, historical and research purposes for an unlimited period, in compliance with the archiving obligations imposed by current legislation and tax legislation.

The University of Torino, via Verdi, 8 – 10124, Torino, is the Data Controller (contacts: rettore@unito.it; ateneo@pec.unito.it; telephone: +39 011 6706111).

The pro tempore Data Protection Officer is Professor Sergio Foà (contacts: rpd@unito.it).

The applicants have the rights as per art. 15-23 of the European General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 (GDPR) and in particular the right to access their own personal data, to request correction, update and cancellation if incomplete, incorrect or collected in violation of the law, and to oppose their processing for legitimate reasons by making a request to University of Torino, addressed to the Director of the Research Division (Direzione Ricerca, Via Bogino 9, 10123, Torino, Italy) by email to direzione.ricerca@unito.it – with the object: “Privacy rights”.

12. CONTACT INFORMATION

Professor Massimo Leone, e-mail: massimo.leone@unito.it