SEERC – Call for PhD Applications 2012-2013.

PhD Studies at SEERC – Call for Applications (Deadline: April 30th 2012)

1. The PhD programme

The PhD programme is run jointly by the University of Sheffield and CITY College , an International Faculty of the University of Sheffield, under a joint supervision scheme. The programme is hosted by the South East European Research Centre (SEERC) in Thessaloniki, Greece.

 At SEERC there are currently two possibilities for a PhD degree:

Full Time programme: The duration is 3 years and it requires full time commitment on the part of the PhD student, which means that one would have to be physically present at SEERC premises located in Thessaloniki.

Part Time programme: with duration 6 years. To be eligible for a part-time PhD the candidate should be able to prove significant experience in the selected field. In this case, the PhD student has the obligation for a minimum of two visits to Thessaloniki annually for supervision purposes (with the CITY and Sheffield supervisors). All other communication with supervisors occurs via e-mail, Skype and telephone.

Part of the PhD programme involves the Doctoral Development Programme (DDP). The DDP concerns both Full Time and Part Time Student. Its main target is to enhance and broad the range of skills of the PhD candidates. Further information on the DDP can be found at the following link: http://www.shef.ac.uk/ris/pgr/ddpportal

2. Tuition Fees

The fees for the PhD for 2011-2012 are **7660 British pounds annually** for full-time study and **3830 British pounds** for the part time programme (a small increase is expected every year on fees. Exact figures will be given to successful applicants).

3. Fee Waivers

Once again this year, the University of Sheffield and CITY College will be offering a small number of fee waiver positions for students to read for a PhD **through SEERC in Thessaloniki**. The fee waivers are offered to applicants with outstanding academic records and the process is highly competitive. **Please note that fee waivers are only given to the candidates applying for Full time studies.**

More information on the terms of reference of the Fee waivers can be found at the following link:
http://www.seerc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=7&Itemid=6
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4. Submission process

We accept proposals from qualified students for Full-time or for Part-time study. The proposals should address one of the **specific research topics** as listed in the table below (for detailed description, please see section 6).

Research Track 1: Enterprise Innovation and Development	
Topic 1:	Understanding Entrepreneurial Behaviour in Turbulent Business Environments
Topic 2:	Strategy Formulation of Multinationals in South-Eastern Europe: Prior to, During, and After the Financial Crisis
Topic 3:	Knowledge management framework for resilient supply chain
Research Track 2: Information and Communication Technologies	
Topic 4:	Engineering Emergence in Artificial Distributed Systems for Energy and the Environment
Topic 5:	Dynamic Monitoring and Adaptation of Service-Based Applications
Research Track 3: Society & Human Development Psychology, Politics, Sociology, and Education	
Topic 6:	Coping with economic crisis in Greece: the role of transnational family networks
Topic 7:	Traveling News: Media Campaigns and Traveler Communities in the EU
Topic 8:	Empowering children and youth with special educational needs to make decisions about themselves
Topic 9:	Self-disgust: exploring the interface between cognition and emotion in depression
Topic 10:	Healthy Life Expectancy in South East Europe: A study of the influence of social factors on cognitive decline with ageing.

In order to apply, PhD candidates need to download the **Application Form** along with the **Guidance Notes** from SEERC's web site[1], complete the application, and then send, by post, one copy to SEERC and one copy to The University of Sheffield.

Please note that incomplete applications will be disqualified from the process. Candidates have to ensure that all supporting documentation is included in the application. The application form and supporting documents should be accompanied by a **Research Proposal** and an updated **CV**. The CV and the proposal of the PhD candidate should be sent electronically also, by e-mail at phd_admission@seerc.org

The **Research Proposal** should be typed, the length should be about 1,500 – 2,000 words (6 to 8 pages) and should include the following:

a) Title of the proposed thesis

b) Reference to one of the Specific Research Topics (section 6)

c) Proposed mode of work (full time or part time)

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[1] http://www.seerc.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=5&Itemid=59

d) Proposed source of Funding: Fee Waiver (Full time Only), Personal funding, funded by any other institution/organization e.t.c.

e) Background to research topic

f) Specific problem(s) to be examined

g) Methods of research proposal, plan and timetable of work

h) Resources available and required (if any)

i) Any other information in support of your proposal

j) The proposal should include correct literature citations and a brief bibliography

All applications should be submitted by April 30th 2012 (postmarked). Please note that the complete application forms need to be sent to **both** SEERC and The University of Sheffield at the **same** time by ordinary post. Moreover, **an electronic version of the Research proposal and the CV should be sent by April 30th 2012 by email to SEERC at phd_admissions@seerc.org.**

Please note that incomplete applications missing one or more documents or failure to submit the hard copies of the application by post (i.e. submission only of the proposal in electronic form) to SEERC and to the University of Sheffield will result to the application's disqualifying.

The possible outcomes of your application are:

- Acceptance to read for a PhD

- Acceptance to read for a PhD with a fee waiver (FULL TIME candidates only)

- Rejection

All candidates will be informed on the outcome of the evaluation procedure, which will involve an interview at SEERC premises with the proposed supervisors.

A step-by-step guide to submitting your application	
Step 1:	Read in detail the requirements from this Call for Proposals
Step 2:	Download the application form from http://www.seerc.org
Step 3:	Read the Guidance Notes for completing it
Step 4:	Prepare Research Proposal and an Updated CV according to Guidelines
Step 5:	Prepare supporting documents for inclusion in the application pack
Step 6:	Send by post 1 copy of the application documents to SEERC and 1 copy to the University of Sheffield. Do this by **April 30th 2012** (post stamp as proof of validity of the application).
Step 7:	Send by **April 30th 2012** the Research proposal and the updated CV by e-mail to phd_admissions@seerc.org

5. English Language Requirements

For Research Topics # 1-3 (Research Track 1) see the English language requirements of Management School English at The University of Sheffield:

http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/management/researchdegrees/apply

For Research Topics # 4-5 (Research Track 2) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Computer Science of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/dcs/postgrad/taught/apply

For Research Topics # 6, 8 & 10 (Research Track 3) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Sociological Studies of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/socstudies/ppr/applying/entry

For Research Topic # 7 (Research Track 3) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Journalism studies of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.shef.ac.uk/postgraduate/info/englang

For Research Topic # 9 (Research Track 3) see the English Language requirements of the Department of Psychology of The University of Sheffield at: http://www.sheffield.ac.uk/psychology/prospectivepg/phd

6. Research Topics

Topic # 1: Understanding Entrepreneurial Behaviour in Turbulent Business Environments

Proposed supervisors:

- Dr. Tim Vorley (tim.vorley@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr. Alexandros G. Psychogios (a.psychogios@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Entrepreneurial literature recognises that there are differences in entrepreneurial and managerial behaviour in SMEs. Debates in the innovation literature are yet to define what innovation means for firms in responding to the imperatives of globalisation and increasing global competition. It is widely accepted that innovation as a process can lead to improved business performance and enable firms to gain a competitive advantage in the market place. The challenges posed by the current economic climate have also seen the concept of resilience become increasingly central, as firms seek to adapt and consolidate (i.e. restructuring and reorganisation) as much as they innovate. Indeed the focus of this PhD is to understand what the dynamic between innovation and resilience means for entrepreneurial and intrapreneurial behaviours.

Therefore, this research project aims not only, to fill a literature gap by examining what constitutes innovation and resilience in firms, but also how they are affected by entrepreneurial management and complex leadership behaviours. In particular, what will be investigated are ways of working and culture of the internal environment that contributes to innovation and resilience by studying the strategies of owner-manager entrepreneurs. Key-issues that might be examined are:

- Innovation process used in SMEs
- Resilience strategies of SMEs
- Complex adaptive behaviours of entrepreneurs/mangers
- Emergence, feedback loops, history, change and strange attractors
- Creativity (among organisational members)
- Business Environment dynamic issues that could affect innovative and resilient behaviour
- Risk-taking culture that contributes to either facilitating or hindering innovative and resilient behaviour

The project can focus on the main three industries namely, manufacturing, services and retailing, as there is a high incident of innovative SMEs in these sectors which have needed to display resilience since 2007. The geographical context of analysis will be the South Eastern European one that is characterized by a high degree of economic turbulence. In terms of methodology, both quantitative and qualitative approaches will be applied. Research techniques such as survey-questionnaire in managers and employees, as well as in-depth interviews with owners/business leaders, plus observations can be used.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate needs to have a good first degree (Class 2:1 or above) and a Master level qualification in social science area related to management/business studies, marketing, economics/finance. She/he needs to have an excellent knowledge of English (IELST 7). Also, the candidate needs to be enthusiastic, hard working, well-organised and able to prioritise work demands. She/he needs to work in a full-time basis. Previous research experience would be an advantage as with knowledge of SPSS, and qualitative data analysis software packages. Full research training will be provided.

Topic # 2: Strategy Formulation of Multinationals in South-Eastern Europe:Prior to, During, and After the Financial Crisis

Proposed Supervisors:

- Prof. Mehmet Demirbag (M.Demirbag@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Leslie Szamosi (szamosi@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

The impact of multinationals (MNC's) within the global economy is well documented. Also well documented is the general 'creep' of MNC's from their home markets, to other developed economies and then into emerging markets. The literature today is very clearly focused on the opportunities for such companies in emerging markets with the focus on countries such as China and India. Less well documented within this context is the growing influence and proliferation of MNC's within South-Eastern Europe (SEE).

Following the collapse of communism, the movement toward 'free market economies', and the accession towards European Union integration, MNC's have turned their sights towards SEE. The impact of foreign direct investment within the region is well documented (e.g., Bitzenis, 2008). MNCs' market entry modes have been studied for some countries in the region (Demirbag et al., 2007; 2008), but countries in the SEE region have different types of institutional infrastructure (Mellahi et al., 2009). What is unclear and unstudied is: how MNC's formulate their business strategy within the region, whether these are different or similar to other emerging markets, how strategy is implemented at the local level; and, the influence of the mother company within the SEE subsidiary. Overall, do MNC's stategise SEE as a region or as a set of distinct emerging markets? Are there differences in these views depending on MNC sector (e.g., banking, pharmaceuticals, construction).

SEE was typically a trading route from east to west, a role that it still plays today.

Some possible avenues of research may include (prior to, and post the financial crisis):

- Do MNC's formulate global, regionalized or localized strategic plans within the region?
- Are there common elements to the strategic plans within MNCs throughout the region?
- What aspects of MNC strategy are open to regionalization / localization and what are considered as 'not touchable' within the region?
- How MNCs decide on location of activities for SEE region.
- Regional integration, knowledge transfer and reverse knowledge transfer between subsidiaries of MNEs in the region.
- Do MNC's develop strategic 'clusters' within the region in terms of how they approach them?
- Can a model of MNC strategic formation within the region be developed?

Full-Time or Part-Time Doctoral Study (Fee waivers can be offered only for Full time study)

Candidate's profile:

Good academic background with a Masters level qualification from a good quality institution. An excellent level of English both spoken and written to meet University of Sheffield regulations would be required. Also, an appropriate level of both quantitative and qualitative research skills would be a very positive element. Candidates that have had extensive career experience especially in the HR field (rather than purely academic experience) would have an advantage.

Topic # 3: Knowledge management framework for resilient supply chain

Proposed Supervisors:

- Dr Alok K. Choudhary (A.Choudhary@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Prof. Panagiotis Ketikidis (Ketikidis@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Supply chains are becoming more and more global, networked and information centric. The volume of information is growing at an unprecedented rate in the supply chain. Efficient and effective supply chain requires capturing, sharing, analyzing and managing these information and knowledge along the supply chain network. However, this is extremely challenging and there are number of dimensions along which the complexity arises including Uncertainty and risks, information inaccuracy, information sharing etc. To succeed in today's highly competitive market and complex economic climate; businesses must be flexible, resilient and prepared to deal with uncertainty and risk in order to operate efficiently and effectively in global environments. In addition, effective and efficient supply chain requires sharing of information and knowledge along the supply chain.

To achieve this, ICT systems used for managing the supply chain must interact efficiently, share information, they must be interoperable and actors must be enabled to share that information according to their own business rules. Industry representatives have indicated that if the supply chain efficiency has to be improved and environmental impact to be reduced, a paradigm shift is required in this domain. Collecting and aggregating supply chain information is of fundamental importance for every organization in order to gain competitiveness and to reduce costs. Such needs are common to a large part of the manufacturing supply chain, including car companies, aerospace companies, electronic appliances producers and many others. In each case it may change the scale of the supply chain and the type of products, but the problem of capturing, sharing, analysing and managing the large amount of information is common.

If a supply chain is to be resilient and well-prepared to deal with uncertainty and risk in its global markets, it requires accurate, current and understandable knowledge about different partners, current status of its work and operations. This knowledge must be trustworthy and therefore it is also vitally important that the enterprises also understand the levels of reliability, uncertainty and risk that exist within the available knowledge. Information and knowledge sharing that can promote the development of a high level "supply chain intelligence" pertaining to the identification, analysis and evaluation of risks in the supply chain. Knowledge management can facilitate supply chain collaborative learning and the development of knowledge about risk.

The objective of this PhD work will be to develop a knowledge management framework by application and development of intelligent ICT (e.g. web 2.0, cloud computing, future internet etc) for capturing, analysing, sharing and managing the supply chain information leading to resilient supply chain.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate will have a good first degree (Class 2:1 or above) and a Master level qualification in Engineering, Computer Science or Management Science. The candidate should have a strong IT background. Prior experience of coding in C++ or Java will be advantageous. The candidate needs to have an excellent knowledge of English (IELST 7). Also, the candidate needs to be enthusiastic, hard working, well-organised and able to prioritise work demands. She/he needs to work in a full-time basis. Previous research experience would be an advantage as with knowledge of knowledge and information management although not compulsory. Full research training will be provided.

Topic # 4: Engineering Emergence in Artificial Distributed Systems for Energy and the Environment

Proposed supervisor:

- Dr George Eleftherakis (eleftherakis@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

The last two decades the complexity or scale of some applications rose so fast that a single machine could not handle. The client server paradigm became unable to respond to the user demands in a reliable and efficient manner. Centralized systems are prone to a single point of failure and their overall efficiency was affected by the bottlenecks on the server side.

Two are the main advantages that distributed architectures offer compared to centralised approaches; avoidance of the single point failure problem and better scalability and utilisation of resources. Therefore it seems natural that in recent years systems operating within distributed environments have experienced considerable growth in size and diversity.

At the same time the development of Grid environments, the shift to service oriented architectures, the increased interconnectivity between computer networks, cloud computing, the introduction of the Internet of things leading to an explosive increase of the number of computers connected, moved distributed systems beyond the initial application of facilitating file exchange to a much broader range of domains. But all these led to an increased demand for complex and scalable applications. In order to cope with this demand modern distributed applications must: be able to easily scale up to any number of nodes required; maintain availability even under extremely dynamic conditions; enable efficient discovery of resources in highly dynamic conditions; be able to adopt to the diverse user demands and conditions in the network; maintain a desired level of security in all aspects of operation; require minimal human configuration and management.

Different approaches and architectures in the past offered solutions and satisfied several of these requirements and some hybrid approaches attempted to increase the number of the issues resolved. The last years there is a trend to be inspired by natural systems by introducing bio-inspired properties and behaviours, so that a distributed environment could become a complex adaptive system, in the sense that

adaptation, resilience and self-organization will emerge as a result of simple interactions between peers.

In parallel, an increasing part of the world-wide energy supply is coming from distributed generation of electricity of different sources of electric power. Thus power distribution networks could evolve from a centrally and hierarchically controlled structure into a very big and totally distributed network.

The aim of this work will be to investigate all the above mentioned areas and propose a generic bio-inspired solution based on a set of emergent self-optimising structures and processes which will be the major catalyst for efficiency, scalability and adaptability in a (fully) distributed network. The case study that will be used to demonstrate the applicability of the approach should be taken from the energy and environment domain and could be the control of a distributed energy supply network that would probably require no human interaction or autonomous control of energy for intelligent homes or buildings, waste management etc.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate should possess a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Computer Science or Engineering or other relevant discipline and have a rather strong mathematical background. It is normally expected that the mode of study is F/T.

Topic # 5: Dynamic Monitoring and Adaptation of Service-Based Applications

Proposed supervisors:

- Dr. Anthony Simons (A.J.Simons@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr. Dimitris Dranidis (dranidis@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Service-based applications (SBAs) are increasingly composed of third-party services available over the Internet. Reacting to failures of those third-party services by dynamically adapting the SBAs becomes a key enabler for ensuring reliability. Such a technique is especially significant in the setting of the"Internet of Services", where applications will increasingly be composed from third party services, which are not under the control of the service consumer and thus require that they are (re-)checked during the operation of the SBA to detect failures. There are two important challenges that need to be tackled in order to solve the problem of dynamically reacting to failures in SBA's. The first is the problem of determining when to adapt an SBA. This is especially challenging in the presence of conversational services. A conversational service might fail in the middle of an invocation sequence, in which case adapting the SBA might be costly; e.g., due to the necessary state transfer to an alternative service. The second problem is the problem of adaptation itself; the SBA should be able to self-repair either by changing its internal behavior or by replacing a constituent failed service with another candidate service.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate should be a Computer Science graduate with good knowledge on Software Engineering. Ideally, he should possess a MSc in Software Engineering or a related Master's degree.

Topic # 6: Coping with economic crisis in Greece: the role of transnational family networks

Proposed supervisor:

- Dr. Majella Kilkey (M.Kilkey@sheffield.ac.uk)

Proposed area of research:

This project will examine the role that transnational family networks play in the strategies developed by families living in Greece to 'cope' with the current sustained economic crisis. Its aim is to contribute to the fields of transnational migration studies and family studies by further developing theoretical and empirical knowledge on the 'situatedness' of the interrelationship between geographical distance, care practices and family relations.

In the context of the severe and sustained economic crises affecting countries across Europe, there is an urgent need to understand the lived experiences of individuals and families. Arguably, this is all the more important in familial-based welfare regimes, such as those in much (but not all) of South East Europe, in which 'the family' is expected to play a strong role in the provision of economic and social welfare. Historical patterns of migration (often also a result of challenging economic and /or social conditions) mean that 'family' may be stretched across national borders. An expanding body of research conceptualises such families as 'transnational families', acknowledging that migration does not end with settlement and that migrants maintain regular contacts with their dispersed kin. Family care is central to Bryceson and Vuorela's (2002) definition of transnational families as "families that live some or most of the time separated from each other, yet hold together and create something that can be seen as a feeling of collective welfare and unity, namely 'familyhood', even across national borders" (p.18). Transnational care-giving practices have been found to include financial assistance, as well as emotional and practical support that can be exchanged through the use of ICTs. Research suggests that specific practices may vary with gender, class, ethnicity and stage in life-cycle, as well as in the context of individual/family life-events.

Concern has been raised, however, that the recognition of 'deterritorialised' family care-giving runs the risk of a 'hyper-transnationalism', in which transnational spaces are accorded a privileged analytical position at the expense of the 'territorialised' spaces of nations, regions and localities within which families are materially and culturally situated (Kilkey and Merla 2012). This project seeks to address that concern by situating families' transnational care-giving practices in a specific spatial, temporal and socio-economic context.

Specifically, this project will examine the role of transnational family networks in the strategies developed by families living in Greece, both Greeks and migrants from

elsewhere in South East Europe, to 'cope' with the economic crisis. For example, what role are transnational family networks playing in facilitating the current wave of outward migration (of both Greeks and migrants) from Greece? Are they facilitating return migration for some groups? What has the crisis implied for patterns of transnational financial support and solidarity? What other forms of support (e.g. practical and emotional) are being provided? What factors and processes mediate transnational family support – e.g. generation, gender, class and location. It is anticipated that the project will take the form of a multi-sited qualitative study, involving interviews with families in Greece and their migrant kin members elsewhere.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate will hold a first degree and/or postgraduate qualification in a relevant social science subject, such as sociology, social policy or anthropology. He/she will also have a keen interest in the areas of transnational migration studies and/or family studies. He/she will be proficient in English, Greek and at least one additional language related to the proposal (e.g. Albanian or Bulgarian). However, in the case of the third language, consideration will be given to any language so long as candidates can demonstrate that it will allow for research with a migrant group living in Greece and their families in the country of origin.

Topic # 7: Travelling News: Media Campaigns and Traveller Communities in the EU

Proposed supervisor:

- Dr. Jairo Lugo-Ocando (j.lugo-ocando@sheffield.ac.uk)

Proposed area of research:

This PhD project will look at Media Campaigns directed towards traveller communities across the European Union (EU). In so doing, the PhD research will look at how the media represents and interacts with communities of travellers in the EU, taking as case study traveller communities in countries such as Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom. The project will assess how mainstream media in these countries report these communities and how news about them is articulated across the different news narratives in the context of the editorial policies of those specific media outlets.

Indeed, media campaigns have often been defined as orchestrated efforts to promote specific political goals by means of using media outlets to disseminate a series of political messages in order to mobilise the electorate (Arterton, 1987: 40). William Paisley points out two quite different but complementary definitions of public communication campaigns that can be found in academic literature. One refers to the intention to influence other groups' beliefs and the other focuses on the methods employed, such as the use of promotional messages through mass channels to target audiences (in Dearing and Rogers, 1996: 16). However, this last definition tends to oversimplify the way in which agenda-setting and media campaigns are inherently

part of the same political process. This despite the fact that these campaigns are not necessarily designed and implemented in order to create and reinforce negative attitudes towards specific groups, but to use these negatives stereotypes to mobilise voters. Therefore traveller communities such as Gypsy, Roma and Travellers of Irish Heritage are often subjects of these campaigns as part of wider political strategies to polarise voters for and against specific causes. These media campaigns often represent these communities as 'non-individuals', while criminalising whole sections of the public in order to promote wider political agendas by creating moral panic and 'othering' the political debate in terms of racial discourses. Therefore the analysis of these media campaigns requires recognising the intrinsic narratives and discursive links they articulate within the wider context of national identity and political ideology. The research will therefore focus on media campaigns launched and implemented by the mainstream media in an orchestrated way across the European Union. In so doing, it will look at the case of the mainstream media in the cases of Greece, Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, although the PhD candidate will be able to suggest alternatives to these cases.

To do this, the studentship will explore the ways in which news about travellers is framed and what type of contact/relationship exists -or not- between media outlets and the communities in question. The project will assess editorial policies towards traveller communities in the context of political communication theory. The PhD studentship will develop a mix-methods approach that will draw intellectually from an interdisciplinary understanding of how these campaigns operate. Specific research strategies for this project will be developed in conjunction with the candidate appointed.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate would preferably have an academic background in a related to media and/or journalism. He/she will also have a keen interest in the subject of traveller communities or social exclusion in general. He/she will be proficient in English and it is desirable that he/she will be able to dominate to a working degree at least one additional language related to this proposal (Greek, Italian or Spanish). However, consideration will be given for alternative case study,

a) Where candidates can demonstrate an interest in another language and place rather than does proposed in this project,
b) Where evidence of orchestrated media campaigns in relation to traveller communities can be suggested.

Topic # 8: Empowering children and youth with special educational needs to make decisions about themselves

Proposed Supervisors:

- Professor Jan Horwath (j.horwath@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Efrosyni Kalyva (kalyva@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

This PhD project will provide the successful applicant with an opportunity to explore ways of empowering children and youth with special educational needs. The focus of the studentship will be on ways in which these young people make decisions about their own lives, for example, schooling, relationships, social activities. To date, particularly in South East Europe, decisions for this population, are based on the views of professionals and parents with minimal or no input by or on on behalf of the children and youth. However, the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN CRC) article 12 (the right of children to express their opinion freely in all matters and procedures affecting the child) has led to an increased acknowledgement of children's 'expertise' in relation to their lives. Moreover, there are very few studies conducted with children and youth with special educational needs as to how to facilitate greater decision-making by these young people about their lives: none of the existing studies have been undertaken in South East Europe.

In this context, the proposed aim of this project is to explore how children and youth with special educational needs view their participation in their education and in their socialising activities in and out of school. It is also of interest to identify some factors that may influence their experiences of participation (such as their age, the type of their disability (mental versus physical), their gender, the type of their schooling, cultural impact, attitudes of parents, peers, and so on). It is anticipated that the PhD candidate will draw on the findings from this study to make practical recommendations, including developing a framework to enhance the meaningful participation of children and youth with special educational needs in decision-making about their own lives.

Candidate's Profile:

- relevant first degree or post-graduate qualification (for example, psychology, social work, education , childhood studies, sociology)
- a post-graduate qualification that demonstrates the candidate has an understanding of qualitative research methods
- good knowledge of English and the language where the research will take place
- ability to work as part of a team
- ability to take initiatives
- good communication skills

Desirable Requirements:

- work experience with young people with special educational needs
- awareness of issues related to education, culture, service provision for individuals with special educational needs in South East Europe, particularly the identified country for the research

Topic # 9: Self-disgust: exploring the interface between cognition and emotion in depression

Proposed supervisors:

- Prof Paul Overton (P.G.Overton@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Ana Vivas (vivas@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Disgust is increasingly recognised as playing a significant role in a range of mental health problems, such as specific phobias, contamination-based obsessive-compulsive disorder, eating disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder. Disgust itself is a heterogeneous construct, and recent research has discovered an important mediating role for disgust directed at the self – 'self disgust' – in depression, particularly in mediating the connection between dysfunctional depressive thoughts and depressive symptoms (Overton et al., 2008; Simpson et al., 2010). However, the relationship between thoughts and emotions in this context has yet to be explored. In particular, what happens at the interface between depressive thoughts and dysfunctional emotions (self-disgust) is unknown. This project will explore this relationship using subjects drawn from the general population, which our previous research suggests express depressive thoughts at a range of intensities. In addition to exploring the connection between thoughts and emotions at 'baseline', we will also use techniques for manipulating those thoughts (intensifying or reducing). Emotions will be measured both by self report and also by physiological indices (facial expressions, heart rate, skin conductance, EEG measures). Studies will be directed at the following questions: How 'automatic' is the relationship between depressive thoughts and emotion, and is there a temporal offset between thoughts and their emotional consequences? How pure is the connection between thoughts and emotions – i.e., do depressive thoughts only give rise to self-disgust, or are they also accompanied by other emotions (basic and/or complex)? Is the relationship between thoughts and emotions unidirectional, or do dysfunctional emotions, once generated, have the power to change cognitions? Is it possible to generalise the discovered rule of connection between thoughts and emotions beyond depressive thoughts? For example, how is the connection between thoughts and emotions affected when thoughts are disordered, as in schizophrenia?

The interface between thoughts and emotions has received comparatively little attention and the interface between depressive thoughts and self-disgust virtually none. This is an important omission, given that current psychological therapies for depression, including cognitive behaviour therapy, are only moderately successful (reviewed by Simpson et al., 2010). A better understanding of the cognitive-emotional interface will help to reshape existing therapies, and by an increasing emphasis on emotion (more or less ignored in current therapeutic regimes) may pave the way to new types of therapy. Self disgust itself is receiving an increasing amount of attention as it is discovered that it plays a role in an expanding range of mental health problems. As a consequence, we anticipate that the work will have considerable impact at the clinical level and is likely to be of interest to a wide range of clinical non-clinical psychologists.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate should hold a Bachelor degree in Psychology or related disciplines, and ideally should be able to demonstrate further post-graduate qualifications, or experience, on research with neurophysiological measures (i.e., EEG, ERPs). The candidate is also expected to have a good knowledge of research methods. The mode of study is F/T.

Special Requirements:

Computer Psychology lab, and software to create and run computerized experiments (already provided by CITY psychology department), and EEG recording system (available in research group of Ana Vivas with Aristotle University).

Topic # 10: Healthy Life Expectancy in South East Europe: A study of the influence of social factors on cognitive decline with ageing.

Proposed supervisors:

- Prof Alan Walker (A.C.Walker@sheffield.ac.uk)
- Dr Ana Vivas (vivas@city.academic.gr)

Proposed area of research:

Already in 2004, Walker pointed out that the population of older people (above 65 years old) had increased 6% since the 1960s, this number is expected to further increase to 45% in the years between 2008 and 2030 (Walker et al, 2011). The increase in life expectancy came about with the latest advances in biomedicine, and the economic and social changes in the last century. A downside of the increase of life expectancy though, is a greater risk for cognitive impairments due to ageing and related neurodegenerative diseases. Intact cognitive abilities are crucial for the conduct of many daily activates such as remembering to take medication, and driving on a busy road, and to maintain independence. Consequently, it is important to indentify and explore the factors that influence cognitive ageing; with an emphasis on factors that have a positive effect on cognitive function and thus promote healthy ageing. A great amount of research has been conducted in the last decades in the field of cognitive psychology and neuroscience. These studies have concluded that several changes in the brain (e.g., dopamine activity), may be responsible for problems in selective attention, working memory and episodic memory associated with ageing (see Drag & Bieliauskas, 2010 for a recent review). However, none of the theories proposed in these fields are able to account for the great increase in heterogeneity and variance in cognitive performance observed in older people (Ardila, 2007). One of the reasons may be that cognitive ageing has a multi-dimensional influence, and in addition to the biological and individual factors we need to take into account environmental and social factors. For instance, studies have shown that education and intelligence may work as a buffer for cognitive decline. Thus years of formal education seem to account for a significant amount of the

variance in cognitive performance with age (Drag & Bieliaskas, 2010). Little research though has been conducted to investigate the influence of social factors. We know now that socio-economical status is one of the main determinants of cognitive development (Stevens et al., 2009). In relation to ageing, few studies have addressed the influence of social participation, integration and social support on cognitive decline (see Hertzog, 2008, for a review). Overall, they suggest that social support (eg., size of social network, marital status) has a positive influence on the cognitive function of older people. However, there are some mixed results due mostly to methodological issues, such as, how they assess cognitive decline/function, cross sectional vs longitudinal studies, definition of social support. There is also evidence of associations between social participation and broader (physical and mental) well-being (Bowling, 1998; Walker et al, 2011). Based on the above, this project will explore the influence of social factors, such as social participation and social support, on cognitive decline in ageing. A second objective will be to conduct a comparative study of Healthy Life Expectancy with countries from South East Europe, since the data on ageing from these countries are rather scarce.

Candidate's profile:

The candidate is expected to have a multi-disciplinary capacity, and hold a Bachelor degree in Social Sciences. S/he should also demonstrate knowledge and interest on quantitative research methods and analyses. The mode of study is F/T.