



First ELLIS Programs launched

Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of Baden-Württemberg invests 1 Mio Euros

Embargo until September 4, 2019 at 5pm

San Sebastián, Spain – The members of the European Laboratory for Learning & Intelligent Systems (ELLIS), a not-for-profit organization whose goal is to establish a network of European research labs in the field of machine learning, have launched a set of ELLIS Programs at a meeting in San Sebastián in Spain. ELLIS Programs are cross-national research projects, with each being directed by two to three outstanding machine learning (ML) scientists. Each team focusses on an area that has the potential to move the needle in modern AI, thus allowing Europe to shape the technological and social AI revolution.

As a result of an international review process led by Yoshua Bengio, Professor at the University of Montreal, with the help of the [CIFAR Learning in Machines and Brains Program](#), 11 ELLIS Programs were selected. The Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts of the State of Baden-Württemberg in Germany is funding them with one million Euros. Using the funding, each ELLIS Program can hold one workshop in 2019 and two workshops in 2020. [Cyber Valley](#) will be co-organizer of the workshops, many of which will take place in Baden-Württemberg, at the Oberwolfach Research Institute for Mathematics as well as during an upcoming Machine Learning Summer School in Tübingen.

Each ELLIS Program comprises around 10 to 15 outstanding researchers who have all made a name for themselves at one of the leading ML research institutions in Europe, among them ETH Zürich, Cambridge, Oxford, the Universities of Amsterdam and Tübingen, the French research institute for digital sciences (INRIA), and several Max Planck Institutes.

Each Program focusses on one high-impact problem area in the field of ML (find the full list [here](#)). For instance, they investigate the principles and methods of robust machine learning, quantum ML, how to connect classical computer vision algorithms and modern ML, or how the sensorimotor behavior of robots interacting with the physical world can be improved by ML approaches.

There are also ELLIS Programs that are about human-centric ML, where the researchers investigate how ML approaches can be incorporated to help ensure widespread benefits to and acceptance from the public by guaranteeing transparency, clear accountability, interpretability and fairness of the algorithmic decisions. Another Program bears the title

“ELLIS Health” where ML approaches are implemented to improve the diagnosis of diseases. And perhaps most pressingly one team investigates how machine learning can be put to use to better model and understand the earth system and help understand and reduce the effects of climate change.

In San Sebastián, the first six winners of the ELLIS Ph.D. Award were also announced. The awards are sponsored by the Kühborth Stiftung GmbH and have been established to recognize and encourage outstanding research achievements during the dissertation phase of outstanding students working in the field of artificial intelligence and machine learning including related fields such as computer vision and robotics. This year, the awards were given for the previous three years, thereafter they will be given annually. From a set of very strong nominations, an international committee of renowned experts chose the following scholars as ELLIS Ph.D. Award winners:

Maria Barrett (U Copenhagen, Denmark)
Wittawat Jitkrittum (Gatsby, UC London, UK)
Alex Kendall (Cambridge U, UK)
Diederik Kingma (U Amsterdam, Netherlands)
Anastasia Pentina (IST Austria, Austria)
Siyu Tang (MPI Informatics, Germany)

ELLIS was initiated in April 2018 in an open letter published by some of the leading European AI scientists warning that machine learning was at the heart of a technological and social revolution in which Europe was in danger of being left behind. In order to meet this challenge, the scientists stressed that the outstanding research centers in Europe should join forces. An inspiration for ELLIS came from the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), Europe's flagship lab for the life sciences, an intergovernmental organization with more than 80 independent research groups operating from six sites throughout Europe.

ELLIS' aspiration is to become the leading open science AI organization in the world, enabling Europe to play an important role in the current scientific and social AI revolution by attracting outstanding machine learning scientists and empowering them to generate scientific, economic, and societal innovation. Further in the future, this European research network is to be a top employer in the field of machine learning and adjacent fields, and a leading institution for training and education of the next generation. In addition to the newly launched ELLIS Programs, so called “ELLIS Institutes” and “ELLIS Units” are to be established across Europe. Neither units nor institutes need to be built from scratch but can leverage existing structures and centers of excellence. A call for proposals for ELLIS Units was made in San Sebastián, as a first step towards the creation of ELLIS Institutes.

<https://ellis.eu/>

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