Interdisciplinary Centre for Security, Reliability and Trust (SnT) at the University of Luxembourg

Luxembourg’s IT expert Lionel Briand receives the most prestigious research grant from the European Research Council

Luxembourg, 23 March 2016 – Professor Lionel Briand, FNR PEARL Chair and Vice Director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Security, Reliability and Trust (SnT) at the University of Luxembourg, has been awarded an “Advanced Grant” by the European Research Council (ERC) for his research in the field of software reliability and security. He is the first Luxembourg-based researcher to receive an Advanced Grant, the most prestigious of the European Commission grants. Briand will be receiving 2.3 million Euros in funding over the next five years. This funding adds to a series of recent successes at the University of Luxembourg in acquiring research funding, including two ERC Consolidator Grants.

Briand’s research programme “Testing the untestable (TUNE)” focuses on improving testing methods for highly complex, software-intensive systems whose dependable operation is of critical importance. Examples include decision and assistance systems in aircraft and vehicles, information systems in financial institutions, and control systems in power and nuclear plants, where any failure would pose a serious risk. Relying on models of the system and its environment, together with advanced artificial intelligence techniques, Briand’s research tackles the problem of bringing more automation and effectiveness to the testing and verification of such systems, which are inherently difficult to test. The ultimate goal is to increase their dependability (reliability, security, safety) within time and resource constraints.

“I feel most privileged to be awarded such a prestigious grant. This was my first time applying for an ERC grant. I feel truly honoured,” Briand says with delight. “I am very grateful to the FNR and SnT for their unwavering support over the last four years since I moved to Luxembourg, as well as to my colleagues in the Software Verification and Validation Laboratory for their help throughout the application process,” the researcher adds. Briand now wants to use this new grant to expand his research collaborations with industry partners in Luxembourg and Europe. “I am highly optimistic that this grant will set an example for promoting public-private research partnerships, an important mode of research and innovation that needs to be further nurtured and developed in Luxembourg,” concludes Briand.

“This ERC Advanced Grant demonstrates SnT’s ability to combine outstanding academic research with high industrial impact. Although the University is small, outstanding scientific results can be achieved through strategic and focused efforts,” says Professor Björn Ottersten, Director of SnT and an ERC Advanced Grant recipient in 2009.

University president Rainer Klump confirms: “The University is most delighted and proud of Professor Briand’s achievement. It demonstrates our research strength in the latest digital techniques; it reflects our targeted support of applications in the major European research programmes and it testifies to our close working relationships with industry partners in Luxembourg. All three areas are key components of our strategy and will be further expanded upon in the coming years.”

Marc Schiltz, Secretary General of the Fond National de la Recherche points out: “This is a signal success for SnT and for Luxembourg. It also lends credibility to FNR's strategy to attract outstanding scientists like Prof.
Briand to Luxembourg in order to build critical mass in key research areas that support economic development and societal progress."

About SnT: Launched in 2009 by the University of Luxembourg, SnT is an internationally recognised leading research institute that together with external partners establishes Luxembourg as a European centre of excellence and innovation for secure, reliable, and trustworthy information and communications technologies (ICT). In order to create a great impact, SnT follows an interdisciplinary research approach, taking not only technical aspects into account but also addressing business, human, and regulatory issues. www.uni.lu/snt

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Contact: lionel.briand@uni.lu

Personal webpage: http://www.en.uni.lu/snt/people/lionel_briand/

Video: www.uni.lu/snt/research/software_verification_and_validation_lab

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Britta Schlüter
Université du Luxembourg
Responsable du Service de Communication
T +352 46 66 44 6563 GSM +352 621 289801
britta.schlueter@uni.lu

Didier Goossens
Fonds National de la Recherche Luxembourg
Head of Corporate Communication
T +352 261925-43
didier.goossens@fnr.lu