Scuola Superiore Meridionale

Inaugural Workshop on Active Inference in Italy: Free-Energy across engineering, complex systems and neuroscience

23rd and 24th June 2026

Originating in computational neuroscience, the Free Energy Principle and Active Inference have emerged as a unifying framework spanning artificial intelligence, decision-making, and increasingly, engineering applications. This interdisciplinary workshop provides a forum for researchers and students to explore these ideas from multiple perspectives. It features tutorial sessions designed for those seeking an accessible introduction to the Free Energy Principle and Active Inference, alongside talks that highlight contemporary challenges, emerging research directions, and cross-disciplinary opportunities. In addition to invited presentations and roundtables, the workshop includes a spotlight presentation sessions to offer students and early-career researchers the opportunity to present and discuss their work.

Reserve your spot: https://tinyurl.com/2yn5tayk
Registration is free but seats are limited: hurry up!

Call for spotlight presentations: https://tinyurl.com/wvrs8jxv

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE

Prof. Giovanni Russo
Board Member of the MERC PhD Program at Scuola Superiore Meridionale
Associate Professor of Automatic Control University of Salerno

Dr. Giovanni Pezzulo
Research Director at the Institute of Cognitive Sciences and Technologies
Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche (CNR), Rome

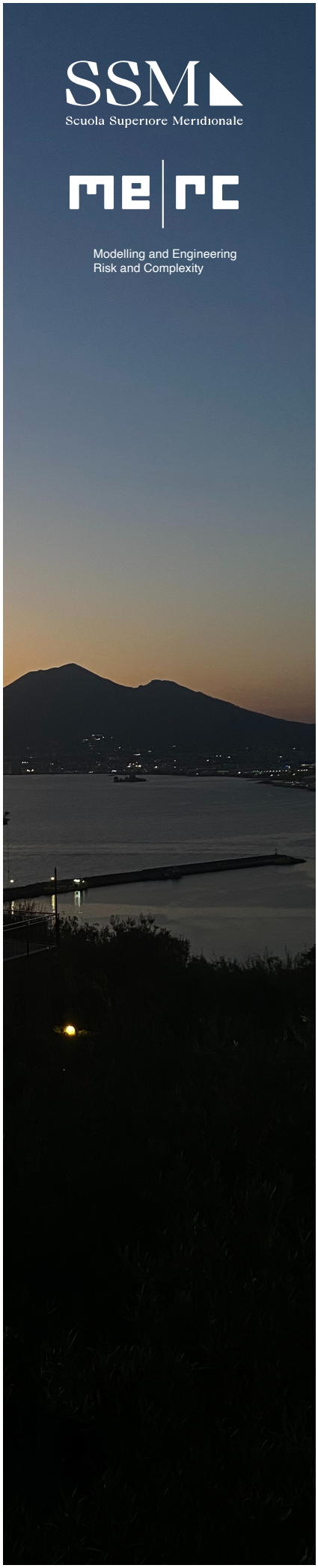
PROGRAM

23th June 2026

Via Mezzocannone, 4, Napoli – II piano

10:00	Institutional Greetings and Workshop Introduction. **Arturo De Vivo** (Responsabile della SSM) and **Mario di Bernardo** (PhD Coordinator MERC)
10:30	**G. Pezzulo** – Sequential Planning and Spatial Navigation Through Active Inference
11:00	**R. Bufacchi** (EMBL Rome) – Normative Models of Ethological Behaviour: from zebrafish, through mice to humans
11:30	Coffee Break
12:00	**A. Maselli** (Uni. Messina) – An active inference account of intentional and unintentional motor behavior
12:30	**D. Maisto** (CNR) – Collective Cognition Emerging from the Free Energy Principle
13:00	Lunch Break
15:00	**F. Bullo** (UCSB, USA) – Neural Circuits and Energy Systems for Predictive Coding
15:30	**G. Russo** – A Control-Theoretical Approach to the Free Energy Principle
16:00	Coffee Break
16:30	**M. Torzoni** (PoliMi) – Decision-Making and Learning in Mechanical Systems via Free-Energy Minimization
17:00	**Spotlight Presentations**
20:00	Dinner

24th June 2026

Via Mezzocannone, 4, Napoli – II piano

09:30	**P. Sacco** (Uni. Chieti/Pescara) – Collective Intelligence as Distributed Precision Optimization: an active inference approach to metabolically efficient social cognition
10:00	**G. Pagnoni** (UniMoRe) – Probing Intentional Engagement of Mental Effort With Active Inference
10:30	Coffee Break
11:00	**Fireside Chat with Karl Friston** [Remote]
11:30	**Roundtable**