

Marie Curie Fellows Association

Letter to members

February 2007

Dear MCFA Members,

welcome to another issue of the "Letter to Members"!

In this Letter:

<i>Editorial</i>	1	<i>Women in Science News</i>	6
<i>Tasks of Board members</i>	2	<i>Re-Launch of the Science Policy Panel</i>	6
<i>Call for the Advisory Board</i>	2	<i>News from the Board</i>	7
<i>Publications and Communications</i>	3	<i>Speakers Corner</i>	9
<i>Career Development</i>	5	<i>Diary of events</i>	9
<i>National Groups and Mailing lists</i>	5		

Editorial

It has been two months since the new board took over for the MCFA... two months in which we have been tackling problems and trying to solve urgent issues for the Association.

First of all, you should know that a new website has been under preparation for some time now, together with Josef, our webmaster. We expect to launch this website very soon. The current website has grown in complexity with the years and it has become unmanageable. The future webpage will be much fresher and contain utilities that the MCFA needs badly, including more support for the National Groups.

Due to our focus on the new website, some links are not working or information is not being updated on the old one. We apologize for any inconvenience this might have caused! We are devoted to bringing a new and fully functional webpage for our members very soon, so please be patient a little while longer.

Membership renewal is of extreme importance to keep the MCFA alive. Thanks to all of you who have already renewed your membership by paying the fee for 2007!

Please note that the deadline for renewing the membership is February 28th. After this date the status of those who have not renewed their membership will be set to "MCFA affiliate". You will of course be able to upgrade to regular membership by paying your membership fee at any time during the coming year.

Please, support the MCFA! We are working really hard to keep the Association functioning, while also trying to consolidate priority areas as well as identifying future areas to develop. Your opinions are at least as vital as your membership fee, therefore we would be thrilled if you would heed the *call for the advisory board*, which you will find in page 2 of this "Letter to Members".

Tasks of board members

After the distribution of positions in the board, we continued to distribute some of the actual tasks of the board. We invite you to join in fulfilling these tasks! If you have some information, want to give support or need input in one of these areas, please contact us!

- Gianna, Maria Antonietta, Vanessa and Antonella are leading the work on the National Groups
- Guggi leads the membership drive
- Ivan leads work on Sponsorship and Fundraising
- Didier and Christos lead the relations to EC and other organizations, Christos also coordinates IT issues.
- Vanessa and Natalia lead PR issues.

We are open to your ideas!
Contact us!

Call for the Advisory Board:

We hereby launch an official call for qualified persons to join the Advisory Board of the MCFA. The main task of the Advisory Board is to provide advice and assistance to the Administrative Board of the MCFA, as well as taking some responsibilities within the MCFA with specific tasks. **Deadline for applications is the 15th of March 2007.**

This is an official call for the following positions:

1. **PR Associate:** This person will assist Vanessa Diaz and Natalia Balcazar in the Public Relations of the MCFA. Among others, his/her tasks will include: liaise with partners organisations and the media, write articles to promote the MCFA, make new contacts. This person must be proactive and motivated.
2. **Business Associate:** This person will work with other members of the board to define a business plan for the MCFA. Experience in Marketing and Business administration is required. This is a senior position, therefore we are looking for an experienced MCFA member. Among others his/her responsibilities are to help create a clean profile for the MCFA, to help us identify our needs and to better characterize the different groups within the Association we are catering to. Estimated work load: 1-2 hours/week distributed along the week plus time for meeting(s) (virtual or physical meetings) with the board and final recommendations. Profile: Experienced researcher with analytical skills and relevant experience in this area.
3. **Editorial Team:** People involved in this task will supervise the monthly "Letter to Members" and Newsletter (4 editions per year). They will work closely with Antonella di Trapani and Guggi Kofod. They will bring up new ideas for each issue and will follow the preparation of these publications. In principle, this task will involve 4 hours every couple of weeks (for layout and formatting) plus time required to solicit contributions. Profile: motivated, with a taste for design. Reliable, consistent. Can meet tight deadlines.
4. **Science Policy Advisors:** This call is targeting people with knowledge of

European Institutions to assist the board in publishing statements and to follow to developments of Science Policy in Europe. We also welcome people interested in Science Policy, but no intention to join the Advisory Board, to instead join the "Science Policy Panel". News about the re-launch of the Science Policy Panel are published below.

A workload of a few hours per month is expected, but load can vary.

Profile: Experience in European policy is a plus. Consistent, reliable. Good team player.

5. **Science-Industry Advisors:** We are looking for MCFA Members who have a relevant experience in Industry and who would like to build up a bridge between Industry and the MCFA.

Responsibilities will include making contacts and eventually, obtaining sponsorships as well as providing feedback from Industry to the board and the SP panel.

A workload of a few hours per month is expected.

Profile: Industrial experience would be a plus. Independent, self-driven, communication skills necessary.

6. **MCFA Annals discussion team:** We are looking for MCFA Members who want to discuss the future of the MCFA Annals and to present a project for the future MCFA Annals to the Board.

Expected work load: variable, but expect a tight deadline in a few months time when asking for report of the discussions.

Profile: Motivated individuals, with team spirit, common sense and a genuine interest in the process of editing a Journal for the MCFA. Former members of the Annals editorial team are very much encouraged to participate in this discussion group.

7. **Fund Raising Advisor/Campaigner:**

We are looking for an extremely motivated individual who will orient the board in fund raising campaigns for the MCFA. This person will work closely with Ivan Montanari and Natalia Balcazar. It is important to notice that this person will not carry on necessarily the fund raising campaign which could require external input, although a certain degree of self confidence is required.

Profile: Motivated, experience in fund raising would be a plus, but not essential. Reliable, business-driven, likes challenges, able to meet targets.

If you are interested in joining the Advisory Board, even if you are not sure in which area you could work. Send your application (CV + short motivation e-mail) to board@mariecurie.org, with 'Advisory Board' in the subject line.

It cannot be underestimated how important it is that we get YOUR support. This is one of the best chances you will ever get to directly influence European Science Policy towards Mobile Researchers!

Publications and Communications:

- ***Call for papers for MCFA Newsletter: Two new permanent sections***

We are collecting contributions for the next issue of **MCFA Newsletter**. The Newsletter differs in scope from the ***Letter to members***, which is normally sent out once a month and presents an overview of current activities. The **MCFA Newsletter** on the other hand features short scientific articles presenting results of your projects in a way understandable to non-experts; reports from past conferences; short notes from

the mailing lists; book reviews; interviews; useful tips; news from the ERA; and a list of planned events.

We will be including two new sections.

The first will be called **"Experiencing the World"**, which will let you share your experience as MC Fellow in any country, speaking about your difficulties and joys in your new environment. The second will be called **"The Pierre and Marie Curie Diaries"**, about your family experiences and a reflection about how your life and the life of your other half and children, have been affected by your mobility decisions.

Deadline for the next issue submission is 15th March 2007. Please write to office@mariecurie.org with subject line 'Newsletter Spring 2007'.

➤ **Science Careers: No more personal profiles**

This week we were informed that due to new editorial decisions, Science Careers has decided not to continue collaborating with us on the personal profiles.

However they would like to keep a collaboration with us and they will interview the MCFA on careers issues, or refer the association to their readers when appropriate.

They have published an article on the funding opportunities available to young scientists under FP7, and they have put a link to the MCFA to highlight our association:

[http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/-career_development/previous_issues/-articles/2007_02_23/career_a0700026/\(parent\)/68](http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/-career_development/previous_issues/-articles/2007_02_23/career_a0700026/(parent)/68)

➤ **Nature Jobs: Collaboration**

Two articles about the MCFA will be published in Nature Jobs soon.

The first one, about non-traditional post-docs who go to Industry would be available in the next few weeks. The second article, is called "Researchers without Frontiers" is dedicated entirely to the MCFA and shall be published soon.

➤ **EURES & you Newsletter**

"EURES & you" the newsletter of the European Employment Service is now on-line.

Go to the EURES portal homepage <http://eures.europa.eu> and click on "EURES & You Newsletters". The next webpage will let you change language and/or unsubscribe the newsletter.

➤ **Invitation for internship applications**

Related to the **MCFA Newsletter**, we invite applications for internship (up to 3 months) in the MCFA. Journalism students, graphic designers, journal and media managers are encouraged to submit the application.

Please send enquires and applications to office@mariecurie.org with subject line 'Internship'.

➤ **New MCFA logo: Update**

A young and enthusiastic graphic designer, Jennyfer Nespereira, is willing to help us with the design of our new logo. Jennyfer will be working for free and she will come up with ideas for the new logo that hopefully should be approved by the board soon.

➤ **The MCFA in Wikipedia: Update**

Dario Taraborelli, a MC Fellow at UCL, has offered his help for the MCFA Wikipedia article. Details about this initiative will be published soon after the update of the Web Page.

Career Development:

➤ *Survey on researchers' mobility is finished*

Please have a look at the MCFA survey on Researcher's mobility and give us your opinion! The **survey takes only a few minutes** of your time, and data will be treated confidentially.

Please follow this link to access the survey: http://www.mariecurie.org/phpESP-/public/survey.php?name=mobility_MCF

The aim of this survey was to better understand the contribution of Marie Curie Fellows to developing a skilled labour force in both sending and host countries. While it is undisputed that a research period overseas forges new skills and knowledge, the role of mobility in forming and in reallocating knowledge across countries is at times debated, particularly with regards to skilled labour movements (e.g. the 'brain drain').

For more information contact Max Tani massimiliano.tani@unsw.adfa.edu.au.

National Groups and Mailing Lists

➤ *News from MCFA National Groups and Call for National Coordinators of MCFA national groups*

National Groups are at the heart of the Agenda of the new board. This year we would like to give a definite impulse to National Groups (NG) and to help National Coordinators. There is a strong commitment within the Board to provide you with all the help and assistance possible, because we recognize that the NGs are the backbone of the MCFA.

This year, we will try to give you a firm hand, by adapting IT resources to your needs and by providing more personalized guidelines, useful workshops and

specific tasks. We emphasize that we are going to devote a great part of our time to help active National Groups. We will reorganize our activities around people who have the ambition to help the MCFA and its members in Europe and beyond, therefore we will have to ask for a real commitment from those amongst you who will be in charge.

An activity report for each National Group has been asked to assess the level of activity and necessities of different National Groups. After the assessment report (deadline is 28-02-07), specific calls will be published to look for MCFA members who are willing to become National MCFA Groups Coordinators and help the existing coordinators, or set up new MCFA National Groups.

For more information please get in touch with us by email: office@mariecurie.org.

A list of mailing list for the different National Groups can be found at the **Communication** area of the current web site.

➤ *New Coordinator of the French National Group*

We welcome Marianne Schaedel who will be in charge of the French National Group. She will be replacing Aldo de Andrea.

To help Marianne in her first weeks, we warmly encourage MCFA members to get in touch with her with your contact details, Marianne.Schaedel@ens-lyon.fr.

➤ *New Coordinator(s) of the UK National Group*

Vanessa Diaz, who has been coordinating the UK group since February last year, is looking for people who might be interested in coordinating with her the MCFA UK group. A brief activity report of the UK group is available in the DF (National Groups → Assessment 2007).

The idea is to distribute tasks among the interested people and to widen the "Coordinator's team".

➤ *MCFA UK Welcome Pack*

Eric Buchlin, a MCFA member at Imperial College will coordinate the update of the MCFA UK Welcome Pack.

➤ *Blog of the MCFA UK National Group on-line again!*

A new version of the MCFA UK Blog is available now. Just go to the main page: www.mariecurie.org and you will see a new (green) banner for the UK Blog.

Women in Science News:

MCFA is committed to the promotion of women scientists and is sensitive to gender issues in science, which has led to the establishment of the "Women in Science" (WiS) working group.

The WiS working group has been active since fall 2006, working to promote mobility inside the women scientists community, to provide feedback from the European Community on policy issues regarding in particular mobility, and to collaborate with other associations and organizations active in the same fields. The general theme is to deal with women in science issues, like for example 'glass ceilings' and 'sticky floors': terms that describe the possible causes for the high gap existing between men and women scientists numbers at the top levels of public and private research institutions.

The main goal is to find ways to promote the participation and motivation of women with regard to science and therefore finding and analyzing reasons why women face problems or give up at the high levels of the science field.

Members of the group are presently: Raffaella Di Sante, Gianna Avellis, Antonella Di Trapani, Vanessa Diaz-Zuccarini, Simona Vonica, Svetlana G. Baca and Silvia Giordani.

The group was present at the EPWS (European Platform of Women Scientists) launch event which took place in Brussels, October 20, 2006. MCFA is now applying for full membership to the EPWS. Actual membership details will be discussed at the General Assembly of the Platform next April in Brussels.

The group took also part in the conference "Science policies meet reality: Gender, Women and Youth in Science in Central and Eastern Europe" which was held in Prague last year, in December. In that occasion, Raffaella Di Sante and Gianna Avellis presented a paper entitled: "Women in the MCFA: stories of mobility and life" which described the experiences of the WiS members during their fellowships.

Future activity of the group include a detailed survey inside the MCFA regarding current and past working situation of the women fellows, working-life balance, career development. The group intends also to submit proposals in the 7th Framework Programme in order to support and enhance its future activity, in collaboration with associations working in the same field.

Re-Launch of the Science Policy Panel

The MCFA is committed to forward our concerns and ideas to Policy Makers in Europe. Therefore, we are re-launching the "Science Policy Panel".

Science Policy will be coordinated by our Chair, Antonella di Trapani, who will have a team of experts and junior MCFA Members to make sure the MCFA is heard.

Among other Senior Members, the Science Policy Panel is proud to count on Vassiliki Papatsiba and Jaroslav Mysiak.

Vassiliki is a mobility expert, and a Marie-Curie Intra European Fellow (Senior), working at Oxford. Vassiliki has written dozens of articles and several books on mobility and on the way policy initiatives shape the future of researchers and their institutions.

Jaroslav Mysiak is the previous Chair of the MCFA and has been actively involved in Science Policy within the Association.

Other actively participating board members are: Vanessa Diaz, Guggi Kofod, Didier Edouga, Gianna Avellis and Natalia Balcazar.

If you are interested in participating in Science Policy, please contact us. Former board members and people working in SP are more than welcome.

If you want to learn, but feel you don't have the experience, please contact us. We are trying to form the next generations of MCFA members. The fresh approach of new people in different working groups is always welcome, since it usually provides an unbiased and unorthodox view on old issues. Everybody is invited!

If you are interested, please write an e-mail to: board@mariecurie.org with the subject: "Science Policy Panel".

News from the Board:

➤ Fourth Stakeholders' Meeting: "The European Institute of Technology (EIT): the draft Legal Instrument"

This meeting was held in Brussels on Monday, 15 January 2007. Natalia Balcazar assisted as MCFA representant.

The EIT pre-decision proposal (more information can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eit/index_en.html) will be presented at the Council for approval at the end of this year.

The EIT should be a new organisation which improves the innovation aspects of Europe, joining Education, Research and Innovation. The participation of Industry is seen as necessary to close the innovation gap with USA and Japan.

The EIT will work through Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) that will mix Research, Education and Business Institutions – bestowing (among others) European Degrees that should be recognised and accepted in all Member States. The KICs will acquire enough critical mass to reach objectives not achievable with the current organisations. Flexibility and independence should also be very important aspects of the KICs. The size of one KIC should be (at least): 500 support staff, 500 research and teaching staff, 600 MS students and 400 PhD students, with approx. 200 Mio. Euros budget per year.

EIT should start to work with a Governing Board in 2008, opening the first Call for KICs at 2009. The first two KICs should be in operation in 2010. Until 2013, four more KICs should start their work.

A more detailed report with the presentations of Commissioner Figel' and Director General Ms. Odile Quintin can be found at the Discussion Forum under "EIT stakeholders meeting" (www.mariecurie.org/cgi-bin/discus/show.cgi?45774/59105).

➤ Meeting at the Royal Society: "Should government do more to create a career structure for young researchers?"

The MCFA attended a meeting at the Royal Society, to discuss the lack of careers perspective for postdocs. The minutes of the meeting can be found in the UK Blog and information has been extracted from there for this short report.

Basically, the answer to the question "should the government do more to provide a career structure for postdocs" was yes.

Sir Graeme Davies said that if the government's science and innovation agenda was to be delivered there must be successful career paths for researchers in both industry and academia. The "sequential post doc" pattern – three or more three year terms – was no longer right. Employment legislation had given those who had been employed on contracts for two years rights which were virtually identical to those of employees; there was no reason, therefore, why universities should not offer open ended contracts. Reports by UUK (the Concordat), the RCUK, and HEFCE had all provided valuable material; they had explained how research careers could be managed so as to sustain the best researchers in academia, how to develop career guidance, in service training, promote diversity, and attract international students.

The Good Management Practice project (GMP64) for HEFCE had outlined in detail a framework for the good management of researchers, from induction processes in the first three months, consistent staff review and finally, advice on career options and opportunities. But the advice had not been embedded in Universities; there was still much poor practice. This might well be that the advice had not got down to the Principal Investigators (PIs) who were basically responsible for implementing the advice but might have neither the skills or motivation to do so.

Dr. John Bothwell, who was representing the National Research Staff Association (NRSA) said that the PI, the university and the funding bodies had different priorities for the researcher and none of them saw helping the researcher in his/her career as essential. It would be for the benefit of

all if researchers were able to work at what they were good at but there needed to be structures that enabled them to pursue careers that recognized that stability had to be balanced against mobility. A researcher needed more control over his/her career, more information about what opportunities were available in his own institution and elsewhere; in short, information, opportunity, responsibility and recognition.

A principal theme in the following discussion was the role of PIs. They were clearly the essential element in motivating and managing researchers. But they had other responsibilities as well – notably securing the funding for their research teams and accepting responsibility for its use. Perhaps the close link between the PI and the researcher should be modified, so that the researcher would be less dependent on the PI's interest and ability in managing him. But this could be disadvantageous in diluting the responsibility of the PI for management and in some cases, weakening the team working which was the essence of much progress.

The proper framework for researchers' careers was already there, in the documents cited by Sir Graeme Davies and institutions which did not insist on its implementation should feel themselves at risk in applying for future funding. Research is a professional business and must be managed professionally. There should be no excuse for PIs to say they were too preoccupied with other matters to give the time to manage their staff professionally; a senior post, in any field or sector carried with it management as well as professional responsibilities: they must proceed in tandem.

In our view, it is ethically unjustifiable to keep people on short term contracts if there is not a career structure for them. Not every postdoc will become a lecturer but postdocs need transparency, infor-

mation, and a real HR policy. The structure and information are there, so, why not use it?

The MCFA raised a particular issue in that meeting about "mobility", because there is great pressure on researchers as they "must" be mobile. The position of the MCFA was that mobility should be considered an instrument for your career and not a goal on itself. There is a problem about how to evaluate and value these mobile profiles, in a fair way. Mobility should be good and/or appropriate for your career... assuming that you have a career structure. It looks as if we were going to the start this same discussion again. It resembles strangely to question of the hen and the egg really, with the difference that there are real alternatives and this is far from being a philosophical issue.

The Speaker's Corner

I think that the biggest difficulty to keep in contact with the former fellows after the fellowship expires is the (lack of?) feedback you can get, if you were not really involved in the Association's activities during the fellowship.

It will be a really big effort to get in contact with former fellows/seniors again, but maybe it will be possible to start from the national Groups, involving the actual fellows and keeping the contact when they return/change their location.

More transparency on our activities is needed, even when in the last two years the board is working hard to reach more fellows.

I personally do not miss more benefits. I do my "job" here because I think that can

be useful for all of us. Maybe I'm too altruistic? Let me know your opinion.

Natalia Balcazar, fellow from 1996 to 1998 (natalia.balcazar@mariecurie.org)

Please send your email to office@mariecurie.org (Subject line: 'Speaker's corner') to be published (in excerpts) in this section in the Next "Letters to Members".

Diary of Events

➤ *International Conferences*

- The Regional Conference on Women in Physics (Africa – Middle East) to be held in Cairo, Egypt. Date: 17th to 19th March 2007. www.egmrs.org/confe/WIP2007-/index.htm

The aim of this regional conference is to provide a forum for exchanging knowledge in addition to discussing difficulties and obstacles facing the women physicists in Africa and the Middle East. Getting together, will allow women physicists to put strategies for developing physics (curricula, research, applications..etc) in their respective countries, to analyze their special problems and to enhance their participation in dealing with challenges in their societies.

The topics to be covered are:

1. Physics career & continuous education.
2. The needs of women physicists to overcome their difficulties (education, research or leadership)
3. Society challenges: Africa/Middle East
4. Teaching physics for girls.
5. Quality control and assurance in physics education.
6. The role of developed countries towards women physicists in developing countries.
7. Personal experience in balancing family and career.



Organiser: The Egyptian National Committee of Pure and Applied Physics (<http://www.geocities.com/-egyptiansca/>)

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➤ **Meetings with MCFA participation**

- An evening meeting was held at The Royal Society on 7th February, 2007 on the theme "Should government do more to create a career structure for young researchers?" Vanessa Diaz (Vice-Chair and UK National Group Coordinator, attended this event (see report on page 7 of this **Letter to Members**)

➤ **Upcoming meetings with MCFA Participation**

- The **7th Eurodoc Conference** will be held in London from 15th to 17th March 2007.
- The MCFA has been invited once again to the **Intermediar** event to be held in the Netherlands on the 19th April 2007. We will have a stand together with ERA-MORE NL
- **Research in Europe** - National and European Funding Possibilities for Young Researchers, National event at the University of Jena, Germany. Date: 8th Mai 2007. Organizer: KoWi.
- **"Women in Science: The Way Forward"**. It will take place in Heidelberg, Germany from 9th -11th May 2007. The meeting is organi-

zed by the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) as the starting point for a joint initiative with the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) and the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN).

"The Way Forward" will look to the future of women in science.

<http://www.set-routes.org/-conference/>

- The **European Materials Research Society** (E-MRS) will hold its annual conference on May 28th - June 1st, 2007 in Strasbourg (France). The MCFA needs somebody (possibly based in Strasbourg) who may assist. Antonella is representing the Association during the meeting. MCFA can provide a free entry and a free E-MRS membership for one year, in case somebody has interest
- The German Coordinators are looking for somebody that can assist in name of the MCFA German Group to the **6th ERA-MORE Workshop**, to be held from 31st Mai to 1st June 2007 in Bonn, Germany. Please contact lyudmila.zinchenko@iais.fraunhofer.de
- **19. KoWi Bundestagung** - "FP7 – Synergies between Research and Industry", at the Johannes Gutenberg-University in Mainz, Germany., Date: 20th to 21st June 2007. Organizer: KoWi in cooperation with the Johannes Gutenberg-University, Mainz

Please feel free to **forward** this Letter to the Members to your colleagues and friends, even if they are not Marie Curie Fellows!

The MCFA Board