

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

March-April 2009

Dear MCFA Member,

Welcome to a new issue of the Letter to members with news concerning our Association!

The MCFA board

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Life of the Association

Update on the Change of Statutes

The changes of Statutes voted at the last General Meeting will need to go through some more administrative steps before being accepted officially because they concern some key articles of

the Statutes. We are in contact with a notary in Belgium in order to solve this issue. If you have experience about dealing with an association's statutes change in Belgium, I would appreciate your advice.

Éric Buchlin

Careers, funding and networking opportunities

Taxes on FP7 fellowships in France

One of the main issues faced by Marie Curie Fellows concerns the differences of taxation in different countries: it is often very difficult to know in advance how the fellowship will be taxed, and many Fellows are disappointed by how much they have left after taxation. The European Commission and DG Research provide some guidelines, but they do not have the power to force Member States to apply them.

In particular, in France, we have seen many Fellows telling us that all their allowances were considered as a salary, and then were taxed. We have however found an official note by the French Ministry of Finances that the travel and mobility allowances of FP7 Marie Curie Fellows should not be taxed (but the living and career exploratory allowances are taxed): <http://www11.bercy.gouv.fr/boi/boi2007/5fppub/textes/5f1407/5f1407.pdf>

If you were last year a FP7 Marie Curie Fellow in France, you will soon need to declare your 2008 incomes in France (unless you have found it was better to use some bilateral tax agreement with another country). Then you do not need to include your travel and mobility allowances in your salary. You can include the above-mentioned note to your declaration form in order to make sure that the tax agent understands the reason for this.

If you know about similar rules in other countries, please tell us at office@mariecurie.org: this may be very useful for other Fellows!

Éric Buchlin

New calls for IIF, IEF, IOF, and IAPP

New call for Marie Curie individual fellowships have been opened:

- Intra-European Fellowships for Career Development (IEF)
- International Incoming Fellowships (IIF)
- International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development (IOF)

The deadline is 18 August 2009.

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7CallsPage>

Furthermore, you will find on the same web page a new call for Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways (IAPP, deadline 27 July 2009).

Courses on FP7 management

The company Berkley Associates is organizing paying (300€ + VAT) courses in Brussels about Financial Management of FP7 projects (14 May) and about FP7 Project Management (28 May). More information on <http://www.berkleyassociates.eu/>.

The Speaker's Corner



Let me say that I am glad to be part of your association. Actually I am only new in the MCFA membership but not in the MC fellowship which I am already wrapping up. I am an Egyptian dentist and since August 2006

I am a PhD student and a MC fellow at the University of Genoa in Italy where my research scopes bone regeneration and the reestablishment of its marrow niche. As your smallest brother, I would be glad to share with you my Marie Curie (MC) experience, in Italy. In fact, it is Italy that makes it such a very particular adventure far different from the ones told by my MC colleagues in other labs in Europe.

My experience as a MC fellow in Italy is not less than a scientific and a personality enrichment opportunity I was permitted to get. In spite of always preferring to elaborate more positively, sharing you would tickle two experienced inconvenient situations one of which generally regards a foreign student in Italy and the other specifically regards a Marie Curie contract in Italy.

Being a non European postgraduate student and being in Italy proved to be two inconsistent situations. To make the very long story short, in Italy a student like me should renew his Permit of Stay yearly, i.e., every 12 months even if he has a three-year support guarantee. The problem surges when you know that the renewal process itself lasts 10 to 11 months, i.e., I am only legal in Italy one or two months a year and solely it is during these couple of months that I can pass into any other European country simply because no other European nation considers the elegant 10×15 cm renewal receipt delivered from the Italian Immigration Authority. Consequently and lamentably, in the past three years as a PhD student in Regenerative Medicine, I was allowed to attend conferences or travel for collaborations only when it happens that the event takes place during these two months of truce, which significantly impacted my studies and I believe it will have its influence on my future career. Desperately I tried to find a way to accelerate the turtle-style renewal process and was always encountered by the famous “pazienza” word, asking for patience, obviously with a nice Mediterranean

smile.

Concerning my MC contract, at that very first year August 2006 to July 2007, the Italian law seemed kind of regular for me, I was paid my stipend on monthly basis while the mobility, travel, courses and conferences allowances were given based on proper receipts I brought. It sounds fine. What you would hardly believe is that the shelf-life of an Italian law ranges from 6–12 months. My same contract for August 2007 to July 2008 stated that all allowances are to be included in the stipend, which means the whole I may get is divided by 12 and forms the monthly payment. Wow, Great! Maybe, until you know that this “rise” kicked me up to a higher taxation where I had to pay 33% of taxes instead of the 20% of the year before. The upgrade sucked up most of the allowances into taxes and that year I found myself in a situation where I couldn't afford travels and conferences participation, let alone being able to book a two-week trip to my country for me, my wife and my two daughters. My lab colleagues were sympathizing with me until the third year — the current one — where I appreciate them wiping my tears and hastening to offer help. At the beginning of last June, about a month before signing the 2008–2009 contract, I started feeling my lungs crushed under the thought of the next contract. I expected the 2007–2008 law to have expired and be replaced by a novel one, refined I prayed. To my surprise, the new contract stated that not only all allowances will be included monthly as the previous year but also that the payment of the next year will be on a four-month basis according to the following: 30% after the first month (a gentle thought to allow me survive the first period... and die later), 20% after the 5th month, 30% after the 8th month and the last 20% at the very end of the fellowship. I think you have gone through these former couple of lines again and I guess you figured out two things and you didn't figure out another one. At first place sympathetic feeling may have taken you recognizing that for 12 months I will be living with only 80% of the sum I should totally get but right after, replaced by an envious feeling that I will be keeping the 20% after the fellowship. Let me directly tell you that these 20% I am waiting for at the end of next July will serve me to

pay back what I borrowed from friends without whom we wouldn't have been able to get along. In brief, the Italian computers taxation software was not informed or altered according to my new genially planned payment modality and calculated the sum given for 4 months as if it were a monthly payment, submitting me to a taxation of 40% (only a dozen of citizens of the Italian peninsula are under that taxation level). With such taxation, my wife and I arrived to a point where we were, actually are, not able to set apart our rental for 4 months ahead. I almost forgot about conferences, however because I still remember that I am a PhD student and not a tax fleer, indispensable meetings for my career are reached through trips that may include two or three nights on airport chairs. All my SOS attempts to responsible offices turned in vain regarding help but with considerable refinement in my patience threshold as nobody hesitates to smile in my face the evermore keyword, "pazienza" — I detest that word. I borrowed money, something I never did, not for a matter of dignity but just going to bed indebted is something too heavy for me.

I wouldn't dare to entitle my days in Italy "The Tragedy of a Marie Curie Fellow" because actually I consider that my experience benefits outweigh the financial and bureaucratic stress during these three years. I learned far more than science, I acquired wisdom, stress-coping and... of course "pazienza"! I came part of a fantastic Tissue Engineering team and I made priceless relationships, the only thing I believe deserving

sacrifice in time, effort and money. In the meanwhile, I am not blaming by any means the Marie Curie grants system. On the contrary, during several MC workshops (in the extremely seldom cases where both my documents and finances allowed me to travel), I was informed by other fellows in Swiss, UK or French labs how they experience such fellowship is planned advantageously and we all recognized how different the same fellowship could be among the European countries. In my case, I presume it is just a matter of incompatibility of the Italian system with such fellowships, something I urge a MC responsible to study or at least to consider. And regarding me, I will keep always my pride being a Marie Curie Fellow and a MCFA member, and surprisingly, my family and I will miss the spaghetti lands.

Samer Zaky

We welcome articles about your experience as a Fellow, good or bad: has your funding been taken away by someone else in the lab? Were the conditions of the contracts different than promised? Did you feel a lack of support from your lab or the EC management? Or on the contrary did everything go fine and the MC fellowship helped you start a successful career? More generally, we also welcome articles about your views on European Science policy. Please send an email to office@mariecurie.org (Subject line: "Speaker's corner") to be published in this section in the next Letter to Members.

Past meetings with MCFA participation

Jeunes Chercheurs en Europe, Rennes, November 2008

EUROSFoire, the website of the 21 French FP7 National Contact Points provides a report (in French) for the French Presidency conference "Jeunes Chercheurs en Europe",

held in Rennes in November 2008, and where MCFA was present (see Frank Heemskerk's report in the January-February 2009 Letter to Members): http://www.eurosfairerprd.fr/yre08/Jeunes_Chercheurs_en_Europe_dossier_complet.pdf

Upcoming Events

European research career fair, Berlin, 28 May

The first European research career fair will be held in Berlin on 28 May 2009, placed under the patronage of Janez Potočnik, the European Commissioner for Science and Research. At this event you will be able to discuss with major players in research, meet recruiters, and take advice from experts to boost your career. More information on <http://www.researchcareerfair.com/>.

World Biotech Youth Forum

The Young European Biotech Network (YEBN) is organizing the World Biotech Youth Forum in Barcelona on 12 and 13 September 2009, hosted

by the 14th European Congress on BioTechnology (<http://www.ecb14.eu/>). The program includes discussions on educational systems, career development, and science in society. More information can be obtained from YEBN:

<http://www.yebn.org/>.

Biotechniques for Air Pollution Control

The UNESCO Institute for Water Education is organizing the conference Biotechniques for Air Pollution Control, to be held in Delft, The Netherlands, on Sep 28-30. More information on <http://www.unesco-ihe.org/Biotechniques-for-Air-Pollution-Control/>

News in Brief

FP7 participant portal

The EC has opened a portal aimed at all participants to FP7. The Participant Portal will become your single entry point of interaction with the Research Directorates-General of the European Commission. It will host a full range of services that facilitate the monitoring and the management of your proposals and projects throughout their lifecycle. <https://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/portal/>

EC DG Research mailing-lists

We remind you that you can subscribe to several interesting mailing-lists through <http://ec.europa.eu/coreseervices/ mailing/>

In particular, you can be warned by e-mail when a new online Research*eu magazine appears. You can also subscribe for free to the paper version of Research*eu from the magazine's website: <http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu/>.

European Parliament Resolution on ERA

In 2008 the European Parliament has voted a resolution on "European Research Area: New Perspectives" that has just been published in the EU Official Journal: <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2009:068E:0001:0008:EN:PDF>

This resolution is based on the ERA "Green paper" published in 2007, and to which MCFA had contributed: http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/7pc/doc/1217403145_era_green_paper_ego_080704_web_synthesis.pdf

Report on Global Governance of Science

This report is the product of an expert group acting under a mandate from the European Commission Directorate General for Research to which legal scholars, sociologists, philosophers and political scientists have contributed. It seeks to advance a vision of global governance for the common good that invokes European principles of good governance and fundamental rights. The European Union as a political entity situated be-

tween the national and global levels, with its principles of good governance, its charter of fundamental rights and commitments to a European Research Area, is ideally placed to encourage critical reflection and undertake practical leadership in relation to the global governance of science and innovation. The recommendations are addressed not only to policymakers in the European Commission and the Member States of the EU, but equally to those organisations worldwide operating within and around science.

http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/7pc/doc/1238566203_global_governance_020609_en.pdf

From Science Careers

Please read these articles and others at <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/> or click on the titles below (if you are reading the electronic version of this Letter to Members):

10-Minute Tools for Managing Stress

Managing workplace stress is an ongoing challenge for scientists — busy, task-oriented, ambitious people who often feel they don't have enough hours in the day. But managing stress doesn't have to take a big chunk of time. Small chunks can work just as well — and that's one of the keys to managing stress in a busy life.

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

We also remind you that you are encouraged to use the MCFA flyers, available from the Internal Documents: <http://mcfa.eu/site/memberArea/internalDocuments.php>.

The MCFA Board

The other parts of your academic job

This special feature includes several articles about the non-research parts of an academic job, such as teaching, committee work and proposal reviewing. How much should you do, and how to gain from it?

Not what you thought you'd be doing

Despite careful career planning, sometimes even the best laid plans gang aft agley, and even the most motivated of scientists in training are led astray by some other passion. And the result, sometimes, can be wonderful.

You will find several examples in this special feature, including the profile of Jorge Cham, the author of *PhD Comics*.

Science for humanitarian aid

For scientists willing to work in high-risk settings, there are many opportunities to do humanitarian work. Many NGOs and United Nations agencies need researchers who can lead surveys in regions experiencing natural disasters or wars, and organizations that provide aid stress that they often need experts to run single projects. Some researchers find ways to volunteer part-time, providing support for efforts overseas without leaving their desks.

Career profiles

Science Careers has also recently published the career profiles of two former Marie Curie Fellows: *Tiago Fleming Outeiro* and *Mihail Barboiu*.