

# Marie Curie Fellows Association



## Letter to Members

May-June 2009

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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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## Careers, funding and networking opportunities

### Charter of Researchers, Code of Conduct and EURAXESS

The European Commission has adopted a European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. These two documents, addressed to researchers as well as to employers and funders in both the public and private sectors, are key elements in the European Union's policy to make research an attractive career, which is a vital feature of its strategy

to stimulate economic and employment growth.

In particular, the European Charter for Researchers addresses the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers and their employers or funding organisations. It aims at ensuring that the relationship between these parties contributes to successful performance in the generation, transfer and sharing of knowledge, and to the career development of researchers.

The Code of Conduct for the Recruitment

of Researchers aims to improve recruitment, to make selection procedures fairer and more transparent and proposes different means of judging merit: Merit should not just be measured on the number of publications but on a wider range of evaluation criteria, such as teaching, supervision, teamwork, knowledge transfer, management and public awareness activities.

These are ideals to which organisations will work towards via the European Partnership for Researchers. Why not benchmark your organisation against its principles and discuss any shortcomings or applaud your organisation where they exceed these requirements?



EURAXESS is a unique web portal providing access to a complete range of information and support services for European and non-European researchers wishing to pursue research careers in Europe. It assists YOU, the researcher in advancing their careers in another European country and supports scientific organisations in their search for outstanding research talent. It is supported by 35 participating countries across Europe, and provides a single access point to information across all countries including a network of walk-in centres offering personalised assistance to researchers moving to another country. Whereas it is funded mainly from Brussels, its operation is decentralised to be nearer to the researcher.

The new EURAXESS site brings together four major initiatives which support the mobility of researchers in Europe: EURAXESS Jobs, EURAXESS Services, EURAXESS Rights and EURAXESS Links see the Website: <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess>. When you as a fellow encounter any difficulties in your situation, or want to advertise or scan research positions, Euraxess should be your first point of call.

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## Bilateral tax agreements

Following my article in the last Letter to Members about the French income tax on FP7 Fellowships allowances, I take this opportunity to remind you that many countries have signed bilateral agreements in order to avoid double taxation. These agreements often include special provisions for “professors and researchers”, and it may be worth taking some time to read in detail the agreement applying to your case. If you are moving your residence from country A to country B, you should look for the agreement between A and B, often independently from your nationality. For instance, the list of all agreements signed by France can be found at [http://www.impots.gouv.fr/portal/dgi/public/documentation.impot?pageId=docu\\_international&espId=-1&sfid=440](http://www.impots.gouv.fr/portal/dgi/public/documentation.impot?pageId=docu_international&espId=-1&sfid=440) in French, or in the other language on the web page of the other country’s tax administration.

Don’t hesitate to share your own experience of taxation rules: write us to [office@mariecurie.org](mailto:office@mariecurie.org)!

*Éric Buchlin*

## New calls for IIF, IEF, IOF, and IAPP

We remind you the calls for Marie Curie individual fellowships:

- 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).

## Past meetings with MCFA participation

### “MCFA Scientific Café” at the Research Connection Conference

The Research Connection Conference was held in Prague at the beginning of May. It was a major event on European research and it was organised under the Czech Presidency of the European Union. The conference was intended to convey information on the European research programmes. It was possible to learn and discuss about the different opportunities offered by the European Commission for research: sessions' themes ranged from the European Research Council to the Euratom Research Framework programme, from Marie Curie Actions to the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP). Some successful projects financed under the previous and current framework programmes were presented and different actors of the European Research panorama were there, willing to share their experience.

In the opening session, the commissioner Janez Potočnik emphasized that, as the conference title suggests, the idea underlying the conference was to bring together European researchers, industrialists and research managers to work together, across national and sectorial barriers in order to build the European Research Area (ERA) which is “an integral component of our response to the challenges of globalisation”.

In this framework, the MCFA organised the forum: “The MCFA Scientific Café: meeting Marie Curie Fellows”. The event was meant to share direct experiences of Marie Curie Fellows with the participants and thus to discuss about the impact a Marie Curie Fellowship might have on a researcher's career and life.

In an informal atmosphere, Vanessa Diaz and Maria-Antonietta Buccheri (former and present MCFA Vice-Chair, respectively) and Frank Heemskerk (from the MCFA Advisory Board) presented their experiences highlighting pros and cons of being a Marie Curie Fellow.

The panellists have varied backgrounds and have been awarded a Marie Curie Fellowship at diverse stages of their careers and in different European countries. Geographic mobility as well as inter-sectorial mobility experiences have been discussed.

All speakers agreed on the value of being awarded a Marie Curie Fellowship: very often, it is a key opportunity in a researcher career. It may allow a researcher to pursue the study of a subject belonging to a niche area, as it was in Vanessa's experience or to study a cutting edge subject, as in Maria-Antonietta's case. Frank, who chaired the session, underlined that a Marie Curie grant have a great potential one might not foresee: starting from a first grant and building step by step new knowledge, new experiences and new networks, one might end up where one never imagined!

Speakers insisted also on the value of mobility in a scientist education and career. Nevertheless, the panelists pointed out on challenges to be faced when choosing a mobile scientist career. “It is not all roses”, neither from a professional point of view nor from a personal one. But, it is absolutely worthwhile to try! Vanessa said “If I had to apply again, I wouldn't hesitate once”.

Participants were invited to actively take part in the session and to interact with speakers, posing questions and comments. Biscuits coming from different European countries were offered to make the atmosphere as friendly as possible!

As MCFA, we believe it is important to participate in conferences focused on European research, share our experiences, and participate to the debate on the steps to be taken on the way of the ERA construction. We look forward to the next experience, hoping that many of you will be there, willing to share your ideas with us and other participants!

*Maria-Antonietta Buccheri*

### Pôle STVE meeting, Paris, 16 March

The Pôle Paris Île-de-France STVE (Science and Technology of Life and the Environment) was created in December 2006



with six founding members from the Paris region. Within this group of research and academic institutions, the EURODOC'AGRO platform has been created in the aim of coordinating research and training opportunities and open the consortium to international networks.

The platform was designed as an incubator for the emergence and engineering of research/teaching/partnership networks funded by the 7th Framework Program of the European Commission, such as Marie Curie ITNs (Initial Training Networks) or IAPP projects (Industry Academic Partnership Pathways).

The MCFA was invited to participate in the kick-off day of the EURODOC'AGRO platform; it was represented by Alain Rival from the MCFA Advisory Board.

During the morning session, several projects were presented, and in the afternoon, a roundtable was organized in order to gather inputs from various stakeholders: European Commission, Chamber of commerce of the Île-de-France Region, the Campus-France Association and MCFA.

Each participant to the Roundtable has been asked to answer to five questions from the organizers.

1. *Which are the 5 major qualities of a Research/Training/Partnership European Project?*

To be attractive, these projects must show the distinctive Marie Curie trademark, which is recognized as "Excellence and Mobility". These networks are based not only on excellent Research but also on Training. Nevertheless, several testimonies arose from Fellows through the MCFA showed that these networks are not always offering a true training experience, which must be properly articulated between different European Universities and research institutions. Some of them are basically "PhD factories" without any participation of the recruited PhD student in networking events or exchanges: the Fellow stays in one single group during the whole duration of his (her) PhD work. The European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers brought considerable progress although they are not always signed (nor fully followed) by host institutions. The fact that the Fellow, in the case of these networks (contrarily to Marie Curie Individual Fellowships) contracts directly with the host University and not with the Commission makes it very difficult to seriously follow-up the quality of PhD and Post-Doc training. Thus the Fellow is left alone dealing with his/her tutor or host institution and there are no possible sanctions from the EC in case of non compliance with elementary rules.

There is probably more to do from the EC to follow up the fate of PhD works implemented in the framework of such huge networks and MCFA is keen to help in this way.

2. *Which are the required skills to manage such a project?*

As it is the case for many other types of projects, the position of Project Managers is quite paradoxical: they are excellent scientists, energetic and impassioned, for sure. But are these qualities and skills really sufficient for the implementation and management of a project costing up to 4 M€, built on the effective and simultaneous production (involving exchanges between countries and private/public sectors) of several tens of PhD thesis?

This very heavy duty must be properly taken into account when it comes to the assessment of the scientific accomplishments of the person in charge, as this excellent scientist will not have one single second left for his own research work during the whole duration of the Project. His (her) research group and evaluators must be aware of this point.

Actually, ITN Networks are designed to devote 7% of the total budget to the management task and this sum allows the recruitment of a qualified officer.

3. *What does "Partnership" mean inside the "Research/Training/Partnership" triangle?*

To be eligible, ITN networks must involve at least one private partner, preferably a SME (Small and Medium Enterprise), with an obligation of recruiting fellow(s) at the end of the project. Obviously, from the Fellow point a view, a private partnership is an open window to the Industry word (which is so different in many ways from the Academic one), some insurance on the applicability of results from his/her research and... prospects for an interesting job!

For SME (which are traditionally not very inclined to invest in upstream research) the prospects offered by this type of Research and Training networks are immense. Indeed, European networks are able to provide small companies with some very strategic opportunities such as technology survey, new partnership, future markets, strategic insights and advances in Science and Technology...

4. *Which are the ingredients of the European PhD?*

To our knowledge, this is a very ambitious

and desirable project more than a palpable reality... Indeed there are still many administrative and legal obstacles to deal with: full recognition of diplomas, statutes of the PhD student, University fees... The opening of the ERASMUS MUNDUS scheme to Doctoral studies is a considerable progress in this way.

#### 5. *Are Mobility and European Research Area (ERA) connected?*

There is no question about this point... The two concepts are tightly connected and Marie Curie Fellows are well placed to prove it!

There is now a sizeable population of mobile Europeans young researchers on the market. However, it is also essential that these young mobile researchers can find a permanent position in Europe at some stage in order to capitalize on the long term and transmit their successful mobility experiences to their colleagues.

*Alain Rival*

### German PhD network meeting, 19 May 2009

The MCFA participated in a networking event of German PhD student organizations in Berlin, 19 May 2009, with participants from Helmholtz Juniors, Max Planck PhDnet, THESIS e.V., GEW PG DOK, PI ("Promovierendeninitiative"), and a few PhD Students working in the Leibniz-Society.

The MCFA and Karoline Holländer (former President of EURODOC) encouraged the PhD student organizations to take a hard look at the Charter and Code, as many of the issues dealt with in these documents also apply to the situation of PhD Students of both German and foreign nationality.

The MCFA wishes this initiative to succeed, and hopes the PhD students will be able to improve their situation, which will also be to the benefit of students of foreign nationalities. Issues of pensions, health and social insurances have not been solved in Germany, causing the PhD students in Germany to have an untenable situation, with many risks during the delicate start of their careers.

We hope that German politicians will take notice, and take the lead in improving the conditions of young researchers.

*Guggi Kofod*

## EU Conference "Sustainable Development — a challenge for European research"

When I read this conference announcement on the MCFA Website, I told to myself "Wow! That's my theme: Sustainable Development". So I read fast the information, the call for papers etc. And I thought: "OK, I'm not making research anymore, but the aspects to be talked about are directly related to my job, I will try".



I prepared a paper about the ECOPROFIT method, which is very successful in Germany and Austria for small and medium enterprises (SME). It allows them to reach the aim of more environmental acknowledgement of their staff and the aim to save money implementing environmental measures. I wrote the paper in between of the usual work a consultancy has to do. That means, with no really too much time. But I did it.

After some months I received an email: "Your paper has being selected". Of course it was necessary to improve some points of the paper, especially related to research aspects, but I was nearly expecting that because I have had the feeling that the conclusions were not as optimal as could be. Therefore I improved the text. And I was in Brussels at the end of May (if you are interested about this theme, see [here](#) for my paper and the presentation).

Together with my colleague we presented the paper. And some people said "Pretty good! Something like that is what I want to do". It was great to find other people interested in the same aspects of sustainability, and it was a great feeling, after so many years out of research! We keep in contact and hopefully we will find out a method to exchange knowledge and transfer information, but that will be another history...

My conclusion hereby is: Thank you MCFA for your information online. It has opened a new line of activities that can be very very interesting. Even if I'm not doing research anymore...

*Natalia Balcazar*



## European research career fair, Berlin, 28 May



The 1st European Research Career Fair took place on 28 May 2009 at the Free University of Berlin. The number of attendees did not exceed 500 although 1500 were expected. The morning conference sessions themes “How to meet the challenges of the Lisbon Strategy” and “The key issues in research for European companies for the next 20 years” were represented by authorities from European Commission, French ministry for Research, vice-president of Karlsruhe University and directors of TOTAL, Areva, Thales Alenia Space and Apec.

Some tips were given for young graduates and researchers searching for a position: soft skills (including ability to listen, and to integrate with a team) count at least as much as a prestigious diploma and technical skills; it is useful to create and maintain your personal network (also for the company that hires you); be enthusiastic, committed, imaginative, courageous; exchange knowledge instead of isolating yourself in an ivory tower.

The afternoon conference session started with Mrs. Malgorzata Tkatchenko, Head of CEA Biomedical Imaging and director of the CEA Centre of Fontenay-aux-Roses, who shared her experience as a female scientist in a foreign country. The main obstacles she identified for female researchers were related to family and to self-confidence.

The second afternoon session was about making companies, research centers, and universities work together, with the example of the Carnot Institute in France. It was said that success depends relationships between different people, personality, trust, intercultural competences, shared goals, and a shared vision of intellectual property management.

Finally, in the last session “Researchers and company: how to understand each other?”, it was said that researchers, in particular post-docs, can bring knowledge and scientific expertise to a company, and are an investment for the future, but they need to be independent and have to defend their identity.

You can continue to register at <http://www.researchcareerfair.com>! Even after the

event, the exhibitors will go on checking the database of candidates. Don't hesitate to register now to take the chance to be contacted by those who are interested in your profile.

*Daniel Gromadzki*

## The Genius of women: inventions and innovations, Milan, 18 July 2009

Gianna Avellis actively attended the conference organised by ITWIIN (Italian Women Innovators and Inventors Network) in Milan on 18 June 2009.

This was an event of the series of events promoted by ITWIIN aiming at exploiting the role of women in the innovation processes, called The Genius of Women: Inventions and Innovations. It was attended by a hundred of Italian women inventors and innovators with their extraordinary stories of new ideas, new enterprises and new capabilities of re-thinking the present in the science, technology, communication, design, art, and fashion. This project points out how to disseminate and exploit in deep practices and politics to support and assist women in the innovation and invention processes, to push the creative work of women in the research and innovative enterprises, to recognise and to give a prize to the Italian women talents in the creation of new products, processes and services.

In the event in Milan we had the first edition of the double PRIZE ITWIIN, dedicated to the most innovator and inventor women in Italy: to the award there were 62 candidatures from all of Italy, related to the same number of projects and IPRs.

Gianna took part to the Round Table organised before the award ceremony and then the ceremony itself, which assigned two different special prizes:

1) THE PREMIO AWARD dedicated to the best Italian scientist in USA more voted by the researcher's and professional's community belonging to the social network of the Californian Association BRIDGES TO ITALY, which promotes this initiative in collaboration with ITWIIN;



2) THE PREMIO DISTI-ITWIIN assigned by the Scientific and Technological Information District, to the Italian author of the best project/activities of communication, information, and training to support innovation.

The Milan initiative, organised by ITWINN and STUDIO DONGHI, is the first event which

will be followed by the European event of EU-WIIN (European Women Innovators and Inventors Network) Conference, Exhibition, and Award Ceremony in Helsinki, 7-9 October 2009, to which Gianna Avellis was invited by the CEO of EUWINN, Bola Olabisi, to take part as organiser.

## Upcoming Events

### Conference on European Labour Market for Academic Graduates, 22-24 October 2009, Maastricht

In half of the countries involved in the Bologna process, all students are now doing courses that comply with the new Bachelor/Master system, while the other countries are working hard to achieve the same level. This means that empirical information on the integration of graduates from the new system in the labour market becomes available.

In 2006 the Faculty of Economics and Business Administration of Maastricht University initiated a conference in Maastricht on the European Labour Market for Academic Graduates (ELM) after the introduction of the new system.

A second conference of this series is scheduled to take place from 22 to 24 October 2009 in Maastricht, The Netherlands, with participation of representatives from the worlds of education, business, government and research. It will be organised by Maastricht University in co-operation with the University of Warwick. More information on <http://www.unimaas.nl/ELM/>.

## News in Brief

### New issue of research\*eu

A new issue of research\*eu, the magazine of the European Research Area, is devoted to Epidemics and is available at [http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu/59/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu/59/index_en.html).

Of special interest for the Women in Science MCFA group would also be the special issue of research\*eu on Women and Science: [http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu/women/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/research-eu/women/index_en.html)

### From Research Europe

The last issue of Research Europe (<http://www.researchresearch.com/>, not freely available) includes an article on the new Blue Card scheme introduced for European immigration, and how (little) it will change the life for researchers (transmitted by Frank Heemskerk).

### 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):

#### Career Renewal for Established Scientists

Having an established academic career must be a very reassuring feeling. You can do whatever you wish without the threat of losing your job. At this stage some scientists lose motivation in research and their productivity decreases while others keep publishing actively. Passion for science, the right research environment and the ability to learn, change and grow are all key factors in keeping a vital research program and remaining productive.

### Professional Polish

Clothes maketh the man. Maybe in academic sciences this is not entirely true; however it is not a bad idea to make a good first impression by dressing smart for an interview. Following a few advices can help you avoid unnecessary uncomfortable moments.

### Tooling Up: Four Must-Haves for Convincing Communication

Excellent communication skills are essential for a successful career. Many people believe that good communicators are born, not made, but that's a misconception. Unfortunately, communication techniques aren't taught at the university, but it only takes practice for one to become a good interpersonal communicator.

### Academia or Industry? Finding the Right Fit

Academia and industry have different values to offer to researchers and they both can have good and bad positions. The most important is to identify your own values and priorities and see which place can offer a good match for your research topic and ideal working culture. In this article various scientists share their point of views on the different aspects of industrial research.

### Taken for Granted: Building a Culture of Safety

The death of a research assistant at UCLA sent a shock wave through academic science, as in many places the everyday lab practices hardly meet the safety criteria. Merely offering or even requiring training does not suffice to create a culture of safety and responsibility. Also needed are conspicuous indications from the leadership of both the lab and the institution that safety is a priority.

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*