

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

September-October 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

MCFA General Meeting and Career Workshop in Paris, 27-29 November

Dear member of the MCFA,

It is our pleasure to invite you to this year's Annual General Meeting of the Marie Curie Fellows Association, which will be held in Paris, France, on the last weekend of November. This is a great opportunity to meet other Marie Curie fellows from all over Europe and to share your experience in science and mobility. The programme will also include a one-day career workshop for PhD students and postdocs where you will learn essential tips and tricks for advancing your career.

There will be a special guest to the workshop – the editor from Science magazine who will talk about science writing and publishing.

All MCFA members are welcome to this meeting! Please make a note in your calendar and book your transportation tickets now.

Below you will find the draft programme of the meeting and some practical information. Looking forward to seeing you in Paris. If you have any questions about the meeting, please do not hesitate to write to office@mariecurie.org or call +33.6.62.50.05.65.

Sincerely yours,

Administrative Board of MCFA

Draft programme of the workshop and General Meeting

Friday, 27 November

Institut Curie, 1 Rue Pierre et Marie Curie, Paris
(5th district)

17:00 Visit to Curie museum (max. 15 people)

18:00 Informal get-together (place to be confirmed)

Saturday, 28 November

Paris Observatory, 77 Avenue
Denfert-Rochereau, Paris (14th district)

9:00 Workshop “the Career Plan” including the following sessions:

1. Career Plan: How to get where you want (Vanessa Díaz Zuccarini, Gugli Kofod)
2. Your selling points: How to individualize your skills and personalize them (Natalia Balcázar)
3. Your life on paper: How to build a good CV (Invited speaker - TBC)
4. Say it right: The job interview (Invited speaker - TBC)
5. Boost your CV: How to publish a scientific article (Dr Maria Cruz, editor, Science magazine)

12:30 Lunch break

13:30 Career workshop (continued)

17:00 End of the workshop

Sunday, 29 November

Paris Observatory, 77 Avenue
Denfert-Rochereau, Paris (14th district)

9:00 MCFA Annual Meeting – Open session (Invited representatives from the EC, NCP - TBC)

11:30 Lunch break

12:30 MCFA General Meeting – MCFA members only:

- Presentation of annual Activity and Financial reports
- Confirmation of last year’s decision about the change of Statutes

- Election of the new Administrative Board
- Discussion of future activities

15:00 End of the meeting

The MCFA career workshop: an invitation!

An essential tool to succeed in every kind of career is to have a clear career plan and an eventual plan B, and even a plan C, sometimes! It becomes especially true for scientific careers and in times of tough economies...

“When I decided to pursue a career in science, I assumed — as I think many aspiring scientists do in the beginning — that the mastery of a difficult subject would ensure my employability. How could a bright future not be guaranteed for people who have mastered powerful analytical tools and, along the way, demonstrated energy, independence, and impressive intellectual attainment?” says Jim Austin, Editor at Science Career, in the booklet “The Informed Job Search – Advice for Scientists”.

Advancing in a scientific career is not only a matter of suitable scientific education and experience. That counts, of course. But it is also important to learn how to single out your own direction and move the steps that will lead you towards that direction. Deciding on your career aims is a fundamental starting point. Then comes planning: gather information about the skills and experience you need to reach your goal and undertake relevant development.

Acquiring the so-called soft skills, as presentation skills, empathy, team work, meeting skills, etc. , is a paying effort, too. Transferable skills may be useful whether you decide to pursue an academic career or to switch to an alternative career.

“I got my doctorate from Liverpool University in behavioural ecology, looking at competition in insects and fish. Now I run my own company. It is a training and development consultancy, working mainly with the academic sector (...). Honestly, I use precisely zero of the zoology that I learned. I use the management, writing, presenting and problem solving skills that came with it every single minute. I also use the reserves of resilience and resourcefulness that being a re-

searcher breeds” claims Steve Hutchinson, Director of the Hutchinson Training and Development Ltd, on the [pages of the Vitae Portal](#).

Last but not least, a key point is to recognize your unique array of skills and find a good way of presenting and selling them so that they can bring you to your desired job, be it academic or not.

The need for some training in complementary skills has been pointed out by many participants to MCFA fora in recent times. The MCFA is delighted of presenting to Marie Curie Fellows a first career workshop. As you may gather from the program, the workshop will cover some main themes: career plan, CV writing, scientific writing and others. We wish the workshop will be fruitful and will help participants to move to the desired next career step.

We hope to meet many of you in Paris on November the 28th !

Maria-Antonietta Buccheri

Registration for the workshop and the General Meeting

To register, please send an e-mail to office@mariecurie.org indicating your planned arrival and departure date. Then we will send you more details concerning the meeting. The deadline for registration is 8 November 2009.

The workshop (on Saturday) is only open to the present and former beneficiaries of the Marie Curie mobility grants. The registration fee is 60 Euros, including the MCFA membership fee for 2010. We will send you more details about the workshop and payment once you will be registered.

The General Meeting (excluding the workshop) is of course free of charge, but it is open only to people who are MCFA members in 2009.

Please keep in mind that the travel and participation costs for this event can be charged to your Marie Curie project (Part D: Participation expenses of eligible researchers).

Change of Statutes

The changes of Statutes voted last year were not validated by the administration of Belgium (were MCFA is legally registered) because they involve changes in some particular articles that make it necessary to have documents signed in front of a notary public. This year's General Meeting will thus have to vote on confirming these changes (which were published in the October 2008 Letter to Members: http://mcfa.eu//site/lettersToMembers//9_2008.pdf and on sending someone from the board to the notary's office in Brussels in order to sign the relevant document in front of him.

Éric Buchlin

Become part of the MCFA administrative board!

MCFA has gathered an enthusiastic and active team, but it is obvious that we need more “hands” to have the association running smoothly and to realize more interesting projects. Every Full Member of the MCFA is encouraged to file their candidacy for the Board. If you are able to devote 3-4 hours a week to MCFA, it is a great opportunity for you to get involved in administration, science policy, gain invaluable experience in management and organizational activities at the international level.

To suggest your candidacy please write a short note about yourself and send it to office@mariecurie.org (the Discussion Forum that we use normally does not work at the moment). You can also use this e-mail address for any questions you may have about the work in the Administrative Board. The deadline for applications is 10th November 2009.

Last Letter to Members

It seems that the last Letter to Members has not been received by everyone. If it is your case, you can still download it from the Letter to Members archives: http://mcfa.eu//site/lettersToMembers/6_2009.pdf. This time we are trying a different way of sending the Letter to Members, so please tell us (and excuse us) if there are problems.

Careers, funding and networking opportunities

XING Premium for MCFA members



We have negotiated with the professional social network XING, where MCFA has a group (<https://www.xing.com/net/mcfa/>), that we can offer 24 months (in total) of XING Premium subscription for free to members of the group who request it. If you are interested, please become a member of the MCFA group (if you aren't already), and ask us (by writing to the moderators of the group). We plan to offer 2 months per person in a first-come, first-served basis, with priority to MCFA members.

Christos Christoglou

ERC Starting Grants call and 2009 results

The ERC Starting Grants 2009 competition results have been published. More information can be found in http://erc.europa.eu/pdf/Press_release_StG-2_results.pdf.



Some of the 2010 calls are already open: <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=67>.

Research policy

Learning Mobility – Public consultation

Dear Marie Curie fellow,

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on mobility with the aim of boosting the opportunities for young people in Europe to develop their skills and knowledge by going abroad.

The EC will take into account the results of this public consultation to shape future policies in this domain.

It is therefore crucial that EU citizens who have experienced mobility in their career take part in this consultation and give their feedback on essential questions such as: How can we convince more young people to go abroad for learning? What obstacles there are at present? Etc.

Marie Curie Fellows are the forerunners of EU mobile citizens, and their opinion and experience matters. We would therefore like to invite you to participate to this public consultation. It's also for you an opportunity to participate in the EC policy making process.

Please complete the online questionnaire at the following address: http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/consult/index_en.html. The deadline for submitting your contributions is 15 December 2009.

More information in all EU languages is avail-

able at: http://ec.europa.eu/education/news/news1535_en.htm

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

DG Research, European Commission

Research, researchers and Sustainable Development

A recent EC report ([doi:10.2777/22864](https://doi.org/10.2777/22864)) details the necessity of sustainable development (SD), and focuses on the connection between this important area and research. It is worth noting that the authors view the activity of research itself as already having a significant impact on the environment, through energy consumption and pollution with materials and chemicals with less-understood behaviour. Indeed, the goal of channeling 3% of GDP implies that research activities could be responsible for a similar-sized impact on the environment.

The new report contains many more examples, and of course advice on how to integrate SD in research. The list of areas indicated by the EU's SD Strategy is long (see p. 10 of the above-mentioned document), and the report indicates a wish that all are addressed via research. Inter- and multi-disciplinary approaches seem to be necessary, and especially it is observed that some in some areas the stakeholders indeed address

SD head-on, while in other areas this happens only on the rhetoric level. Inter-disciplinarity could help to transfer best practices from one area to another.

The report brings forward a number of systemic recommendations, like increasing the prestige of SD in the research arena, but calls are also made for structuring research funding around SD issues. The signal value of this report is strong, and supports the view of the EU: that SD is imperative to continued human endeavour. This would have an enormous impact on our future as researchers, and I think we should welcome this. We as researchers must take the lead, society invests in us exactly for this purpose. On the other hand, we have to allow for research where SD has a lower or non-existent profile, hence the main question is how the funds should be distributed. The central conclusion for us as young researchers is that SD will grow in significance, and each of us must integrate these central questions when planning our future in research.

Guggi Kofod

The Charter and Code: Towards a transparent, fair and equitable European Research Area



The Commission Recommendation on the “European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers” of 11

March 2005 is a set of general principles and requirements which specifies the roles, responsibilities and entitlements of researchers as well as of employers and/or funders of researchers. The “Charter & Code” has received a significant and growing recognition by research institutions: today almost 100 organisations representing 900 institutions from 24 European and non-European countries have undersigned it.

However, despite the formal recognition of the added value of this policy tool, there is generally little information on concrete steps undersigning organisations carry out to implement the Charter & Code principles they have endorsed.

The European Commissioner for Science and Research, Janez Potočnik, has launched a new support tool, “the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers” (HRS4R), at the French Presi-

dency Conference on “Young researchers in Europe” in Rennes on 20 November 2008. It is a concrete step forward in implementing the recently agreed partnership for researchers, which provides a comprehensive policy agenda in order to make by the end of 2010 rapid and measurable progress to:

- systematically open recruitment;
- meet the social security and supplementary pensions needs of mobile researchers;
- provide attractive employment and working conditions;
- enhance the training, skills and experience of researchers.

Key features. HSR4R is a mechanism to support research institutions’ implementation of the Charter & Code. It should help to overcome the lack of public information on the actual compliance with the principles and consequently increase the objective information on the attractiveness of the research institution concerned and thus give them the international visibility they merit.

This mechanism is a support tool. It is thus voluntary. It is also light to apply and flexible in its validation and verification approach. The result should be reliable information which is easily made available to the public at large. The underlying characteristics of this mechanism are:

- Implementation by individual institutions on a voluntary basis;
- Based on institutional self-assessment with full respect for the autonomy of the institutions
- Simple and light, non-bureaucratic and flexible, recognizing the variety of situations across institutions
- Transparency, providing easy, publicly accessible information on the actions by undersigning institutions to implement the Charter and Code principles

Implementation steps:

1. An internal analysis by the research institution, involving all key institutional players, to compare institutional practices against the Charter and Code principles;

2. The publication of planned actions for improvements in compliance (what, by when, by whom) through
3. A Human Resources Strategy for Researchers incorporating the Charter & Code; The acknowledgement of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers by the European Commission;
4. The implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers" by the institution, which through its internal quality assurance mechanism also carries out a self-assessment at least every second year on the basis of which it may update its Human Resources Strategy as necessary;
5. An external evaluation, which takes place periodically, but no later than every 4th year.

Latest News. At the moment the European Commission is mainly focusing on the concrete implementation side of the Charter & Code. This

autumn the European Commission has set up an "Institutional Human Resources Strategy Group", consisting of 40 "pioneering" research institutions around Europe, intending to make use of the "HR Strategy for Researchers Incorporating the Charter & Code". The main objective of this initiative is to have by March 2010 the first group of Charter & Code undersigning institutions "acknowledged" by the Commission as organisations which are concretely applying the Charter & Code principles in their own human resources policy.

For further information on the Charter & Code and the HRS4R, please go to <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/rights>. You can find there the name of the organisations which have undersigned the Charter & Code and the name of those which have announced their intention to apply the HRS4R mechanism.

Don't hesitate to inform your institution about this supporting tool, it can make things change!

Esperança Manuel

Past meetings with MCFA participation

EUWIIN, Helsinki, October 2009



Over 500 delegates attended the 2nd European Union Women Inventors & Innovators Network (EUWIIN) International Expo, Conference and Awards Ceremony, the most informative occasion for promoting inventive and innova-

tive women in Europe and the world. The programme was rich in content and gives lots of opportunities to learn more about existing policies and practises which support and assist the many creative and scientific inventions and innovations by women in Europe which have a good potential in developing into thriving businesses.

Areas of discussions covered intellectual property rights, business intelligence, research and development, equity and commercialisation, access to funding and various other existing opportunities.

Attendees included: creative, inventive and

innovative SMEs and professionals; intellectual property right advisers; women in science, engineering and technology groups; multi-national companies and manufacturing industries; investors and financial advisers; policy makers, government officials and funders; researchers and academics; chambers of commerce, business advisers and trainers; and diversity professionals.

The EUWIIN event began with a series of innovative, thought-provoking, and cutting-edge roundtable dialogues featuring a diversity of leaders. The year 2009 also provides an opportunity to showcase model products, programs, share lessons learned and look to the future. EUWIIN's activities aim to work on correcting gender balance in the world of invention and innovation by constantly involving women in important dialogue in the many policy and strategies across Europe.

ITWIIN (Italian Women Innovators & Inventors Network) was represented by its president

Rita Assogna. Gianna Avellis and Raffaella Di Sante, from the MCFA administrative and advisory boards, are currently acting in the main board of ITWIIN, which pushed Italian inventors and innovators in the top position of the EUWIIN award winner's list: there were two women of

ITWIIN in the first five positions. ITWIIN acts as a new branch / chapter of EUWIIN in Italy and some agreements were settled in this event for future collaborations.

Gianna Avellis

News in Brief

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):

Getting – and Not Getting – Tenure

Even if guaranteed lifetime unemployment isn't a professional priority, not getting fired probably is. And that's an interesting thing about the tenure track: Either you win a lifetime-employment guarantee or you join the unemployment line, saying goodbye, in some cases, to a big chunk of your self-esteem and professional reputation.

Tips for Finding Consulting Work

For scientists and engineers between jobs, or for those with jobs but who may have some spare time, consulting work can keep skills sharp and morale high, and put a little coin in your pocket. Finding customers for your consulting practice, however, takes the same professionalism and perseverance as finding a job.

The Entrepreneurial Bug

Whereas some budding entrepreneurs start a company so that they can be their own boss or get rich quick, scientists usually have a different motivation: to transform their research findings into products or services that help people.

Finding Your Way Into Policy Careers in Europe

A wide range of organizations offer science policy-related jobs. But in Europe, don't expect to find many open doors there. Instead, prepare to look for a partially open window, wedge it open, and climb in.

Women and this year's Nobel Prizes

The announcement of the Nobel prize in economics brought the number of women honored in this year's Nobel Prizes to five (out of 13 total): "The largest number ever to join the ranks in a single year," noted the [Nobelprize.org](http://nobelprize.org) Web site. It's tough to know whether this is something to celebrate. Let's set aside the gender imbalance for a moment and instead focus on the women...

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

This Letter is edited by the Association des Boursiers Marie Curie a.i.s.b.l. (Marie Curie Fellows Association), <http://mcfa.eu/>. Editor: E. Buchlin, eric.buchlin@mariecurie.org. Director of publication: G. Kofod. Please send requests about articles in this Letter and submissions for the next Letter to Members to office@mariecurie.org