

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

October 2007

Dear MCFA Members,

Welcome to this new edition of our Letter to Members! Among other news, you will find information on the Association's Extraordinary General Meeting, which will be held in Catania, Italy, on 24th November. Two National Groups meetings are also planned this month, and another will follow. These are good opportunities for discussions and for participating to the life of the Association.

In addition to reports on the previous meetings (including the discussion with Mike Rogers at the last General Meeting), you will find in this Letter a special section with information from KoWi, and even an inside view from the EC Directorate for Research! Enjoy!

Contents

Life of the Association	2
How is European research organized?	4
Past Meetings with MCFA Participation	6

Life of the Association

MCFA Extraordinary General Meeting in Catania

The Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) will be held in Catania on the 24th of November.

The MCFA Annual General Meeting has been held in London past September. In the last "Letter to members" you could read our report about the meeting. During that event, the quorum for the election of the new Administrative Board has not been reached. Therefore we organize an Extraordinary General Assembly in order to have new elections.

We warmly invite you to participate to this event! A general assembly is a chance to better know how the Association is running and to get more involved in it. It is the proper time to discuss about the Association's life: main MCFA objectives, main activities, the current MCFA organisation, your expectations on the Association, new propositions and ideas. Moreover, a general assembly is an opportunity to meet other Marie Curie Fellows and share with them your experience, no matter how different your backgrounds are! You can share your excitement and successes as well as your frustrations or problems you are actually facing. You can do some networking and maybe meet a couple of new friends!

We also invite you to put your candidacy forward for the election of the new Administrative Board. A new folder has been opened in the Discussion Forum. You will find it on the MCFA Website, <http://mcfa.eu/>: click on the Communication button, then select Discussion Forum from the drop-down menu and log in. There, you will find the dedicated folder.

Being part of the Board is an interesting experience. It is a challenging task, but it worthwhile to try. As a Board member you will contribute to the Association's advancement, identifying the direction to follow and working to accomplish established goals. But at the same time you will extend your ability to work in a team and you will gain experience in managing an international organisation.

Any MCFA full member can submit her/his candidature and contribute to the Association's advancement. The Association is running on a voluntary basis, thus the Association's actions

depend strongly on committed people.

Do not feel unprepared or shy: if you have some time to devote to the Association on a regular basis, just put your candidacy forward! Your input is essential!

Should you have any question about the Administrative Board, please post it in the Discussion Forum: in the EGA 2007 folder, you can find a section dedicated to members' questions!

I am looking forward to meet you all in Catania, have interesting conversations with you and have some nice time together!

Maria Antonietta Buccheri

We also remind you that the reports are available online in the Members section of <http://mcfa.eu/>: log in as a member (at the top right of the page), and then go to the Members menu, choose Member area, and click on Internal Documents.

National Groups

National Groups are the backbone of the Association. They can reach Fellows in every single country in which they are active.

National Meetings are intended to get together Fellows living in the same country. It is an opportunity to discuss main concerns Fellows are facing in the country they are living in and also an opportunity to do some networking.

Two National Meetings are planned this November: the Slovakian one will be held in Košice on the 15th of November and the Italian one will be held in Catania on the 23th of November. Please, find below the invitations by the respective Coordinators. More details (agenda of the meetings, arrangements, others) will be spread via the International mailing list and the respective National mailing lists. If you are not subscribed yet, please take a few minutes to do it! Visit our Website and click on the Communication button, then choose the mailing lists option and follow the instructions.

The Spanish meeting will also be held soon. More information about it will follow. If you wish to help the Coordinators in organising the meetings, feel free of contacting us at office@mariecurie.org.

Slovak Group meeting

The meeting organized by Slovak National group is not really a meeting: it is more a workshop not only for MCFA members but also for PhD students, researchers and university teachers from East Slovakia. The objectives of the workshop are:

- to bring important and useful information about the fellowships and the ways how to apply for it
- to provide practical advice for writing proposal, managing projects etc.
- to inform about Marie Curie Actions and the work of MCFA

The emphasis of the workshop is to make MCFA more visible because in Slovakia not many people apply for Marie Curie Fellowships and it is also a way how to encourage MCFA members to meet and cooperate. This way would help on the one hand people who want to apply for fellowship, and on the other hand MCFA to visualize its activities among scientists.

The workshop is planned for participants from East Slovakia region because they have fewer possibilities to meet people with experience with EU projects in comparison with people living in the capital.

It will take place in Košice in November 15, 2007 at the Technical University of Košice. Speakers are Dr. Karla Zimannova from Slovak Academic Information Agency, Mgr. Zuzana Lavrinova — National Contact Point for Marie Curie Actions and people who have successfully applied for the Marie Curie Grants.

The presentations will be on:

- Marie Curie Fellowships and MCFA
- How to participate in MC Fellowships? (calls, opportunities)
- How to write a MC proposal? (financing, different kind of proposals)
- Possibilities of mobility funding in Slovakia

At the end of the workshop is planned an open panel discussion for the practical questions from participants.

Jana Kadukova

8th Italian National Meeting: “A researcher’s tool to success: mobility”

The 8th Italian National Meeting will be held in Catania on the 23th of November.

Two sessions are planned. The first one will focus on mobility, as the title suggests! Invited speakers are going to discuss the importance of mobility in the researcher’s career path, focusing on different aspects and concerns of the issue, as the European Research Area, the Italian Government proposals, the mobility between University and Industry, and Taxation. Daphne van de Sande, who is in charge of the Italian National Contact Point (NCP), confirmed her presence to the meeting.

A second session will be dedicated to the Marie Curie Fellows, their current projects, concerns, expectations on the Association, etc.

The meeting is mainly intended to get together the Fellows living in Italy at the moment, but it is at the same time open to any interested (actual or past) Fellow.

The event will be followed by the MCFA Extraordinary General Meeting (EGA), which is planned for the 24th of November.

The National Meeting, as well as the EGA, will take place in Catania, on the Eastern cost of Sicily. Thus, this will be a chance to discover this city, her fascinating buildings in lava stone, and the so called “movida” in the evening! Or maybe to sip a coffee on the seaside!

We are looking forward to meet you and have nice time together!

*Maria Antonietta Buccheri
and Manuela Giovanetti*

Discussion with Mike Rogers at the AGM

Mike Rogers, from the EC (Marie Curie Individual Fellowships Unit) was present at the MCFA AGA on the 22nd of September 2007. It was an opportunity for the MCFA to express our views on several topics, including an improved collaboration between the MCFA and the EC.

As a general remark, Mike Rogers stated that in the MC Unit there are people who has been working there for some time now and this provides an opportunity for continuity. However, we

were all aware that there was an internal movement of people in the EC, so eventually there is an inevitable turnover of staff.

They are currently assessing the impact of MC actions and previous schemes, and preparing themselves for the novelties in FP7, mainly, the co-funding scheme. The objective in setting up the new Agency is to transfer the management of contracts that will operate under the EC guidelines, in order to improve efficiency and efficacy.

Several issues were raised during the meeting by the MCFA, specially on how to create a better way to interact with the EC, including different collaborations and direct links with the EC. The MCFA repeatedly pointed out that it is essential for both, MC Fellows and the MCFA to receive support from the EC in reaching MC Fellows. Right now, the MCFA has limited resources to reach MC Fellows and many of them never realize (or realize too late) that the MCFA exists and it provides useful information for them, as well as guidance and help, if needed. An MCFA flyer was sent to the EC and Mike Rogers agreed to provide some help by printing leaflets and flyers and to distribute information about the MCFA in Marie Curie related events for the Commission's own use. The possibility to include information about the MCFA in MC applications is considered fundamental by the MCFA and this point was stressed out during the meeting. Mike Rogers agreed to bring this information to the EC and to try to find ways to give more MCFA-related information to MC Fellows and potential

applicants to Marie Curie Fellowships at an opportune moment.

It was also suggested that the MCFA should collaborate more and better with NCPS and that the Letter to Members could be sent to them. An NCP meeting is programmed in November 2007.

The EC has taken note of the MCFA response to the Green Paper published by the Commission in April 2007.

Additionally, the MCFA pointed out that in case of need, it was really difficult for MC Fellows to contact the relevant project officers in the EC. It was suggested that the FP6 helpdesk could be reopened. Mike Rogers explained that this had been done, and that there was probably a need to expand this for the new contracts as operational issues tended to be very specific while general enquiries handled by the Europe Direct Helpdesk were more of a preliminary nature.

The MCFA also stressed that the Chair of the MCFA should be in the European Commission's External Advisory Group on Human Resources and Mobility. Mike Rogers noted that this had been the case in the past, and said he would suggest this idea to the EC at the next review cycle in 2008. This would certainly benefit both, the EC and the MCFA as there would be a direct link between both organizations, creating a framework for dialogue and eventually helping to sort out problems or concerns more quickly. The MCFA represents the views of MC Fellows and mobile researchers in Europe, who are the reality of the Programmes implemented by the EC.

How is European research organized?

An inside view from the EC Directorate for Research: PEOPLE to People

This little contribution comes to you from the bowels of the nerve centre of the 7th Framework programme. The sheer size of the thing has been difficult to digest. Continuing the analogy, imagine having to eat 3 dinners one after the other but only being allowed to chew everything twice. Is it any wonder that there is indigestion (so much of the new money comes later in the 7 year cycle), constipation (the first projects take longer to

get come out at the other end), heartburn (many people have worked very hard to get the system up and going) and headaches (yes, just plain old headaches). All this time we have a diet coach watching the menu, what we eat, how we eat it and how quickly we eat (DG Budget and Financial Control), while the left-overs are examined closely for undigested morsels (Court of Auditors). Eat too slow and the food for tomorrow is taken away, eat too quick and there is admonishment, eat just right and you'll get criticised elsewhere... Meanwhile friendly stakeholders are telling us they are all hungry but all want to eat

different things, in different order, on different days. The Framework programme is a community of not just 27 countries but nearer 36, as Associated countries have the same rights in the FP and Member States. They have on average each 14 days of public holidays so try to plan a meeting with all able to attend... However, the flexibility shown is generous, and consortia of over 40 participants have been known to have no problems meeting at airport lounges...

One the positive side there is news that our initial digestive system has lengthened (more decentralised checks and cross checks and delegation) but there is also bad news in that there are fewer enzymes along the way to help digest the workload (staff numbers have not kept up). It is not by accident that the Commission is asking for 558 staff to handle the Research executive agency workload — a figure so reasonable that 6 months of attack by the budget boys and girls have not been able to crack the logic of the arguments. For the real people with families, the introduction of flexitime has been helpful to work life balances and establishing a better equilibrium, while making managers lives more difficult as the core hours when one can meet are further reduced.

So with that little introduction I wanted to set the scene for what I hope will be regular short contributions from the inside. See you in the next issue!

What is KoWi and how it can help you

The European Liaison Office of the German Research Organisations (KoWi, Koordinierungsstelle EG der Wissenschaftsorganisationen) facilitates the successful participation of scientists at German research institutions in the EU Framework Programme for Research and Development.

Financed by German Research Foundation (DFG, Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft) and with premises both in Bonn and Brussels, KoWi

works in close contact with national authorities on federal and 'Länder' level and with the science and research organisations in Germany. Together with the National Contact Points for the Framework Programme, KoWi provides substantial support for scientists interested in EU funding.

At the European level, KoWi is acting in close cooperation with the EU institutions involved in R&D policy as well as with the liaison offices of other European research organisations (IGLO, Informal Group of R&D Liaison Offices).

A particular focus of KoWi is the support of PhD-, postdoctoral students and universities applying for the Marie Curie schemes. Moreover, KoWi assists researchers interested in the "Ideas", "Cooperation" and "Capacities" schemes of the Framework Programme.

For this purpose KoWi regularly offers

- information events at research institutions in Germany
- personal guidance during the application phase
- training courses on contract and project management

In addition, KoWi informs researchers via the "Active Information Service" (AiD) about calls for proposals, updates on the EU funding schemes as well as vacancies in research in Germany and abroad.

If you are in Germany (or are planning to move to Germany) and need advice from KoWi with your Marie Curie proposal or if you would like to share your experience with Marie Curie at events organized by KoWi, please contact Victoria Llobet, vl@kowi.de or Joanna Mastalerek, jm@kowi.de.

KoWi also regularly offers traineeship possibilities (minimum 3 months). If you have a good knowledge of German, feel free to submit your application any time. For further information check the KoWi website: <http://www.kowi.eu>.

Joanna Mastalerek

Past Meetings with MCFA Participation

Women researchers' night in Bari, 28 September

Gianna Avellis was invited to the Night of Researchers held in the historic centre of Bari, Italy, to develop the issue of European Research and Networking. She presented the Marie Curie Fellows Association, as example of European Networking and her experience with the fellowship she won at the Department of Computing of Imperial College, London, UK, doing research and networking with several gurus of Software Engineering during her stay there.

She also mentioned the m-WiSET (mobile Women in Science Engineering and Technology) and its current activities, a working group she founded with Raffaella Di Sante, who was also invited to the workshop but could not attend.

Gianna underlined that from her direct experience in the Italian Forum of Research of CGIL FLC, of which she works as representative of Apulia Region, mobility and networking are getting much more attention than in the past, and will be positively evaluated in the national contract for recruitment of Italian researchers in the University. However, to do networking properly, women have to be fully represented in the top positions of University and Industry, in all decisional levels. To address this issue, she mentioned the 7th PF project proposal submitted last May, and currently under evaluation, namely WIDEMAP (Women in DEcision-Making Processes). In it we address the problem of the glass ceiling also thanks to Networking with other partners in US, Canada and Australia, such as London Metropolitan University (UK), University of Oklahoma (US), Univ. of British Columbia (Canada), Medicare (Australia). Networking will allow to compare analysis and statistics of data and most of all to exchange and transfer know how on the best practices.

Gianna mentioned in this theme her personal experience of 20 years of European projects in ICT as senior researcher in Tecnopolis Science Park, and as independent expert evaluator of European projects for the Commission in the last Call of Software and Services. She has understood the importance of networking especially in consortium building in European projects, which

become more and more competitive, as well as in learning from more advanced research centres new role models, especially for women researchers, and strategies of dissemination and exploitation of European results.

Gianna concluded with a quick look at the situation of women innovators and investors networks in Europe, such as the "Network of the Networks" EPWS (European Platform of Women in Science), the EUWIIN (EUropean Women Innovators and Investors Network) founded by the GWIIN (Global Women Innovators and Investors Network) which instead was born after the success of many initiatives of women innovators and investors in UK, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Finally, she mentioned the Italian network founded last September in Rome, the ITWIIN (Italian Women Inventors and Investors Network) and illustrate its objectives and call for subscriptions.

Meeting about the "European Blueprint for Continuing Professional Development"

Vanessa Diaz had a meeting in October about the development of a "European blueprint" entitled "From PhD to Post-Doc and Principal Investigator: Continuing Professional Development for Mobile Scholars and Knowledge Entrepreneurs": <http://www.cee-socialscience.net/1989/independence/EarlyIndependence.pdf>.

This is a proposal by an independent group led by Dave Filipovic-Carter and Chris Armbruster about continuing professional development, aimed at helping junior researchers to overcome the obstacles towards an independent career. The proposal is to constitute a sort of organization that will offer to some young and promising researchers from all around Europe the tools (mentoring, seminars...) to become independent as principal investigators.

This would be a step towards the goals of the European Charter for Researchers, which is

strongly supported by MCFA. For this reason, both the group behind the “blueprint” proposal and the MCFA think about starting a collaboration, which would include the MCFA spreading awareness towards this initiative, and the MCFA

becoming a member of the Advisory Board of this project.

You can send your comments and ideas about this possible collaboration to office@mariecurie.org.

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