

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

June–July 2007

Dear MCFA Members,

Welcome to this last issue of the MCFA Letter to Members before the summer holidays. We will resume the publication of this Letter at the beginning of September.

In this issue, you will find some good news for the Association, for example the offer we obtained for secretarial support from the University of Potsdam. The Board has also elaborated several proposals for collaboration with other associations and contributions to meetings. The discussions on the European Institute of Technology and on the ERA Green Paper are still ongoing, and you are warmly encouraged to participate to these discussions in the Discussion Forum, accessible from the menu on <http://mcfa.eu/>. Furthermore, we publish the result of the analysis by Gugli Kofod of our survey on researcher's mobility. Last but not least, you will find the usual reports on past meetings with MCFA participation, and a diary of upcoming events.

Most important for the life of the Association will be the *Annual General Meeting*, on the 22nd of September in London. The Association needs your participation and your candidacy as a member of the new Board! We warmly invite MCFA members, with or without experience, who can devote some time on a regular basis to put your candidacies forward.

Finally, we gently remind you to renew your MCFA membership at you earliest convenience. Your contribution is essential for the MCFA.

For any enquiries about the articles of this Letter, if no specific contact is given, please send an e-mail to office@mariecurie.org. This is also *your* Letter, so please send us also your submissions (news, "speaker's corner"...).

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Life of the Association

MCFA Annual General Meeting: 22nd of September in London

The next *Annual General Meeting* (AGM) will take place in London on Saturday the 22nd of September, just the day after The Source Event Career Fair (see page 9).

All MCFA members are invited to attend the assembly. We remind that the statutes require that a large number of members are physically present at the AGM in order to be able to take decisions. The agenda will be communicated later, and will include at least the presentation of activity and financial reports, and the election of a new administrative board. More information will be posted in the lists and our web site in due time.

We encourage you to think already about *being a candidate for the board*. As a board member you will be able to collect new experiences and extend your skills, which may open you alternative career paths. If you are interested or would like to know more, please contact us at office@mariecurie.org.

Collaboration with EARMA

A proposal has been sent to the *European Association of Research Managers & Administrators* (EARMA) in order to develop future collaborations between MCFA and EARMA.

MCFA to Obtain Secretarial Support

Thanks to Guggi Kofod and the International Funding Office of University of Potsdam, MCFA has obtained a tentative offer for part-time secretarial support. This would greatly help for the day-to-day management of the Association and would ensure continuity in regular tasks like handling of mail and overview of treasury, as well as helping with the maintenance of our publications.

New Swedish National Group Coordinator

Petru Niga (petru.niga@surfchem.kth.se) has proposed himself to be the new coordinator of the Swedish National Group. He would like to revive the group by sharing experiences, organizing meetings and managing the group website. Petru is a physicist with a Marie Curie Fellowship at Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. He is originally from Romania, with experiences in Slovenia and Ireland.



Publications and Communications

Discussions on ERA Green Paper

The Board would like to publish a document about the position of MCFA on the “Green Paper” on the European Research Area, published by the EC. We are looking for people interested in science policy to lead or participate to the discussions.

To allow discussions, a new subject has been created in the MCFA Discussion Forum (accessible from the MCFA web site), under “Science and science policy: Green Paper”. Every opinion matters, please join the discussion!

The Green Paper is available from

http://ec.europa.eu/research/era/consultation-era_en.html#greenpaper.

Discussions on EIT

A joint statement between MCFA, EURODOC and ESU on the European Institute of Technology (EIT) project will also be prepared. Please join the debate on the Discussion Forum, under the subject “Science and science policy: European Institute of Technology”.

MCFA in Wikipedia

The Wikipedia page about MCFA, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marie_Curie_Fellows_Association, initiated by MCFA member Dario Taraborelli, now presents a

quick overview of the history and structure of the Association. You can contribute to this page or contact the Board or Dario with ideas and propositions.



Career Development and Funding

Deadline for IEF, IOF and IIF

We remind you that the closing date for the Intra-European (IEF), International Outgoing (IOF) and International Incoming (IIF) Fellowships for Career development is 14 August 2007 at 17h00 (Brussels local time). An extensive guide for applicants can be found on the FP7 webpage. To check all the existing calls and deadlines go to: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7CallsPage>

Survey on Researchers' Mobility

A web-based survey was conducted among members of the MCFA. Questions ranged from grant-specific questions, to more personal questions such as ease of relocation. In the following some of the results are reported. These findings may help inspire discussions and new policies.

There were 125 respondents in total. The respondents were distributed somewhat evenly over the years, and over the host countries. 26 reported having received Ph.D. grants, 85 reported Post Doc. grants, 2 responded "No", and 1 responded having received both types of grants (11 answers unclear). 116 respondents placed themselves in the Science/Engineering group, while 9 were in Humanities. There were 43 females and 82 males.

Only 4 of 125 responded that the relocation conveyed by the grant was not relevant to their research, while 105 responded that it was very relevant. Important objectives were to be close to experts, cultivate new contacts, satisfy scientific curiosity and get international experience. Less important was the salary or the need to obtain access to scientific data. Demands from home institutions were considered unimportant by most.

When a researcher moves to gain international experience, (s)he also leaves an institution

behind. 83 responded that research in their specific area of expertise stopped at their home institution when they left. 10 of these responded that their specific authority at the home institution was the reason for this, while 41 stated that it was their specific knowledge.

To the question whether the objectives mentioned as important above could be met with other means, most agree that phone calls and e-mail would not have been adequate. Conferences (26% agree) and connection through colleagues (29% agree) could have helped the objectives somewhat, whereas shorter fellowships (41% agree) could also have helped to get the international exposure which Fellows see as one of the important reasons why they choose to apply for a Marie Curie Fellowship (MCF).

According to respondents, the MCFs are highly relevant to the development of new research ideas and topics, 100 of 125 agreed to this. The respondents did not agree among each other how the MCFs were specifically relevant, however, relations with other researchers, the gain of international insight into new research directions and the development of new ideas were deemed more important, while the access to new facilities and to confidential data were not as important.

Respondents have become more mobile through their MCF, 108 of 124 agree. 74% now consider moving permanently, 66% would like to extend their stay, and 73% want to move again after a period in the home country. It also seems that MCFs are reaching people who can make most use of them, 114 of the 125 respondents would have either applied again the following year (13), gone on their own (7) or sought other means of funding (94) if they had not received the MCF.

Accommodation was mostly found by appli-

cants themselves (83%), and was not provided by the host. 22% found it difficult or very difficult to find a place to stay, especially in The Netherlands, where 6 of 11 found it difficult or very difficult to find accommodation.

Most fellows travel alone, only 25% travel with their family. Of the people responding to the question about having difficulties relocating their spouse, 50% agreed. To the same question regarding relocating children, only 29% of respondents to this question reported difficulties.

The size of the grant was found mostly to be adequate. 6 respondents answered “Not adequate at all”, these were based in France, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. 9 of 31 respondents who moved with their family found their grants to be inadequate, whereas 13 of 95 who traveled alone had this problem.

It is obvious that the MCFs are a great success, since they facilitate what the fellows want: to be mobile, to interact with other researchers and to develop new ideas. Fellows did not believe that these objectives could be met in any other way than through a fellowship. If the MCFs should be improved, it is mostly on the social side: fellows who bring their spouses have (unspecified) troubles doing so, and when they have relocated, 30% find their grants inadequate.

We would like to thank the respondents who have made this survey possible, and we hope that you don't mind participating in more surveys in the future. The surveys provides the MCFA with the hard facts necessary to convince policy makers and the Commission about successes and failures of policies that affect us, the mobile researchers.

Guggi Kofod

The Speaker's Corner

A year and a half ago I was absolutely oblivious to the activities of the MCFA. I had paid my membership fees because I thought it was useful, since I received support from the MCFA when I was trying to get my contract sorted out from the Commission. By that time (2005), there was quite a bit of a mess with contracts and many MC Fellows during that time were moving (spouse, kids, dogs, etc.) to their host country without a proper contract in their hands. A daunting experience I can tell you.

Then, I came to the UK and I decided to have a go at the UK group in 2006. I saw the old web page and I was quite puzzled by the fact that there were no activities at all in the UK. I wrote an e-mail to the office saying that I wanted to work for the MCFA and I organized my first meeting in Sheffield, with the help of the European Research Office at the University of Sheffield and I met for the first time with other MC Fellows.

In 2006 I received the information about the Marie Curie Conference in Manchester. Although I thought it was a bit too expensive, I decided that I wanted to go and I submitted a paper for the Conference. It was nice to meet other MC Fellows and to see that there was 'something going on'. To be honest, I was terrified to meet

the 'big' names in the MCFA. I thought: 'ohhhh... these people must be very important'. I used to be very shy and I still am for many things and somehow I was petrified by the idea of meeting 'all these people with so much experience'. Anyway, I met people from past boards and at some point I got involved in an extra thing or two.

Other national meetings came (London, York) and I attended my first Annual General Meeting. I put my candidacy forward to the board because I thought I could make a difference although I knew that the last year of my Fellowship would be really challenging and quite difficult. In fact, the last year of my MC Fellowship (I just finished 2 weeks ago) lived up to my worst fears in terms of stress and work. I always thought that besides some cleverness, sheer hard work would get me through tough situations. At some point along the way, I realized this was not true and the last months of my Fellowship + job hunting + MCFA + work + husband, etc, were excruciatingly painful. It's almost all finished now and although I am still striving for the 'happily ever after' things have calmed down and I'm a bit more relaxed "workwise".

However, I have a regret: despite all my sheer hard work for the MCFA there are still too many

things to be done. The MCFA is based on the goodwill of people working for it and it requires patience, dedication, wisdom (very difficult as it comes with experience), a vision and loads of motivation. I am very motivated and dedicated but not patient at all. I would like to think I am wiser but I'm sure I'm not and regarding the 'vision'... well, it is something that changes with time and the reality bites that you receive along the way.

I am perhaps writing the last 'speaker's corner' before the MCFA Annual General Assembly and I am writing here for everybody: all of you who are not planning to attend, all of you who are planning to attend and the some of you who are planning to submit your candidacies for the MCFA board. Listen to me: the list of things to do is just immense and sometimes I wonder how much of the hard work is visible. However, I honestly think this experience has been worthwhile as working for the MCFA has changed me deeply. I have learned quite a few things about myself and working with others, I am much more open to collaborating and networking than before; incredibly, I think that I will be able to do better science as I am much more willing to talk about projects or ideas as I am more confident and I have learned a thing or two about European funding, I have met interesting people with very different backgrounds, I have made some friends

that I hope will stay with me for a long time, I have discovered that I have other career interests that I might explore or not but which are there and I cannot deny and I've become a 'believer': I truly believe we have a mission. There are so many things the MCFA can offer you and so many things you can do for the Association that won't happen unless we put our hearts into it.

We need responsible and motivated volunteers to take the MCFA where we want it to be. If we want to be heard, if we want to count, we need to be present, constant, responsible and trustworthy. All of you, reading this 'Letter to Members' have the potential to do something good for the MCFA and MC Fellows in general. Your input is essential.

I will certainly be in London on the 22nd of September for the MCFA Annual General Assembly and I will be truly looking forward to meeting all of you there and to have an interesting chat and... possibly a few drinks afterwards!

Vanessa Diaz

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

Past Meetings with MCFA Participation

Women in Science

Gianna Avellis and Raffaella di Sante actively participated to the exhibition of *Women in Science: The Way Forward* conference, held in Heidelberg, Germany, 9-11 May 2007, at the premises of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), Europe's flagship laboratory for basic research in molecular biology, funded by public research monies from 19 member states.

The conference aim was to increase the awareness of the persistent gender disparity, to shed the light on the causes and to signpost a way towards gender equality. It presented the

latest findings and projects in gender research, and showcased successful initiatives for women in science, together with a number of concrete initiatives that are already helping to advance women's careers in science.

The conference was part of SET-Routes, a collaboration between EMBL, EMBO (European Molecular Biology Organization), and CERN, funded by European Commission, with the aim to encourage women to pursue careers in Science Engineering and Technology (SET).

An exhibition area showcased successful initiatives and gave participants the opportunity to exchange experience at European and interna-

tional level, besides getting expert advice.

m-WiSET (mobile Women in Science Engineering and Technology) Working Group of MCFA presented in the exhibition area a position paper with the objectives and current activities of the group, together with a self-running Powerpoint presentation of m-WiSET aims and first results. A large poster of MCFA was showed in the stand allocated to our organisation, and promotion material such as leaflets and pens of the association were also available to the conference participants approaching our group for information and collaboration setting.

In this context, several contacts were established with European and USA representatives in the stand. In particular, we approached the European Commission, DG Research, for promoting our project proposal in the 7th Framework Programme, a Science in Society Coordination Action, called WIDEMAP (Women in Research Decision-Making Processes).

It was a very fruitful and engaging two and half days of information and discussion, with world leading representatives from Europe and USA.

GWIIIN and EUWIIN in Berlin

The first annual *European Union Women Inventors & Innovators Network* (EUWIIN) Conference & Awards was held in Berlin, 14–16 June 2007. Its aim was to promote “Innovation & Research for a Better Competitive Europe”.

Gianna Avellis and Raffaella di Sante participated to the Showcase and Conference. Raffaella attended also the Global Women Inventors & Innovators Network (GWIIIN) conference.

The Showcase was a great opportunity to meet face to face the EUWIIN (European Union Women Inventors and Innovators Network) Awards 2007 finalists and learn more about what makes them exceptional, besides giving the opportunity to market those innovative products and services. The marketplace was another feature of the conference providing the participants the opportunity to gather as much vital information as possible while building a wealth of valuable contacts. Each market table was hosted by



an organisation or individual with a brief summary of their product or service. Ideas for products come mostly from the social needs such as the one of school, child care, sexual education, security, e-Inclusion, other most creative concerning original jewels making reporting personal design of the creators and ethnic jewels with stories of the region. Other concern product now successfully in the market such as ergonomic handles for pans.

We have been invited to this conference by one of our partner in the European project WIDEMAP (Woman in Research Decision-Making Processes) submitted within the Science in Society panel in the 7th Programme Framework, namely the London Metropolitan University, Hilary Farnworth, contacted by Gianna ay EURODOC this year. Raffaella sketched the project objectives in the afternoon round table.

After the welcome and introduction session, chaired by Mrs Bola Olabisi, Director of EUWIIN and CEO of GWIIIN, the Marketplace and Showcase opened, and the conference continued with a common session opened by the official welcome address of Dr Bruno Broich, CEO Technology Foundation Berlin, and two opening keynote addresses by Dr Jennifer Sommerville, Director of the London Office and Business Development Services, London Metropolitan University, UK, and Dr Dorothea Shafer, German Institute for Economic Research (DIW), Department Innovation, Manufacturing, Service. The last addressed the issue of innovation in Europe: gender and financial constraints. The main conclusion was that accelerating the development of financial systems at European level will accelerate the development of female entrepreneurship. There is a policy action addressing this issue in Europe. Discrimination for female entrepreneurs was also pointed out both in terms of cost, interest rate and access to financing, especially in countries with weak financial systems.

The last part of the conference was devoted to interviews and discussion — an hour with leading innovators and open floor discussion tackling several themes of innovation and giving an international perspective of the unique role of women in driving innovation, with panelists coming not only from Europe (Switzerland, Germany, UK) but also internationally such as Bangladesh, and Egypt. Gianna pointed out the

need for dissemination of success stories and best practices as role models for new women enterprises.

Each participant then chose an afternoon session between roundtables on several themes such as:

- Could IPR (Intellectual Property Rights) be your most valuable asset?
- Product development: the climate and sustainable development.
- Financing innovation and new technology transfer,
- From start-up to SME: surviving the market with that great idea!
- Education: better knowledge exploitation and passing the market test, and finally the one in which we participated, that is:
- “Science engineering and technology: embracing innovation and business development” chaired by Marina Larios, President of European Women in Science, Engineering and Technology (WITEC). The main issues addressed were also what we could do to facilitate women entrepreneurship, starting from the fact that our economy and society are not benefiting from women. Marina introduced the session, presenting her consulting firm in UK, INNOVA, partner of the European project EQUALITEC. She mentioned the rate of 10–20% of women in industry and technology in Western countries vs. 80–90% in Kuwait, and 50% in Mexico, underlining that in these last countries there is a drawback: the belief that there is no money in science, which is then left to women, while men are more oriented in business driving sectors.

Virpi Roto, NOKIA Research Center, Helsinki, Finland, outlined the NOKIA approach to User Research as Source for Innovation. The user plays a central role in scoping the research, in user needs analysis and interviews, and brainstorming. This is in order to specify and better select the type of user you want for your innovation (women vs men), and to specify the context

of use of your innovation in different user and organisational settings.

Amanda Chessel, IBM UK LTD, presented how innovation work with a large group of people. It was very interesting to look at the Characteristics of an Innovator, who besides the one of Innovator, Enabler, Champion, Implementer, is very often considered as a “dissident” people in his organisation and usually raises a fear for change by the organisation.

Raffaella addressed the topic on Innovation in Science Engineering and Technology at her Department of Engineering of Innovation, University of Salento, Apulia, Italy, which currently collaborates with several R&D institutions such as ENEA, ASI, CNR, INFN, INFM. She identified interesting open issues concerning innovation and research in academia, such as initial training of researchers, and Industry-Academia pathways and partnerships. She also pointed out the weaknesses in Italy on these partnership and the actual lack of the financial support for spin-off Societies and research capital ventures.

Elisabeth Pollitzer, director of EQUALITEC (EQUAL in Information Technology Electronics and Communication), Gianna friends at Imperial College during her MC fellowship, analysed in her European project the women participation in ITEC, developed user mentoring circles, and methodologies to support women returning to the labour market after a career break. The project collected 50 different case studies and suggested as conclusion that ITEC is an evolving and becoming more and more an interesting opportunity for women who would like to take a career in Innovation, addressing several fields such as e-Health, e-Commerce... The aim of EQUALITEC is to teach women how to network and benefit or contribute to benefit of other networks in ITEC.

An open discussion of all participants followed addressing the issue of what we can do for increasing the participation of women in SET. The conclusions identified different actions, such as to:

- Push more networks at European level of Investors and Innovators, particularly in IT sectors;
- Making CVs in SET more exciting and interesting for women;
- Market the image of women investors and

innovators in SET, such as by TV, Internet, other communications channels followed by women

- Promote workshops at European and international level to share experiences
- Work on motivation of women in SET, letting them feeling as contributing actors to the field
- Analyse the nature of work of women in SET to allow a good work/life balance in their life
- Introduce new European policies on women Job Recruitment and Retention
- Address multidisciplinary aspects of research in SET
- Promote working in Groups, and women Leadership
- Invest in Communication of success stories in SET and their importance for society
- Last but not least conclusion was to stress how to motivate women in SET not only on the economic basis, but also on personal satisfactions, and the recognition of their value of work. To this end, EQUALITEC project has set up a database of women experts as role models.

The conference and showcase was really very interesting and gave perspectives on what is the current state of the art of Innovation and Invention Sectors by Women, at European and international level.

Discussion on Green Paper

Commissioner Potočník has participated to a discussion on June 12th in Brussels, with internet link to satellite meetings all over Europe. Eric Buchlin has attended one such satellite meeting at Imperial College, London.

UK FST Meeting on “Innovation”

Eric Buchlin has been invited on the behalf of MCFA to the *Foundation for Science and Technology dinner/discussion meeting* on “How should the government promote innovation in the UK economy?”, on 5 June 2007 at the Royal Society in London.

There were first four 15-minute talks:

- Jonathan Kestenbaum (National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts - NESTA) spoke about the conditions for innovation: government impulse, culture of enterprise, collaborative approach, capital, science.
- Anne Glover (Technology Strategy Board - TSB; and Amadeus Capital Partners) spoke about TSB investments, and venture capital investments in Europe.
- Peter Warry (Science and Technology Facilities Council - STFC) spoke about the role of research councils (research, training, dissemination, contribution to economic competitiveness) and how they could improve their economic impact.
- Rod Coombs (University of Manchester) spoke about innovation policy, which includes science policy and economic policy, and involves both framework conditions and targeted policies.

These speeches were followed by two discussion sessions, which led to amend somewhat the title of the meeting: government is actually only one player, and innovation is a global issue, not a UK issue. During this discussion, Paul Wicks, from the National Research Staff Association of the UK, made the point that it was difficult for post-docs to innovate in the framework of a PI-lead research.

This meeting was also an opportunity to speak about MCFA to some of the stakeholders of innovation in the UK.

The speeches will be published in a forthcoming issue of the FST journal: <http://www.foundation.org.uk/journal/>



Upcoming Events

The Source Event Career Fair

The MCFA is an Event Ambassador for a new science career fair called *The Source Event* organized by Nature Jobs and London First. The event will be held in London (UK) on September 21st 2007. The Source Event will promote the UK and Europe as a great place to pursue a career in Science, be it in industrial research, research organisations or academia. It will present the best opportunities from the best organisations: public, private, national and international.

The program promises to give attendees many opportunities to gain insights on a wide range of positions and career paths giving inspiration and insight for their career development.



We warmly invite Marie Curie Fellows to attend this event that will give you opportunities to broad your job search, know about alternative and very rewarding scientific careers and meet face to face with employers of choice. Jobseekers will be able to meet with potential employers who are offering hundreds of genuine vacancies (we advise you to bring a paper copy of your CV). The plenary and workshop sessions will provide a unique opportunity to meet high profile scien-

tists and gain careers information and advice.

Registration is still free. For more information, please use the following link: <http://www.thesourceevent.com/>

Vanessa Diaz, MCFA vice-chair, is an *invited speaker* and will be representing the MCFA.

ESOF 2008

The *EuroScience Open Forum* (ESOF) is an open platform for debate and communication for the science community of Europe and the world promoted by Euroscience. It presents and profiles Europe's leading research trends in the sciences, humanities and social sciences.

For information about ESOF, please use the following link: <http://www.esof2008.org>

The MCFA has submitted 3 *proposals for workshops* in the "Careers Programme" of ESOF 2008: a first workshop, on project management, a second workshop on careers for scientists, in industry and beyond and a third one on mobility of women scientists.

The detailed proposals will be available for MCFA members only in the Discussion Forum in the next few weeks.



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