

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

April 2008

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

Reorganization of MCFA IT services

The online members database and registration forms are currently being reorganized (in a separate, offline version that cannot be seen online at the moment). Please give us feedback about the current online version and tell us about any suggestions you might have about the next version of these services or the website!

Revision of the Statutes

The discussion on the proposed changes for the MCFA Statutes is on-going. Please contribute, by telling what you think in the discussion forum thread “Hot Topics: MCFA statutes 2008 discussion” at <http://www.mariecurie.org/discus/>! The proposals are available from <http://eric.buchlin.org/private/mcfastatree4vuir/>.

Éric Buchlin

EIT Selection Criteria: follow-up of MCFA participation

As you probably know from our last Letter to Members, MCFA participated to the public consultation on selection criteria for the EIT Governing Board. Over 130 different proposals were submitted from EIT stakeholders and the general public, commenting on the Governing Board selection criteria initially proposed by the Identification Committee.

The ad-hoc Identification Committee, set up by the European Commission in January, has now produced a final set of selection criteria: http://ec.europa.eu/eit/selection_criteria_en.htm.

The MCFA suggestion regarding the criteria to be applied for Board members from the three worlds of the "knowledge triangle" (business, scientific, academic worlds) has been partly integrated.

In the first set of proposed criteria, the mentioned requirements appeared unbalanced: although in our view the required experience from business community members seemed adequate, the same was not true for members from the other two communities. In fact, according to us, the required standards for members of the scientific community were high and the ones for members of the academic community were too weak. In the new text they are far more balanced.

Unfortunately, our suggestion that personal experience with MC fellowships should be a criteria for one or more Board Members has not been taken into account.

We also insisted on the importance of avoiding conflicts of interest in order to guarantee the transparency of the overall functioning of the EIT. The new set of criteria reads that a formal code of conduct will be implemented for Board Members. We have to wait for its publication to verify if it will contain clear rules on the conflicts of interest.

In our view, participation in such public consultations is important to the Association. It represents a possibility, although a little one, to contribute to the debate regarding the European Policy in Innovation strategies and to take part into the overall process of creating an European Research Area. Moreover, it increases MCFA visibility in Europe.

Maria Antonietta Buccheri

A XING group for MCFA

The MCFA group on the professional social networking website XING is growing! Please join us by going to <http://www.xing.com/net/mcfa/> (you will need to register if you are not already a XING member).

We are also in the process of asking the creation of a MCFA group on LinkedIn.

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):

On Headhunters

Even if recruiters are not important for entry-level jobs, knowing how the executive-recruiting business works can only help. Recruiters work in a Wild West atmosphere. Few laws govern their conduct and their relationships with candidates.

Structuring Academic Careers in Europe

Many people point to what they see as Europe's flawed academic career structure as a major reason for the migration of European researchers to the United States. Each country has its own academic job titles and – often unwritten – career paths, making an international job search thorny and opaque. Now, with the strengthening of social and political unity in Europe, there is a new optimism that the situation can change.

Funding

About contracts and taxation

A common question that we get at the MCFA is about taxation of the Fellowship, and why the amount of money landing in the bank account each month is as it is. Here follows the view of the MCFA (which is only an opinion, not a legal paper!).

First, one should understand the structure of the funding which is received from the Commission. If you have received a personal Marie Curie Fellowship, such as for instance the IEF Intra-European Fellowships, basically a contract is made between the HOST and the COMMISSION. The Commission pays all costs connected with your Fellowship. The HOST then makes a contract with YOU (called Host-Fellow Agreement), which describes your obligations and your benefits, including salary, social, health and pensions.

As applies to any job situation, the best opportunity you will get to make things go your way, is during the contract negotiation between YOU and your HOST. Use it!

Every country in the world is different, also (especially?) when it comes to taxation. Further, we are not aware of any country which has made a set of regulations specific to Marie Curie Fellowships, therefore the taxation of Fellowships have to be adapted to local rules. The recommendation regarding taxation given by the Commission in the documents you can find on Cordis regarding your specific Fellowship are just that, recommendations, they are not law. This is because the Commission has no jurisdiction over tax law in individual countries.

In most countries, the employer (HOST) must pay the state a certain amount for each employee (YOU) towards unemployment, health and/or retirement benefits mentioned above. This amount must be taken from the same funds which pay your salary, and therefore affects the final size of your salary, i.e. it is not a matter of simple division that determines your final salary.

The Commission recommends a salary structure based on 'allowances'. Four allowances are allocated: Living, Mobility, Travel, and Career Opportunity.

The Commission recommends that only the living allowance is taxed, and the other three allowances are given to the Fellow without deduc-

tions. We at the MCFA think this makes sense: the three allowances B-D are meant to pay for EXTRA expenses that the Fellow would NOT incur, had s/he not embarked on a period of mobility. The mobility allowance is meant to help cover expenses invoked when moving countries, such as the actual move, purchasing of new furniture and equipments, new/altered insurances, family expenses, etc. The travel allowance is meant to cover travel to the country of origin, for instance to visit family. The career opportunity allowance is meant to cover for instance travel expenses when looking for the next job, which could be in the home country or in a third country. As all such expenses covered by B-D are not incurred by people who do not undergo periods of mobility, and therefore have nothing to do with the actual work that the Fellow is delivering at the host, it is fair that this money goes untaxed to the Fellow.

Most Fellows however experience a different treatment of their allowances. A very common approach is for the host institution to lump all allowances together and deduct the taxes and other contributions from the total sum. This is not in the Fellows best interest. At other places the Fellow is forced into the local pay scale, and no allowances B-D are paid out, which normally results in a much lower salary than what is provided by the Commission.

The MCFA feels that the best and most fair treatment by the host institution of the Fellows remuneration should be based on the following two principles:

1. Only the living allowance should be taxed, and social deductions should be made only from the living allowance.
2. The mobility, travel and career opportunity allowances should be paid untaxed and without other deductions directly to the Fellow.

It is the responsibility of the Fellow to declare the received allowances to the local tax authorities, and to argue that these allowances remain untaxed. The MCFA recommends all Fellows, in case of insecurity, to hire a local tax advisor, preferably with knowledge of the taxation of mobile researchers.

In order for the Fellow to achieve the treatment contained in the two principles mentioned above, which follow the recommendations by the Commission, the MCFA recommends the Fellow to be active during the contract negotiation phase. This period will be the best opportunity to achieve fair treatment. Once the contract has been signed by the Fellow, it is legally binding, and it will most likely not be possible to change it.

Finally, the MCFA urges that the contract negotiations between the HOST and the COMMISSION should be made contingent upon the existence of a proper and fair contract between the FELLOW and the HOST, based on the above mentioned principles. We believe this to be in the best interests of the Fellows funded by the Commission, and we sincerely believe it will remove most of the problems experienced by Marie Curie Fellows.

On behalf of the Marie Curie Fellows Association,

Guggi Kofod

Please contribute to MCFA publications!

We would like to take this opportunity to remind you to tell us any "horror story" about your fellowship: has your funding been taken away by someone else in the lab? Was your boss crazy? Were the conditions of the contract different than promised? Did you feel a lack of support from your lab or the EC management? We will remove your name and publish your story in the Letter to Members.

Questions about funding from the MCFA website

Here is an example of the questions the Association receives about funding on its website, and the answer that was given to this question.

Question: I need information about if I can apply for a Marie-Curie postdoc fellowship to do a postdoc in a lab of the University of Birmingham, United Kingdom. Also I need a link where I can obtain specifications about terms and conditions, and deadlines for application. Moreover, my wife will do a postdoc in Birmingham too.

She is finishing her doctoral thesis in september. Then, he wants to apply for a postdoc fellowship to develop her training postdoc. The question is if she can apply for a postdoc fellowship without the test of the thesis at the moment of the application. She will do the test in september and get the title in december. Will she need to send a certificate where place the permission of writing? Please, tell me what she need to do in this case.

Answer: As an EU national, you can apply for the Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship (IEF), which is now a part of the "People" set of actions of FP7. The call for applications for this fellowship is now open, the deadline for submissions is 19 August. All the information about the fellowships, eligibility, and the application procedure is available at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=usersite.PeopleDetailsCallPage&call_id=118 in the "Information Package" tab.

The application is prepared jointly with the host laboratory (the University of Birmingham in your case) and submitted online.

Regarding your wife's application, here is an extract on the eligibility criteria (Guide for Applicants, point 2.3.1, pg. 13):

Intra-European Fellowships are directed exclusively at experienced researchers, who are defined as persons who either

- i) have at least 4 years of research experience (full-time equivalent) after obtaining the university diploma that formally gives them access to doctoral studies (without having to acquire any further qualifications) in the country in which the degree/diploma was obtained; or
- ii) are already in possession of a doctoral degree.

The time limit to fulfil the above conditions is the date of the relevant call deadline. Once a researcher has obtained a diploma entitling her/him to commence doctoral studies the "clock" starts ticking. In the event that a researcher has taken a break

from their research career for whatever reason (e.g. working outside research, family reasons, etc.), then the clock is stopped and only starts once they resume their research career.

(They have further examples in the text.) Therefore, if your wife will not have 4 years post-graduate research experience by 19 August, and the PhD is awarded only in December, it looks like she will only become eligible for this fellowship next year, i.e. in 2009.

Yegor Domanov

Job advert: Executive Director - European Theoretical Spectroscopy Facility (ETSF)

European Research Infrastructure, the European Theoretical Spectroscopy Facility (ETSF) seeks an Executive Director, and applications from ex-Marie Curie Fellows would be welcome.

The Executive Director (m/f) will be located at its central node in Louvain-la-Neuve, the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) being the employer. The appointment will be full-time and long term.

The ETSF is a recently created user facility charged with providing support and service to research under way in academic, government

and industrial laboratories. The activities of the ETSF are based on recently developed theory and simulation tools, able to explain phenomena related to electronic excitations, transport and spectroscopy. The facility is distributed over 10 core nodes and 6 associated nodes, grouping more than 200 scientists.

As the first Executive Director, the candidate should be a highly motivated, enthusiastic person, capable of guiding ETSF through continued and sustainable growth. The applicant would ideally combine excellent managerial skills with a background in scientific research. The candidate must be fluent in English, and must possess excellent communication skills.

Deadline for submission of proposal : May 15, 2008.

For more information, contact xavier.gonze@uclouvain.be and visit http://www.etsf.eu/jobs/ETSFExecutiveDirector_particulars.pdf

New FP7 PEOPLE call: ITN

In addition to the three last FP7 PEOPLE calls (IEF, IOE, IIF), the call for Marie Curie Initial Training Networks has been opened: http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=usersite.FP7DetailsCallPage&CALL_ID=121. The deadline for submitting proposals is 02 September 2008.

Past meetings with MCFA participation

Donne e Impresa nella Società della Conoscenza, Bari, Italy

Gianna Avellis was invited to this workshop, which brought several views on Women and Enterprises, based on the current project results by city of Bari, CNR-IAC, Progetto Pubblicità, Technological Districts in Apulia, and several Equal Opportunity Representatives.

After a presentation of MCFA and the Women in Science working group, m-WiSET, Gianna described the objectives of ITWIIN (Italian Women Innovators and Inventors Network, www.itwiin.org), an Italian branch of EUWIIN the European network, funded by part of the m-WiSET working

group of MCFA.

The main objective of ITWIIN is to promote networking and lobbying for technology transfer and best practices exchange, as well as to contribute to consortium building, especially at a European level. A further objective is to map the current situation of women innovators and inventors in Italy, both in public and private sectors and to produce analysis and statistics on the positive actions and success stories, to monitor the situation in Italy and compare with other organisations and institutions that operates at European and international level. Finally, the last aim is to support women innovators and inventors, to motivate, and increase the self-esteem

through mentoring and coaching.

ITWIIN will also promote equal opportunities activities in the field of inventions and innovations. The first Conference of ITWIIN will be held in Rome, funded by the Ministero per lo Sviluppo Economico, on the 3rd of October 2008.

ARTI Info Day, Valenzano, Italy, 28 February 2008

Gianna Avellis was invited to the InfoDay organised by ARTI (Agenzia Regionale per la Tecnologia e l'Innovazione), the regional agency of Apulia for Technological Transfer and Innovation in the Apulia Region, to present MCFA objectives and activities and the results from the work done in the Working Group of Women in Science of MCFA, to encourage women participation to the PEOPLE programme.

The issue debated during the InfoDay concern the 4,7M€ budget of the PEOPLE programme in FP7, allocated by the Commission in order to consolidate the European research, to let Europe become an attraction pole for the best researchers, especially through the Marie Curie Actions to promote the mobility and continuing learning.

These opportunities to increase the potential of the research structures in Apulia region, as un-

derlined by Marco Barbieri, district counsellor of Labour of Apulia Region, cannot be missed and should be integrated with massive funds of Apulia Region for joint research projects between enterprises and university to more than 400 young researchers in Apulia to improve the innovation and research capabilities of the regional research system.

The work done by ARTI to promote the 7th FP has been summarised by the president of ARTI, Prof. Gianfranco Viesti, who also pointed out the pre-evaluation services set up by ARTI of the FP7 proposals.

Daphne Van de Sande of APRE and National Contact Point for FP7/PEOPLE-IDEAS, illustrated the main lines of the PEOPLE programme and the funds allocated to the researchers in the context of Ideas programme.

Luisa Torsi, independent expert evaluator of FP7/PEOPLE, gave indications on how to write a good proposal.

Carla Capriati, responsible of the representative Regional Office of Apulia in Bruxelles, introduced the action lines of the FRIENDS project, to foster the candidatures of Regional Export in Apulia to several institutions of the Commission.

The INfoDay was closed by the discussion among the participants and Daphne Van de Sande at individual level to point out the success rate of their proposals.

Upcoming Events

Symposium on Cytochrome P450 Biodiversity and Biotechnology, Nice, France, 08-12 June 2008

MCFA member Frédérique Hilliou is participating to the organization of the 9th International Symposium on Cytochrome P450 Biodiversity and Biotechnology. It will be held in Nice, France, from the 8th to the 12th of June 2008. The symposium focuses on CYP genes, which are prominent in every new genome annotation, and unexpected functions are discovered in all fields of biology. New uses for the P450 enzymes that CYP genes encode are actively sought because of the diversity of their catalytic repertoire. New insights in genome evolution are provided by the

study of the large CYP gene family. The symposium tries to catch the excitement of these developments in P450 research, and you are cordially invited to participate and contribute your research to the Symposium. More information on <https://colloque.inra.fr/p450nice2008>.

The Source, London, 26 Sep 2008



The Source Event, now in its 2nd successful year, is a dedicated science career fair organized by NatureJobs that combines a dynamic exhibition with conference and workshop sessions. The 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.

Jobseekers will be able to meet with potential employers who are offering hundreds of genuine vacancies. Our plenary and workshop sessions will provide a unique opportunity to meet high profile scientists and gain careers information and advice.

The Source Event will be held on 26th September 2008 at the Business Design Centre, London. To register simply go to <http://www.thesourceevent.com> before 1st September 2008; exhibition registration is free, and the conference / workshop is £45.

Reminder: ESOF 2008 in Barcelona, July 2008

MCFA will be participating and/or organizing several sessions in the Careers programme of the Euroscience Open Forum 2008 in Barcelona, 18-22 July 2008: <http://www.esof2008.org>. There are also a Science programme and Outreach activities. Travel grants are available for young researchers from Eastern Europe, Spain and France.

Marie Curie Conference at ESOF 2008

ESOF 2008 will be preceded by a Marie Curie Workshop, which is reserved to Marie Curie Fellows and will offer them a day and a half of training on essential skills for excellent researchers. Specialists from academia and private companies, consultants and EC officials will train you and you will be able to interact with them and benefit from their advice and best practice.

It will also be a unique opportunity for you to practise new skills and gain visibility in the research community with your posters and oral presentations dedicated to communication, or private/academic collaboration. You will also have the opportunity to share your dissemination success stories and explore how to reach out and create synergies with other scientific fields.

The conference also includes workshops on access EC funding, on how to write successful grant proposals, and on how creative academics

can exploit their research potential in the private sector.

Career opportunities for postdocs/experienced researchers will be discussed with specialists from private sector, scientific publishing, consulting companies etc.

The Marie Curie Conference is organized by the European Commission as a training event for Marie Curie Fellows. It is also a means for the EC to monitor progress of funded Fellows and assess whether they are receiving diverse training. For all these reasons, MC fellows are strongly encouraged to attend the meeting.

The registration fee of 350€ covers participation in both the Marie Curie and ESOF conferences. It is not possible to register only for the Marie Curie conference but fellows are, of course, not obliged to stay for the ESOF conference. Participation costs can be charged to the Marie Curie contract (typically category E or F expenses for Marie Curie Actions): Fellows should pay *not* for participation expenses from their salary.

If you are a Fellow, please register on <http://www.esof2008.org/index.php?id=193> before 15 May 2008.

Marie Curie event at the IEEE NSS / MIC / RTSD conference, October 2008

A Marie Curie networking event will be organized on 23 October 2008 during the IEEE International Nuclear Science Symposium (NSS), the Medical Imaging Conference (MIC), and the Workshop on Room Temperature Semiconductor Detectors (RTSD), which take place in Dresden on 19-25 October 2008. This will also be a good occasion to converse with representatives from the European Commission.

The conference website is <http://www.nss-mic.org/2008/>. While registering, please mention in the submission form that you are a Marie Curie Fellow.

Read more about this event on <http://mcfa.eu/site/public/eventReader.php?idEvent=51647>

FP7 information meetings in France

The National Contact Points in France organize an information day on 05 June in Paris on these three subjects: scientific employment in Europe, the European Research Council, and the Health programme. More information on <http://www.eurosfaire.prd.fr/news/consulter.php?id=1890>. This event will take place in the

framework of the European Research and Innovation Exhibition, Paris, 05–07 June: <http://www.european-research-exhibition.com/>.

Réseau Europe Ile-de-France Sud organizes another information day on 23 May in Orsay on the 2008 FP7 PEOPLE calls: funding of mobility, building a proposal... More information on <http://www.dr4.cnrs.fr/spv/documents/Pg%20Journ%E9e%20M.%20Curie%20REIS%2023.05.08.pdf>.

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

The MCFA Board