

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

November-December 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

Open discussion session at the Annual General Assembly in Potsdam

Before the MCFA Annual General Assembly, the Open Discussion was organized, where anybody outside the MCFA could participate. It is important to have this open part of the meeting as only full members of the MCFA can participate in the General Assembly proper. This year we had the pleasure to have three important guests participating in the open discussion.

Chris Armbruster, Executive Director of the Research Network 1989 heads the Continuing Professional Development programme for post-docs. This programme is intended to help senior post-docs advance to independent researcher positions. Chris organizes annual five-day training programme for postdocs. A second call for applications will follow in late 2008 and a new cohort will be admitted for 2009 (please follow the announcements on our website for details).

Mike Rogers is the Programme Officer at the Marie Curie Actions unit of the European Com-

mission DG Research. Mr. Rogers is MCFA's main point of contact with the European Commission. At the meeting Mr. Rogers presented his proposals for tighter collaboration between the EC and MCFA. In particular, MCFA can participate more actively in the promotional activities related to the European research, better disseminate the information about the tools and programs developed by the EC for mobile researchers such as EURAXESS, Research Enquiry Service, FP7 Calls for Proposals. Furthermore, the MCFA can improve its support to Marie Curie fellows with practical questions by updating existing and setting up new "welcome packs" (also for 3rd countries), providing mentoring to the new fellows, and following up fellows career developments. Finally, the Association should reactivate its work in the science policy area by setting up targeted policy working groups, ensuring that outputs of these groups reach the EC and other stakeholders, and by contributing experts to external working groups (e.g., in the EC). At the same time, the EC is prepared to provide to the MCFA all necessary documentation and support, disseminate the information about MCFA among new Marie Curie fellows, and help establish working contacts between the MCFA national groups and the FP7 NCPs.

Alexandros Savvaidis is the head of the Greek MCFA National Group, MCFA-Hellas. The Greek group is so far the only MCFA National Group that acquired legal status in respective Member State. Furthermore, MCFA-Hellas now serves as the FP7 Mobility National Contact Point in Greece.

Outcome of the General Meeting in Potsdam

The MCFA Annual General Assembly has been held on November the 15th in the afternoon, after the open session (see above).

The MCFA activities of the year have been presented by Guggi Kofod, the chair. The Activity Report for 2008 is available on the member area of the MCFA website: http://mcfa.eu/userfiles/file/MCFA_Activity_Report_2008.pdf. Please, have a look at it to be informed on MCFA activities! It illustrates

successes and challenges the MCFA faced during the year. Each point presented has been discussed by present members in order to highlight strengths and weaknesses of every issue and to define, eventually, better strategies to improve MCFA actions. Key points of this discussion have been: MCFA mission, Membership drive strategies, National Groups, MCFA visibility, collaborations with other Associations and participation in Science Policy.

One of the MCFA main successes of the year has been the participation to the Marie Curie Conference and to the ESOF2008. These events gave the Association a good visibility and the possibility to get in touch with many MC Fellows. The Association has also been active in Science Policy: the MCFA participated into the public consultation on selection criteria for the EIT and one of its suggestion regarding the criteria to be applied for EIT Board members has been partly integrated in the final set of selection criteria. Moreover, the MCFA Chair, Guggi Kofod, was invited to represent the MCFA at the External Advisory Group for the PEOPLE programme of FP7. In order to increase MCFA presence in the European Science Policy panorama next year some new policy groups will be launched soon. A special attention has been dedicated to public relations. New collaborations with other associations have been established and old ones renewed. Another good point is that MCFA contacts with the EC Directorate for Research have been renewed last year and have been maintained and strengthened this year.

Membership drive has also received great attention during the year. Nevertheless, increasing the number of MCFA full members is still one of the main challenge. Possible new strategies have been discussed and hopefully there will be improvements next year. As for National Groups, this year we could meet new members willing to be actively involved in this task! Therefore, some NGs are currently being revived. More support for National Groups is envisaged next year.

During the AGA, the Treasurer, Natalia Balcazar, presented the financial report, also providing an estimation for next year expenses. You can find the financial report in the member area of our website: http://mcfa.eu/userfiles/file/MCFA_Financial_Report_2007-08.pdf.

Then followed elections' time: everybody present had already voted online. Results were presented. Unfortunately, the quorum was not reached (10 members present and 39 online vote) and new elections are now called during the Extraordinary General Assembly (see below).

This year two proposals to change some articles of the statutes have been presented. Every member could vote online in order to approve them or not. Even in this case, the quorum has not been reached and this voting will take place again during the EGA. The online voting system will be available some days before the EGA so that every member could vote.

We warmly invite you to participate to the EGA!

Shouldn't you be able to get there, please, take part to the online voting! The MCFA is your Association and these events are chances to take important decisions regarding the Association's life.

Maria-Antonietta Buccheri

Extraordinary General Assembly and new elections

As the quorum has not been reached at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) in Potsdam, an Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) will be convened in accordance with the MCFA statutes. The EGA has the power to make legal decisions irrespective of the number of the members physically present or represented. The EGA will be held in Orsay, France, on 10 January 2009 at Université Paris-Sud. The agenda for the EGA will be the same as for the AGA as required by the statutes. If you would like to attend the EGA, please contact Éric Buchlin at eric.buchlin@mariecurie.org for more information.

Prior to the EGA a new online voting will be arranged to elect the MCFA Administrative Board for the year 2009 and to approve the MCFA statute changes proposed by the board. All full members of the MCFA are encouraged to participate in the new online vote to avoid a situation where the important decisions affecting the whole Association are made by a small number of members. Invitations with a link to the online voting ballot will be sent to all eligible members in the end of December 2008.

Become part of the MCFA administrative board!

As already written, a new election for the MCFA Administrative Board will take place at the Extraordinary General Assembly.

If you are able to devote 3-4 hours a week to MCFA, please put your candidacy forward! Every MCFA full member can do so and contribute to the Association's advance.

Being part of the Board is an interesting experience: it is a chance to get involved in administration, science policy, and gain invaluable experience in management and organizational activities at the international level. Although you could feel unprepared, remember that your contribution is essential for MCFA activities!

To suggest your candidacy please write a short note about yourself in the dedicated area of our Discussion Forum. Alternatively, you can send a short note to office@mariecurie.org. 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

New National Group in Switzerland!

Riccarda Caputo is the new coordinator of the Swiss National Group. You can write to riccarda.caputo@empa.ch in order to contact her for suggestions, activities or issues concerning Marie Curie Fellows in Switzerland.

MCFA flyers available

We have updated the MCFA flyers and put two versions (one black-and-white with light graphics, and one with full color) in the Internal Documents folders of the website: <http://mcfa.eu/site/memberArea/internalDocuments.php>. You can download them and forward them to Marie Curie Fellows who might be interested by MCFA, or you can print them, make them available at your lab or bring them at conferences!

Participate to the “Women in Science” Policy Group!

I would like to suggest some topics on which the “Women in Science” (WiS) Policy Group can concentrate its effort for 2009 and I am asking your contributions and suggestions as well as your active participation as a MC member in addressing them:

The first topic is *dual career* -- this is an issue with high impact on women researchers, because most of the time is the female partner that has to renounce to her career to follow the male partner in a research mobility experience.

Our work will be to analyse the current situation of research couples, collect statistics and best practices of other fellowships in Europe currently implementing the dual career concept in their scheme. We want to raise awareness about this issue among our members and push it in the Advisory Committee for MC scheme, by our member there, i.e., our Chair. Then, based on our work, he will invite the EU Commission to introduce in the current PEOPLE scheme of individual fellowships the option of partner's application.

By doing so, our MC scheme can really reach the same standards of most of the fellowships in Europe. For example, I found while talking with Teresa Reeve (University of Cardiff) at EU-RODOC2007 conference, where our WiS WG was invited to present some results from our survey on scientific mobility, that this policy has been put in practice in most of UK fellowship scheme and in other European countries.

The second topic is *career breaks and re-integration*: women researchers experiment in their research working life problems with their careers due mainly to work-life balance types of problems, children, old people care, family, but also re-integration after some long term absence from research work.

To address this problem we need to enforce in our MC scheme some policies that can help women researcher to return to research work and advance in their career as well as to avoid career breaks in the future.

Last but not least is the *research decision making policy*: women with same experience and skills of men do not advance in their career at higher decision making level. The glass ceil-

ing issue is still happening in most academic and industry research bodies.

It is necessary in our view to raise awareness on the conditions that facilitate women's representativeness in decision-making processes in order to adopt policy recommendations to advance women's participation in this area, especially when they return after a career break.

We intend to investigate and analyse which policies can help to introduce measures to faith the low presence of women in research decision making. To address this issue we intend to monitor and analyse the current situation and positive action schemes adopted in other countries such as United States, Canada, and Australia, with the help of world-wide leading expert organisations in this field, and comparing and transferring the best practices from these countries to Europe.

As a first step I would like to receive some subscriptions to this WiS policy group in order to plan a survey and publications on the results for 2009 conferences.

Please take into account that in the past two years we have been very active, thanks to you, in setting collaborations and networking with other Women in Science Working Group in Europe and abroad, by active participation the European Conferences on Women in Science, and we look forward to collaborate in the same way for achieving the same results this year, i.e. to mention some of them: ICWES14, Science Meets Reality (Prague), EURODOC (London), SET-ROUTE EMBL (Heidelberg), Intel EMEA Academic Forum (Budapest), GWIIN/EUWIIN (Berlin), EQUALITEC (London)... These are only some of the conferences and workshops attended. A full description of the issues addressed in each conference and our contributions was done in the Letters to Members of the last months.

For the members working in our Policy Group, participation to European conferences on Women in Science to learn and disseminate our experiences of Scientific Mobility in Marie Curie fellowships is very important.

Please send me your view on the topics to be addressed in the WiS Policy Group and your candidacy to this Group.

Gianna Avellis,
g.avellis@tno.it

Careers, funding and networking opportunities

PEOPLE Reintegration grants

The FP7 call for reintegration grants is open for applications. There are two cut-off dates for evaluation: 02 April and 09 October 2009. More information can be found at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7DetailsCallPage&call_id=168

Become an FP7 evaluator!

If you would like to apply as evaluator/review/monitor expert for FP7 proposals, you may apply and be registered in the experts database individually without the recommendation of an organisation: please go to <https://cordis.europa.eu/emmfp7/> and click on "Register as an Expert".

FP7 IDEAS / ERC Advanced Grant

A new call for proposals for the ERC Advanced Grant has been published in November. Deadlines range from March to May, depending on the topic. More information on <http://erc.europa.eu/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&topicID=67>

ENEA for FP7/IDEAS

ENEA, the Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and the Environment is one of the main Italian research bodies. It stands as host organisation to researchers worldwide to accomplish their IDEAS projects, supporting them with its own laboratories, facilities, collaboration and support. It is possible to choose ENEA as a host institution for the realization of an IDEAS proposal. More information on <http://ideas.enea.it>.

New Career Basics booklet

Just out this month is a new version of Science Careers' Career Basics Booklet: <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/careerbasicspdf>. Developed as part of the Science Careers Outreach Program with sponsorship from the Department of Defense's Science, Mathematics and Research for Transformation (SMART) program, the booklet is a collection of articles from the virtual pages of Science Careers. It has all the information that you need to get your career on the right track: articles and resource lists provide information on choosing a career path, marketing yourself, skills needed in different career paths, and diversity issues.

Upcoming Events

Conference "Gender and Diversity in Organizations"

The "Gender and Diversity in Organizations" International conference is organized by the ESCP-EAP European Management School and is taking place in Paris on 15 January 2008.

Although equal treatment and diversity management are established fields of research and management practices in Anglo-Saxon countries, they are relatively recent in Continental Europe. Anglo-Saxon research has begun to explore the rhetoric and the reality of such policies. The relationships between gender equality and diversity

have been questioned, theoretically and empirically. On the other hand, it can be argued that the concept of Diversity enables to better seize the diverse dimensions of gender, i.e. the diverse realities of men and women's employment and career situations but also the diversity of women (of class, ethnic origin, age...). The concept also evokes the potential benefits which employers can get from a gender diverse workforce.

For more information on the agenda, venue and registration, please refer to the website: <http://www.escp-eap.eu/genre-et-diversite>

News in Brief

Nature Network Berlin is open for registration

You may be familiar to the Nature Network web site, a public forum supported by the Nature publishing group for people interested in science to exchange ideas. If you register you can create a group or join existing ones; some of those are local hubs. In particular, if you are working in the Berlin area or visit frequently, we encourage you to join the Nature Network Berlin group which we started some months ago for researchers in Berlin to communicate about scientific events in the city: <http://network.nature.com/groups/berlin/>. We meet often and have hosted informal meetings with excellent researchers visiting Berlin (including several Nobel laureates), Nature editors, and officials from funding agencies. We have some exciting events coming soon, so if you are interested, join and have a look!

Miguel Andrade

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):

Social Networking Grows Up

Have you ever minimized your Facebook browser window when your supervisor walked past your

desk, afraid you might appear unprofessional? Social-networking guilt may soon be a thing of the past as a new breed of social networking sites for scientists clamor to be the next great time-saver in the lab — for you and your supervisor.

Scientists as Financial Analysts

With words like "meltdown" and "turmoil" being widely used to describe the current state of the financial system, it may seem like an odd time for scientists to consider careers in finance. But in the spirit of good investment advice—buy low, sell high—this may be a good time for the finance-curious to give the industry a look. See also the article [Finance's Quant\(um\) Mechanics](#).

Tooling Up: 15 Minutes to a Better Interview

Find out early what the interviewers are interested in and then talk about it. If they ask questions about your interest in gene expression in yeast, don't continue talking about *E. coli*. Your job is to spark interest—and then to maintain it.

Young Italian Scientists Take to the Streets

Passed over the summer, Legge 133/08, the new Italian law, is set to drastically cut the financial and human resources for universities and public research agencies. As a result, there are no guarantees even for scientists who were in the process of being brought into permanent positions.

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