

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

February-March 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

Please contribute to MCFA publications!

Would you like to hunt for stories for the Letter to Members? Take contacts with former Marie Curie Fellows who want to share their experience? Interview representatives of institutional stakeholders of EU science policy? Contribute to the Newsletter, a publication with broader scope than our Letter to Member? Then please

contact us at office@mariecurie.org and propose yourself to be a “journalist” for MCFA!

Do you have a “horror story” about your fellowship? Your funding has been taken away by someone else in the lab? Your boss was crazy? The conditions of the contract were different than promised? You felt a lack of support from your lab or the EC management? Then tell us your story, we will remove your name and publish it in the Letter to Members.

Revision of the Statutes

As you may know from the last Letters to Members, we are in the process of revising the Statutes of MCFA. Thank you for your input last month on the current English translation of the French official version of the Statutes.

We have made a first round of proposals for changes, which are summarized in the table in <http://eric.buchlin.org/private/mcfastatree4vuir/> (in different formats). There are non-exclusive proposals for

- Taking into account evolution of EU research funding schemes: old-style Marie Curie Fellowships have been extended to a whole spectrum of funding schemes, and some of their beneficiaries could be admitted as MCFA members.
- Adding institutional memberships (for universities, companies, and other international research-related institutions)
- Having a AGM (Annual General Meeting) every 2 years only, with a board mandate of 2 years
- Renewing the board by half (for more continuity) every year
- Lowering quorum (and proxies) requirements for the AGM
- Allowing the EGM (Extraordinary General Meeting) to take place the same day and place than AGM

Please have a look and tell us what you think of the different options! You can contribute to the discussion in the discussion forum thread “MCFA - Hot Topics: MCFA statutes 2008 discussion” at <http://www.mariecurie.org/discus/>. I would also appreciate receiving suggestions for a better wording of the proposals.

Éric Buchlin

Response of MCFA to consultation on EIT Selection Criteria

The MCFA Administrative Board has put together this response to the call for consultation on the European Institute of Technology Selection Criteria:

MCFA gathers more than 4000 European researchers granted a Marie Curie Fellowship and has become the voice of “mobile researchers” in Europe. The Association often takes part in European science policy debate.

MCFA welcomes the possibility to participate in the public consultation on the EIT Governing Board selection criteria, wishing to offer its perspective on the subject and to contribute to the debate regarding the European Policy in Innovation strategies.

MCFA recognizes the importance of boosting the innovation in Europe and to integrate higher level education, research and the business world in order to answer the challenges posed by globalisation and by the emergence of new scientific and technology powers.

Initially, we want to stress our concern about parts of the EIT Governing Board selection process. Open selection criteria are important, but we believe it has not been made perfectly clear what body will actually perform the selection. Is this a political process that takes place in the Parliament, or will countries select their own representatives following the established criteria? The process is at least as important as the criteria. In short: “How is the selection committee selected?”

The proposed selection criteria reads:

1. « Members should participate in the Governing Board in their personal capacity and must therefore be independent from any political, governmental or industrial interests. Avoiding conflicts of interest may require limits on the extent to which members can concurrently hold other national or international positions. »

Comments: The limits must be clearly identified before appointing the Governing Board Members. It is of crucial importance to avoid conflicts of interest “upstream”, in order to guarantee the transparency of the overall functioning of the

EIT. A Board Member, who is also a stakeholder in a large national research foundation, may be able to promote the interests of the national foundation unduly. All in all, we think Board Members with dual functions must be avoided, especially in the difficult initial phase of establishing the EIT properly and soundly.

2. « When appointing members, consideration should also be given to including younger, next-generation leaders. »

Comments: In our view, former Marie Curie Fellows are young, next-generation leaders. They have been selected according to excellence criteria established by the EU and have taken part in innovative projects financed by the EU. The Marie Curie Fellowships constitute a strong element in the research policies of the European Union. Moreover, former Marie Curie Fellows have experience on a European level, with personal insight in international mobility as one of the most effective means of knowledge transfer. We therefore think it reasonable to ensure that one or more Governing Board Members have held some form of Marie Curie Fellowship, and suggest that this be made one of the Selection Criteria.

3. « Members need to have a documented capacity to take strategic decisions and demonstrate extensive managerial capacities, with an ability to combine strategic and operational skills. »

Comments: The MCFA must insist on the important necessity that a modified set of criteria should be exercised with respect to the “younger, next-generation leaders” mentioned above: they cannot have the same degree of expertise. It would be possible (as it is in the ERC grants for example) to identify the “potential” for leadership, and to promote the training and tutoring of the most promising leaders within the Board itself taking advantage from the “oldest”. To augment the suggested criteria from above, we suggest that at least one third of Board Members are “younger, next-generation leaders”.

4. « Members from the scientific community need ... (to) be up to date in current RD management trends at the EU and global level... and be up to date in current RD management trends at the EU and global level »

Comments: R&D management methodologies have changed drastically in recent years and greatly contribute to the success of transferring knowledge in an Open Innovation environment. Familiarity with the EU goals and objectives would be essential to bring the innovation to the market in the right European context. The MCFA therefore welcomes the requirement that ‘members would need to demonstrate extensive experience in international level research management and organisation, and be up to date in current R&D management trends at the EU and global level, with special emphasis on EU goals and objectives’. In order to ensure the proper coordination and cooperation within the board, the MCFA would suggest that this criteria should be applied to the selection of Board Members from any of the three communities, and not only to those from the scientific academic community.

In summary: It must be ensured that “younger, next-generation leaders” can be selected, and that some of these will be former Marie Curie Fellows. The high standards asked from the academic Board Members must also apply to Board Members from other communities.

A XING group for MCFA

Christos Christoglou from the MCFA Board has asked (and obtained) the creation of a MCFA group on the professional social networking website XING: <http://www.xing.com/>. Please join our group and use it to invite other Marie Curie Fellows! If you are already a XING member you just need to go to <http://www.xing.com/net/mcfa/> to become a member of the group otherwise you will need to subscribe to XING first.

Presentation of a new MCFA partner association: WAYS

WAYS is the “World Association of Young Scientists”: <http://www.ways.org/>. Here is a document they have prepared to present themselves:

Background. Science is a critical resource for building a sustainable future. The nature and complexity of global challenges require developing a new set of approaches and practices within the scientific community, which are based on international cooperation and multidisciplinary.

Objectives. WAYS is devoted to connecting young scientists and advancing science throughout the world. Our goals are:

- To empower young scientists worldwide
- To promote scientific excellence
- To increase awareness of global and society-relevant issues amongst young scientists
- To increase the societal impact and utility of scientific knowledge
- To facilitate the participation of young scientists in decision making and action for science and society

Who we are. WAYS was launched as an international NGO under the auspice of UNESCO in 2004 with the support of other international bodies (International Council for Science, Inter-Academy Panel, and the Hungarian Academy of Science). Since then, the development of WAYS has been continued informally by active volunteers based in Europe, North America and Africa.

What we do. To achieve our goals, we are developing online facilities to create and develop a social and professional network of young scientists, which may ultimately serve as a hub for scientific knowledge. Many, if not all, young scientist organizations face maintenance and development issues. WAYS 2.0 has been conceived to host already established networks, to facilitate contacts between young scientists and to provide support for grass-root initiatives. WAYS 2.0 is thus a critical basement and umbrella to facilitate networks, to promote the sharing of resources and talents.

Our vision. Through virtual networking, database sharing, information dissemination and/or collaborative tools, WAYS shall provide an open and dynamic access to an ever-evolving knowledge. WAYS shall also help its members to develop their projects locally and to attain global reach. Finally, WAYS should also be instrumental in the transfer of know-how so that any WAYS members wishing to adapt a successful project can receive help to implement it locally.

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):

Mind Matters: Too Perfect?

The pursuit of scientific truth leaves a smaller margin for error than most other pursuits, so scientists are expected to be exacting. But perfectionism can diminish your productivity, undermine your job satisfaction, and damage your relationships with colleagues and supervisors.

Opportunities: Master of Disaster

When I started my first company, I thought I was prepared for the ups and downs of the start-up life. But only 9 months into the adventure, I encountered the first (of what would be many) disasters: We ran out of money. We survived (barely) and went on to build a profitable company. Today, I look back on that moment of disaster and realize that it was absolutely pivotal to the success of our company.

Mastering Your Ph.D.: Goodbye to All That

Leaving the lab may not be easy, but when you've decided to say goodbye to the bench, rest assured that plenty of opportunities await. We focus on some of the issues you'll face in finding jobs outside the lab and in becoming part of a new work culture, whether it's in a company, a consulting firm, a nonprofit organization, or the public sector.

Special Feature: Business Financing for Your Research

Scientists at academic institutions usually turn to government and foundations for money to

do their research. But the fluctuating federal research budgets of recent years, in Europe and Japan as well as the United States, have given researchers reasons to go looking for alternative funding sources.

Tooling Up: Breaking Free of Academia

It's quite a transition you're planning. You know, the one where you leave Plan A behind (you, in a prestigious tenure-track faculty position) in favor of some last-minute, rush-rush "Plan B." "Transition" is the word most often chosen to describe such a change of direction, but it's hardly an adequate choice; one doesn't "transition" out of a burning building.

Funding opportunities: PEOPLE call

The European Commission has published three calls for proposals for the People programme under the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7).

The calls relate to:

Intra-European fellowships. This action supports experienced researchers at various stages of their career, helping them in acquiring new research skills (multi or interdisciplinary) or to undertake intersectoral experiences.

International outgoing fellowships. This action offers European researchers the opportunity to be trained and to acquire new knowledge in a third country high-level research organisation, and subsequently

return to an organisation in a Member State or Associated Country.

International incoming fellowships. This action encourages top class researchers from third countries to work on research projects in Europe, with a view to developing mutually beneficial research cooperations between Europe and third countries.

To see the full details of the call, please consult the following web address: <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/dc/index.cfm?fuseaction=UserSite.FP7CallsPage&rs>

The deadline for submitting proposal documents is 19 August 2008.

Upcoming Events

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 event at the IEEE NSS/MIC/RTSD conference in Dresden, 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>

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