

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

November–December 2007

Dear MCFA Members,

Welcome to this November-December issue of our Letter to Members, the last of this year. You will find the results of the elections of the board, as well as a lot of information on opportunities to participate to the life of the Association, like participating to meetings, giving ideas for the revision of our statutes and for a proposal by the Women in Science working group, or helping for the updates of the website. Please use these opportunities and tell us what you think by writing to board@mariecurie.org!

In addition to the usual reports on past meetings, you will also find a new section with brief news, and another one with calls for papers from our members for meetings or journals.

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Life of the Association

Extraordinary General Meeting and Results of the Elections

The EGM has been held in Catania on 24th of November, as a follow-up of the ordinary Annual General Meeting in London, which did not reach the quorum. The results of the elections are as follows (42 votes in total):

	Yes	No	Abst.
Discharge of present board	26	2	14
Giovanna Avellis	25	4	13
Natalia Balcázar	30	4	8
Maria Antonietta Buccheri	29	5	8
Eric Buchlin	27	3	12
Christos Christoglou	25	5	12
Yegor Domanov	23	4	15
Guggi Kofod	25	4	13

As a result, all these candidates have been elected to the new board. This new board will be installed in approximately one month, the time needed to share the responsibilities and to do the necessary administrative work to make the change of board legal in Belgium, where the Association is registered.

Congratulations to the new board members!

First news from the new board

On the 5th of December the new Administrative Board had an online meeting to distribute the positions among them. The meeting was done via Skype, with 6 participants (Natalia Balcázar, Maria Antonietta Buccheri, Eric Buchlin, Yegor Domanov, Guggi Kofod, while Giovanna Avellis joined later; Christos Christoglou was unable to attend). The meeting worked reasonably well, despite a few technical hiccups in the beginning.

The distribution of positions was done openly, with unanimous acceptance among the new members. Like last year, we decided to back up each of the three core positions with a replacement. The new Administrative Board for the year 2008 therefore looks as follows:

- Chair: Guggi Kofod
- Vice-Chair: Maria Antonietta Buccheri
- Treasurer: Natalia Balcázar
- Vice-Treasurer: Eric Buchlin
- Secretary General: Yegor Domanov
- Vice-Secretary General: Christos Christoglou

The National Groups will be coordinated by Maria Antonietta Buccheri and Giovanna Avellis.

In a few days, we will update the “Administrative Board” section of the website (<http://mcfa.eu/> – About us – Administrative Board), so that you can find there some information about the Board members.

The new board would like to thank the former board for its work last year! And we hope that the members who could not continue in the Administrative Board will still lend us their expertise in the future. We are looking forward to the coming year, where we will try to help our members in their project phase, as well as work to promote better conditions for the mobile researchers in Europe.

With warm wishes for a great New Year 2008,

The new Administrative Board

Next meeting in Lyon?

The local meeting initially organized by Marianne Schaedel in Lyon on the 18th December 2007 is cancelled, as not enough people replied to the announcement made on the mailing-list, but another meeting can be organized in January if some people are interested. Please express your interest to Marianne, marianne.schaedel@ens-lyon.fr!

Such a meeting would be a great opportunity to discuss about the fellowships and issues met by fellows, to discuss about the preparation of the French national meeting (planned in Paris in March), and of course to socialize around a dinner!

Report on the Italian group meeting

The 8th MCFA Italian National Meeting was held in Catania on the 23th of November 2007, hosted by the Department of Biology of the University of Catania.

The first part was open to the public and it was focused on the value of mobility. The meeting took place in a room of the Zoological Museum, under the vigil eyes of a large stuffed elephant who definitely presided over the entire room! The big elephant was not the best symbol of painless mobility! But bravely enough the speakers discussed advantages and challenges of being a mobile researcher in Europe and beyond.

The Director of the Department, Prof. Alfredo Petralia welcomed the participants and introduced the MCFA National Coordinators, Maria Antonietta Buccheri and Manuela Giovanetti. He outlined the importance of having scientific exchanges in Europe and even more so with the Mediterranean Area. He also expressed his wish that exchanges between scientists become easier and easier in the future. Following this welcoming, Daphne Van De Sande, in charge of the Italian National Contact Point, shed light on the possibilities offered by the 7th Framework Program: considering the audience, she focused the attention on opportunities for researchers that already obtained a PhD. Later on, M.A. Buccheri presented the document drawn by the MCFA in response to the Green Paper “The European Research Area: new perspectives”. MCFA recognizes the key role of mobility in enhancing the European Research Area and in spreading the ideals of an European culture. Nevertheless, in that document MCFA points out that mobility should be an opportunity and not a forced choice: it should not create discriminations, beyond best intentions. The coffee break was especially appreciated, thanks to the exquisite Sicilian pastry which played a leading role! In the afternoon participants decided to have some more talks while having a walk and discovering the city. So the meeting ended under the eyes of another elephant: the black stone one located in piazza Duomo, well-known symbol of Catania!

Interesting conclusions emerged, especially concerning the general low participation recorded in Italy at such events in the last years,

National Meetings of MCFA as well as informative meetings organised by universities and EC agencies. Mobility has certainly a great value as it helps the single researcher in deepening and growing his/her educational level, creating bridges among different methodologies, different cultures and interpretations of science. Unfortunately, many researchers experienced negative feedbacks once back to their home-countries. This is especially true in Italy: notwithstanding many words are spent on the value of a research experience abroad, when participating to national competitions local colleagues are usually preferred to mobile researchers, independently from each candidate's achievements. Mobile researchers need more guarantees regarding their social rights and the possibility of being equally employed after a period abroad. Another interesting conclusion regards the MCFA effort towards fellows. It seems that any help with bureaucratic issues as well as with national laws is more than welcome by MC fellows starting new fellowships in a foreign country, but many MCFA members are not under MC grants anymore while still not established in a permanent position, and they might also need help when returning back from a mobility period abroad; MCFA should also take into consideration such a need. Moreover MC fellows recognize the importance of being part of a large network of researchers with similar experiences as the one offered by MCFA. Attention should be paid in keeping always such a network active.

*Maria Antonietta Buccheri
and Manuela Giovanetti*

Report on the Slovak group meeting

November 15, 2007 was the day of the meeting called “How to get a Marie Curie Fellowship” organized by the Slovak group of MCFA. It was open for MCFA members and non members with the aim to bring important and useful information about the fellowships and how to apply for them, to provide practical advice for writing a proposal and managing projects, and to inform about the work of MCFA. The emphasis of the workshop was to make MCFA more visible because in Slovakia not many people apply for Marie Curie fellowships and there are only a few MCFA mem-

bers and they meet rarely. This meeting helped MCFA to make its activities visible among scientists. The workshop was planned for participants from East Slovakia because they have fewer possibilities to meet people with experience with EU projects in comparison with people living in the capital. It focused on PhD students, researchers and university teachers.

The first lecture dealt with possibilities offered by Marie Curie fellowships and an introduction to MCFA and its activities. Then Mgr. Lavrinova (National contact point for Marie Curie actions in Slovakia) had two presentations about the Marie Curie Actions opportunities and how to write a successful proposal. Lunch together gave more opportunities to create new contacts among participants. After that Dr. Zimanova (Slovak Academic Information Agency) spoke about general possibilities of project funding in Slovakia. It was a pity that many people left before last panel discussion because then two successful professors — Prof. Bužek and Prof. Dusza (both from Slovak Academy of Science) shared their own experience from project management. Facts we can find with more or less effort but experience we can only learn by our own or get them from someone who had tried it.

I hope that all people who have attended the meeting learn something new and useful what can help them in their future carrier.

Jana Kadukova

Revision of the Statutes

At several occasions in the last years it has been suggested that the Statutes of MCFA would need some update. A few reasons for this have been evoked:

- Meeting the current quorum at an ordinary Annual General Meeting (AGM) has become “mission impossible”, making people’s travel to the AGM from all over Europe almost pointless. We need to address this issue by releasing partly the quorum constraints (which can be dangerous), and/or allowing the EGM to be held at the same place and day as the AGM, or any ideas you might have.

- There is a lack of continuity in the board: each year, people with valuable experience and contacts leave, for various reasons, and the new board needs to learn everything from scratch; a term of one year is too short and there is no mechanism for transferring experience and contacts. One solution would be to have a board renewed each year by half or third.
- Marie Curie fellowships are evolving, with new schemes which are only co-funded by the EC: these new fellows are excluded from the Association by the present Statutes. The existing structure of affiliates / associate / full members may be too complicated anyway.
- On the other hand it may be useful to have institutional members in addition to ordinary members.

There is of course also a quorum condition on the meeting deciding a change of Statutes, and discussions are made more difficult by the fact that the official language of the Statutes is French. So in our opinion a realistic plan for changing the Statutes could be as follows:

- January: check English translation of the Statutes;
- February: propose different options;
- March: discuss;
- April: choose, translate back to French;
- June: check compatibility with Belgian law (and how to publish the new Statutes legally);
- August: the Board proposes new Statutes for voting;
- September or October: first vote, at the same time as the AGM;
- October or November: if no quorum met at the previous meeting, new vote, at the same time as the EGM.

Please send any comments and suggestions to board@mariecurie.org, and participate to the debates in the Discussion Forum!

Éric Buchlin

Call for a “Website Content Manager”

The Administrative Board has decided that the MCFA homepages should be overseen by a manager. Our web-site should be the first stop of our members for help regarding their projects, whether before, during or after the project phase. It should also provide interesting and up-to-date information, and a forum for discussion, for members “young” or “old”. The web-site consists of the main pages (mcfa.eu), a discussion forum and a number of other services. The structure of the MCFA web-site is constructed and maintained by our Webmaster, who is also involved in maintaining the physical servers.

It will be the tasks of the Website Content Manager to:

- manage the updating of information in the website
- streamline and simplify the structure of the MCFA web offerings
- coordinate his/her work together with the Webmaster

The Website Content Manager will work closely together with individual Administrative and Advisory Board members, in order to support the various activities of the Boards with a vital and useful Web presence.

As for the other positions in the Board, the work is not remunerated, and it is expected that the position will require approximately 1 to 3 hours of work per week.

On behalf of the Administrative Board,
Guggi Kofod, Chair

WIDEMAP proposal

The equal participation of women and men in decision-making processes at all levels is a world-wide critical issue. The mobile Women in Science Engineering and Technology (m-WiSET) Working Group of the Marie Curie Fellows Association (MCFA) intends to propose in the context of the 7th Framework Programme a project called WIDEMAP (Women In Decision Making Processes) to address this issue. Our idea is to do it by monitoring and analysing the current situation and positive action schemes adopted in United States, Canada, and Australia with the help of world-wide leading expert organisations in this field, and by comparing and transferring the best practices from these countries to Europe. The further aim is to raise awareness on the conditions that facilitate women’s representation in decision-making processes in order to adopt policy recommendations to advance women’s participation in this area. To achieve these aims, we have contacted already different partners to build a proper international consortium, which will be composed of different institutions, international organisations and private companies, to address diverse project needs at national, regional and international levels.

m-WiSET is looking for the participation of MCFA members to this proposal, for the initial submission stage and for an involvement in the project itself.

Gianna Avellis

From our members

ISCRAM 2008

MCFA member Hussain Aziz Saleh will be co-chairing the Early Warning System session at the 5th International Conference on Information Systems for Crisis Response and Management, Washington, DC, USA May 4-7, 2008, <http://www.iscram.org>.

Call for papers, Journal of Ecotourism

MCFA member Sylvie Blangy is a guest editor for a special issue of the Journal of Ecotourism on “Aboriginal ecotourism”. More detail on <http://www.aboriginal-ecotourism.org/spip.php?article489>, or write to sblangy@connect.carleton.ca.

Past Meetings with MCFA Participation

The Seventh Framework Programme: Opportunities for the Economic and Social Sciences London, 11 October 2007

Natalia Balcázar was invited to participate as facilitator at the Session 1 “The Seventh Framework Programme: Opportunities for the Economic and Social Sciences” of the Conference organised by the Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) and as Panel member as representative of the MCFA at Session 2 “Linking Research to Policy”, both open for the general public.

At the Session 1, some representatives of the European Commission presented the Programmes included in the 7th Framework Programme:

- Mr. Lennon (Director of Directorate T, DG Research), PEOPLE Programme,
- Mr. Valette (Head of Unit, Directorate L, DG Research), COOPERATION Programme
- Mr. Dewatripont (ERC and ECARES, ULB), IDEAS Programme.

Due to travel delays, Natalia needed to be replaced by Mr. Stephen Yeo (CEPR) as facilitator of Session 1. The presentation of the different Programmes was made in a very clear way and the public had the opportunity to ask questions directly after each presentation. All the presentations are available on the Internet at <http://www.cepr.org/meets/wkcn/8/8873/>, as well as the programme of the Conference, a list of participants and pictures of the event.

As introduction in Session 2 “Linking Research to Policy”, facilitated by Kevin O’Rourke (Trinity College Dublin and CEPR), Veronica Littlewood (Economic and Social Research Council) presented the results of some studies on “The impact of Social Sciences research on Policy”.

The Panel discussion started afterwards, with participation of all the above-mentioned representatives of the European Commission, Natalia Balcázar for the MCFA and Veronica Littlewood.

Natalia used the opportunity to explain how changes in FP7 have been seen as an improvement in opinion of past and present Marie Curie

fellows (no more age limit, possibility to divide the fellowship time in smaller periods, etc.). She stressed also the importance of the Charter and Codex for the fellows and expressed the hope that a lot of institutions and universities will subscribe them: “This is the right way to make researchers more visible as professionals in the society”. The possibilities offered with the new IDEAS Programme are also welcome, because this offers possibilities for young researchers working in interesting areas to get supported without the necessity to prepare big consortia — something difficult to organise and managing when you have had not time enough to build up a big network.

After the Sessions there was a Reception. Frank Marx (European Commission) introduced Natalia to Mr. Lennon. Natalia took this opportunity to talk with him directly about the problem of our Association to get more known among the (new) MC fellows. Mr. Lennon was very interested about this. He ensured the support of the Directorate for the MCFA, especially through Mike Rogers, that was present at our Annual General Meeting in London a few weeks before. He offered the possibility to visit him in Brussels.

As consequence of this conversation, Natalia took this proposal by word two weeks later, while she was in Brussels for the Association’s banking issues. Mr. Lennon was not available at the moment, but he arranged that Mike Rogers could meet Natalia. Georges Bingen joined the meeting. We addressed again the theme of the information about the existence of the MCFA to the new fellows: Both agreed to include some sentences about MCFA and to include our flyer in the documentation for the fellows. The National Contact Points (NCPs) will get also some information as Working Package. One theme that came from Georges Bingen was the question about future fellows that will be only co-financed from the European Commission. Natalia informed them that we plan to make some changes in the Statutes (we will discuss this in the next months at the Discussion Forum — please look there and give also your opinion), and that this is one of the points that will be discussed. As summary of the meeting I can inform you that the Commission wants to support us as much as possible and that we have to keep in contact.

Funding opportunities

From CORDIS: New FP7 calls

A number of calls have just been published for proposals in all FP7 programmes: Cooperation, Ideas, People (Marie Curie grants) and Capacities. More detail on <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/calls/>.

Industry-Academia: PEOPLE-IAPP

In particular, there is a call for proposals for a European Commission funding scheme providing full funding for research projects involving partnerships between public and private research organisations: the Marie Curie Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways

(IAPP) scheme. More detail can be found on http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/industry-academia_en.html and the deadline is 25th of March 2008.

To help interested participants achieve the most from an Industry-Academia collaborations and to prepare a proposal for the scheme a conference will be held in Brussels on January 14th 2008. Anyone wishing to participate in the conference may find the agenda and registration form at <http://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions>. Participation is free but numbers are limited to 250, therefore early registration is advised. The conference will be opened by Janez Potočnik, Commissioner for Research.

News in Brief

From Science Careers

Please read these articles at <http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/> or click on the titles below (if you are reading the electronic version of this Letter to Members):

To Have and Have Not

Salaries for European scientists vary greatly by country and region, despite efforts to bring them into balance.

Overcoming Conflicts in the Lab – and Beyond

If you face conflicts squarely and calmly and manage them skillfully and confidently, you can ultimately transform them into a source for improved relationships and personal growth.

Interdisciplinary Research: Building Bridges, Finding Solutions

Complex scientific problems and socially relevant issues are challenging scientists to find new ways to integrate knowledge from multiple and disparate fields. Increasingly, collaborative approaches are changing the way science is done.

Work and Life in the Balance

For many scientists, work-life balance means career and family. For others, it's job and social life. Regardless of the type of balance you're seeking, it's tricky to manage and takes a lot of self-discipline.

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

This Letter is edited by the Association des Boursiers Marie Curie a.i.s.b.l. (Marie Curie Fellows Association), <http://mcfa.eu/>. Editor: E. Buchlin, eric.buchlin@mariecurie.org. Director of publication: G. Kofod. Please send requests about articles in this Letter and submissions for the next Letter to Members to office@mariecurie.org