Table of contents

Introduction Pag 4
Role models Pag 5
  > Antonella Di Trapani Pag 7
  > Eleni Chatzichristou Pag 9
  > Gianna Avellis Pag 11
  > Silvia Giordani Pag 13
  > Corinne Martin Pag 15
  > Reia Chmielowski Pag 16
  > Maria Bostenaru Pag 17
  > Natalia Balcazar Pag 19
  > Svetlana Baca Pag 21
  > Theodota Lagouri Pag 23
  > Nusrat Sanghamitra Pag 25
  > Elena Martines Pag 27
  > Sylvie Blangy Pag 29

LIFE IS NOT EASY FOR ANY OF US. BUT WHAT OF THAT?

WE MUST HAVE PERSEVERANCE AND ABOVE ALL CONFIDENCE IN OURSELVES.

WE MUST BELIEVE THAT WE ARE GIFTED FOR SOMETHING AND THAT THIS THING MUST BE ATTAINED.

Marie Curie
INTRODUCTION

An important factor in fostering a positive attitude toward science and scientific careers in young women researchers has been providing them with scientific role models who are women. Such stories give them realistic information about career opportunities. Therefore this booklet has been developed to provide young women scientists with a collection of role models who have benefited from mobility in their careers.

These are not famous scientists, but rather real examples of people who express all the passion to “explore, dream, and discover” the world of science. It is hoped that reading about successful scientists who have achieved a healthy work-life balance while moving to new locations will be particularly helpful for those individuals considering mobility in their own career. An e-mail address is included in the profile for each scientist.

You are welcome to approach us with questions you may have as to how we dealt with the situations we have faced in our careers as you undertake similar adventures in your own. This booklet is available to be used by programs that support the development of systematic approaches to increasing the representation and advancement of women in science, engineering and technology, since mobility plays a key role in these programs. The stories contained herein will be useful to mentoring or advising program focusing on career, networking opportunities, discussion and grants opportunities in conjunction with mobility.

Role models who have overcome these challenges will continue to play an important part for moving in the right direction, because it may take Role models for mobility of MCFA women scientists some time to achieve true gender equity in science.

In general people choose mobility as a path to acquiring new and different skills with respect to those available in their country of origin, but the aim of each individual who chooses mobility depends mainly on their previous occupation and age. At an early stage of their career undertaking a PhD or a Post-doc position in a different institution may add substantial scientific value to the CV. For those who already hold an established position, mobility may be seen as a way to improve their scientific profile, to make it internationally competitive and to gain experience in managing projects and disseminating research results profitably. The benefits gained from the mobility experience and the ease of reintegration afterwards also depend largely on the career stage and country of origin.

Challenges may arise in the early career stages, for example just after completing a PhD, when one may encounter a lack of funds or specific equipment necessary to implement new or different techniques.

In addition some individuals experience challenges arising from discrimination or scarce opportunities in their own homelands to obtain a stable position. For people facing such issues the availability of role models who have triumphed over similar situations can be inspiring. Challenges specific to mobility can arise due to family situations; often it can be difficult to fulfil the needs of dual careers. Even when one’s partner is willing and able to relocate, it is not always straightforward to find him a job or a position close to the wife’s new working place. When children are involved, in particular when they are little, special attention must be devoted in order to organise their new life, as well. Therefore role models for dual career couples are needed.

Gianna Avellis & Nusrat Sanghamitra Coordinators of m-WiSET and board members of MCFA
The Marie Curie Fellows Association (MCFA) (http://mcfa.eu) is the association of scientists (Marie Curie Fellows) who were awarded a Marie Curie Fellowship or a Mobility Research Training Grant by the European Community. The Association gathers scientists from more than 50 countries, both in Europe and outside of it. The MCFA has a high (around 40%) representation of women compared to other European research associations. Proposals within MC actions are evaluated based on many criteria, which also take into account gender issues in an attempt of providing equal opportunities to women researchers. Grants are established under European RTD framework programmes to encourage and finance the training and mobility of researchers in the European Community.

The association was founded in October 1996 and is organized in hierarchical lines with local groups (National Groups) and at an international level (Administrative board elected by members annually and an Advisory Board). There are also horizontal structures as committees and working groups, such as Women in Science and Science Policy.

The overall activity of the organization is aimed at providing feedback and recommendations to and from policy makers (especially the EC) and stakeholders. Our activities also extend to the field of women participation in SET, career development, excellence, and decision-making.

The above-mentioned concentration of women in MCFA is relevant; there are more than 1,000 women scientists actively involved at all levels in several scientific research fields in this association. This allows for significant surveys and statistical analysis on mobile women researchers, compilation of case stories and different career experiences.

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quite often ended up in new collaborations and research ideas, and the travel involved, which brought her around Europe and also as far as the US and India to disseminate the achievements of the scientists involved in her projects. In between working trips, she was able also to improve her French and enjoy the ‘fart de vie’ and ‘la bonne cuisine’. However, due to the lack of permanent contracts at ESF, it was soon time to look again for a new opportunity. Soon she found one and went to work for the newly-born European Research Council (ERC) in Brussels, packing her belongings and moving yet again to another new country. She has now spent more than two years as Research Programme Officer, for both Starting and Advanced Grants in Chemistry and Materials, coordinating 1.5-2.5 M € budget for grants for scientists to do research in Europe and to set up the best research groups so as to be able to compete with the rest of the world. “In this job I really feel I am doing something to make science better in Europe by investing in the brightest brains we have. It is very challenging and exciting.”

She has found that, since she started her studies the situation in the world of science has not changed much. At all career stages women in science, particularly in the “hard sciences”, are not well represented — sometimes they are less than 20% of the academic population. It can be very difficult to reach a gender balance on science panels: “I am sitting in rooms where we are outnumbered 10 to 2”, she says. Antonella hopes things will change soon and women will be given the same opportunities as men and strive to reach really high positions in science. She considers herself very lucky to have had such a successful career, achieving a very good position in the top EU institution for research while still at very young age. She hopes she will be of example and serve as ‘role model’ to many other women. Her successful career has been recognized by her peers as she delivers talks as key-note speaker to several scientific conferences, ‘Young researchers’ careers’ and ‘Women in science’ events.

Having changed country five times and also changed her career path each time she moved she has found that the main difficulty is settling down in the new country, dealing with bureaucracy, building up a new circle of friends, adapting to the new culture and to the new working environment. “All this can be stressful and it can be difficult to combine the science and the necessary bureaucracy with a personal life. “What I have learned in all these years is to be flexible and adapt quickly to situations, but I also think that I would not have been here if I had not started with my Marie Curie grants and I would not have grabbed opportunities along the way, been flexible and not afraid of changes. The mobility offered by the Marie Curie Fellowships provided that ‘mobility bug’ that shaped my career and helped me to make some important choices in my life, fulfilling my objectives and my love for science. My life has been one of continuous change, and I have never remained in the same country or same kind of job for more than 2-4 years, but I regret nothing.” Her motto, quoting Mark Twain, is: “Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn’t do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines.” Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails and explore. dream. discover.”

Two years later she collected her tons of data and went back to Leiden to write up her thesis. This was great, for a while, but was not enough to be the whole story: she had to set off for a bigger trip to pursue her dream further. Five years after her arrival in Paris she left again for her next stop, the Netherlands. She worked for two years at the Dutch Space Research Organisation in Leiden before she decided to embark on a PhD. This was also the time when she shifted her scientific interests from the young emission-line Be stars to the exotic most distant active galaxies. At this time she spent six months in Uppsala Sweden, in order to set the project on a firm footing and to start collecting her data. It was summer time, the famous Scandinavian summer, and Eleni still remembers the endless days at the historical observatory and the sunny Stockholm arthitectures that so reminded her of her home country. It being necessary to collect massive amounts of data for her thesis, she went to Chile to the European Southern Observatory (ESO), where it was love at first sight. Eleni felt she had to return to this country as soon as possible. Therefore she quickly applied for an ESO position and off she moved to Chile half a year later. Her aim was still to collect data for her thesis, but once she set foot in the Andes Mountains she felt closer than ever to her dream. She could spend weeks in a row at 2500 meters observing the sky. When the night fell she was taken by the awe inspiring starry sky. In the complete darkness one felt as though one were floating in space, between the earth and the sky, just like an astronaut. It was a living dream she wished would never end, yet it did.

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Two years later she collected her tons of data and went back to Leiden to write up her thesis. In June 1999 Eleni was already an accomplished scientist. She had Masters and PhD degrees in astronomy and had in her portfolio several years of research and hands-on observational work. Thus it was not difficult to land her next dream job, a National Research Council fellowship at NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center, Maryland. This time she set sail for yet a different part of the world, North America. Eleni found in the USA a new home country where she absolutely loved her job, the new friends she was making, the multi-cultural character...
of pretty much every aspect of life, and the amazing and diverse landscapes. The two years at Goddard elapsed quickly and Eleni moved on to work at Space Telescope Science Institute in Baltimore. Six months after her director moved to Yale University to establish the Yale Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics and Eleni moved along as well. More time passed and the 18 years of absences from her home country started weighing on her. She had also just turned 40 and, even though she had consciously chosen to postpone starting a family, she started realizing that she would not be able (biologically speaking) to do so for much longer if she wanted to have one. Therefore she quit her job and went back to Greece, ready to change her professional field if necessary. The first year of her return passed quickly as Eleni was amazed at how many things had changed in the country. At this time she won a Marie Curie International Reintegration Grant, this helped her to get established as an astronomer in her home country. She started getting deeply involved in science education and, as a result, she participated and/or coordinated several EU-funded projects promoting new technologies in education and inquiry based science communication.

She is the national node for Greece of the E hands-on universe and the Europlanet-R i projects, and coordinates the Greek activities for science communication. as a result, she participated and/or coordinated several Eu-funded projects promoting new technologies in education and inquiry based science communication.

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She has also written more than 350 science popularization articles and one book. She has served as reviewer of NASA’s Science University projects, member of the advising committee for NASA’s “Knots” mission, reviewer of NSF research proposals and, until now, reviewer of Marie Curie research proposals (physics panel). Her dream to start up a family was also fulfilled while in Greece, and Eleni gave birth to a wonderful boy. She may eventually experience rough times having to deal with two demanding jobs and single motherhood, but she hasn’t thought for a moment that this is impossible. Career and personal life can definitely co-exist when one is ready for it. So, what next? When time comes Eleni will be ready to sail off to new adventures and discoveries, and to take on new roles and responsibilities. This was true in many European research project proposals written in this field in the home country.

This goal of bringing young researchers home is shared by the president of Apulia Region, who has launched programmes to fund thousands of young researchers to study abroad, after having subscribed to an ethical contract to return to Apulia to develop the impact of their research in the region. He wishes to prevent the diaspora of young researchers from Italy, and has implemented a number of initiatives to attract them back to the country. Eleni decided to come back to Italy to apply the results and contacts developed abroad to the Distributed Software Laboratory of Tecnopolis. She maintained her contacts with the host institution and they continue to participate in fruitful collaboration.

In addition she formed and maintained new links with researchers at the Open University (UK), the European Institute of Law, Science and Technology, based in Brussels. The Marie Curie grant came in a very timely manner for Eleni to be able to open up all these new possibilities in her home country at a critical turn in her career. As a senior researcher in several renowned institutions worldwide, I have experienced first-hand extremely stimulating international environments, handled state-of-the-art observational facilities, established very useful collaborations, and developed excellent interpersonal and communication skills. I had no clue how I would be able to apply all these skills and qualities in the limited research environment that Greece provides. The answer came through the Marie Curie grant. At the same time, Eleni started teaching intensively, offering science courses at the graduate and undergraduate level. She moved up the ladder quickly and a couple of years ago she was offered the position of Dean of Academic Affairs at the City University of Seattle, Athens site. “I consider this to be one of my most rewarding experiences”, Eleni is the author of 23 refereed papers in international journals and 41 papers in conference proceedings, gathering more than 1,200 citations. She has also served as reviewer of NASA’s Science University projects, member of the advising committee for NASA’s “Knots” mission, reviewer of NSF research proposals and, until now, reviewer of Marie Curie research proposals (physics panel). Her dream to start up a family was also fulfilled while in Greece, and Eleni gave birth to a wonderful boy. She may eventually experience rough times having to deal with two demanding jobs and single motherhood, but she hasn’t thought for a moment that this is impossible. Career and personal life can definitely co-exist when one is ready for it. So, what next? When time comes Eleni will be ready to sail off to new adventures and discoveries, and to take on new roles and responsibilities. This was true in many European research project proposals written in this field in the home country.

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In addition she formed and maintained new links with researchers at the Open University (UK) in the field of mobile learning. She feels that the reintegration problems are related to gender issues; it is difficult for women to reintegrate with other researchers who hardly accept the new competences the fellow gained during the period abroad. When she returned from London, she decided to move to another department, the multimedia laboratory. This move did not prevent her from applying the knowledge and research results; she gained in London for Requirement Engineering to the new field of Multimedia Educational Software. She was also able to produce relevant publications with her supervisor in London. Mobility means also developing an “open mind” attitude towards finding new research opportunities. This was true in many European research project proposals written in this field in the home country.
MOBILITY MEANS ALSO DEVELOPING AN “OPEN MIND” ATTITUDE TOWARDS FINDING NEW RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

A side result of her mobility was the different approach to her work: while she was interested in very technological issues on research in Software Engineering, she is now more open to tackle different fields, especially the ones that have a direct impact with the social environment. For Gianna returning to her home country was an “ethical” choice. Mobility is a good thing not only for the fellow travelling, but also for the researchers at the host institution where they can see different life styles and can choose different careers.

Gianna’s experience with a part of a dual career couple also resulted in a change of career and scientific interests for her husband. Before her fellowship at Imperial College her husband was a teacher of Combinatorics at University of Bari, Dept. of Mathematics, but he opted to take a one-year sabbatical from his university to join her in London. He thought to use the time to plan the development of his contacts with some Imperial College researchers in order to study a series of topics. However, he also had a secondary didactic goal: to find a bibliography about the origin of the “formal thinking”, i.e. that human skill of thinking by signs manipulation, such as in Logic or in Computing. To this end, he began to go to the British Library every day, which was situated in the British Museum building. Perhaps, it was the charm of the wood seats of the library, wherein some of the greatest modern thinkers spent their study hours, or the intriguing aspects of the new topic: it happened that slowly the historical enquiry from the secondary goal turned to the main and ultimately exclusive goal.

His second book “The Computer of Ockam” analyses the evolution of formal thinking in middle age and Renaissance, and now he is writing a third book analyzing the evolution of formal thinking in modern age. In the meantime, he also is contributing to Garzanni’s encyclopaedia with a section on the history of Mathematics. He also changed the topics of his teaching, from very technical courses for Mathematicians and Computer Science to more historical and philosophical oriented courses to Computing, Mathematics and also Philosophy of Science students, such as History and Fundamentals of Mathematics to Mathematics and Philosophy of Science students, Mathematical Logics and History of the Logic and Algorithm to Computer Science students. Their combined experience shows that sharing the same logical and temporal aspects of studying abroad was a great advantage for both. The mobility experience was a key for Gianna to develop new skills and opportunities as well as to make new contacts and to consolidate the existing ones with other universities and research institutes, such as Bremen University, Germany, and Schlumberger Laboratory for Computer Science in Austin, Texas, USA. Further, but most important for her career, she reached a good scientific level in Software Engineering which is demonstrated by her many publications in the field.

MOBILITY IS A TRUE PRIVILEGE

Dr. Silvia Giordani represents a new generation of multidisciplinary scientists that, thanks to a high level of interdisciplinary training and mobility, bring together research expertise and know-how from a wide range of subject areas in a concerted effort to bring about new advances and future applications of nanoscience.

She received a Laurea in Pharmaceutical Chemistry and Technology from the University of Milan, Italy and a PhD in Organic Chemistry from the University of Miami, USA. She then moved to the School of Physics at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland to work on a Marie Curie Research Training Network project on “Template Grown Molecular Nanomaterials”. During her post-doctoral training she acquired extensive and interdisciplinary expertise in the characterization of nanomaterials. In particular, she focused on the problem of controlling the aggregation of single-walled carbon nanotubes (SWNTs), which has been the major bottleneck to applications. She was able to develop a novel simple and flexible method to disperse and de-bundle SWNT using organic solvents as dispersants.

She has been successful in a Marie Curie re-integration grant application to work on her original project in one of the leading group on functionalization of nanotubes at the University of Trieste, Italy. Dr. Giordani’s independent career was launched in 2007, when she won the prestigious Science Foundation Ireland President of Ireland Young Researcher Award (FYRA) for a research proposal entitled “Functionalizing Nanotubes with Molecular Switches for Smart and Sensitive Devices”. This prize, still one of the most prestigious awards granted towards bringing the very best young researchers from around the world to Ireland, provides 1 MA over a five-year period in support of Dr. Giordani’s research program. Since 2007 she has been a research lecturer in the TCD School of Chemistry and an Investigator in the Institute of Nanoscience (CRANN) where she is running an international and interdisciplinary research group which currently includes three postgraduate students, four postdoctoral fellows and two undergraduate students. The research team is working on the design, synthesis, and characterization of photoactive molecules for sensing and light-activated delivery and on the functionalization and characterization of nanomaterials that are intended for applications in smart and responsive bio-related nanotechnologies.

Gianna at the EU presidency conference on “Training, Career and Mobility of Researchers in the Innovation Union”, June 2011, Budapest (Hungary).

Silvia with Mary McAleese, President of Ireland, during the FYRA award ceremony, May 2007.
To date, Dr. Giordani has authored 40 peer-reviewed publications that collectively have received over 1,200 citations and her results have been highlighted in journals such as Science, Nature, and New Scientist. She has also presented her work at numerous conferences around the world e.g. in Japan, Brazil, Chile, United States, and across most of Europe. In order to effectively perform modern interdisciplinary research it is critical to establish a network of academic and industrial collaborators, and Dr. Giordani has already initiated fruitful collaborations with several Irish / European- /US-based groups with complementary skill sets.

Dr. Giordani is also mindful of the importance of enhancing the general public’s understanding and appreciation of research and is passionate at communicating science to young people. She has given lectures to high school students both in Ireland and in Italy and she has been invited to speak at many wide audience events; Women in Science Workshops, National Youth Orientation Day and Science Festivals. Since 2008 she has been an active member of the Leonardo group, the “brain trust” of Science Gallery and has been on the steering group for the SFI “Summer Undergraduate Research Experience”.

Recently she coordinated a visit to TCD for a group of students from her old high school, the Giulio Natta Institute in Bergamo. She organized two days of lectures, demonstrations and tours around CRANN labs and Science Gallery. The visit was part of her mentoring “juniors” project, sponsored by Zaninoni Foundation and Confindustria Bergamo, which gives the young students a unique opportunity to experience what it is like to work in scientific research and provides them a taste of possible future careers. The high school students under the supervision of Silvia, the tutors and their professors are researching projects on energy and cancer.

To EFFECTIVELY PERFORM MODERN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH IT IS CRITICAL TO ESTABLISH A NETWORK OF ACADEMIC AND INDUSTRIAL COLLABORATORS

LEFT: Silvia and collaborators showcase photocromic molecules during “Lightwave” at the Science Gallery, January 2009.
RIGHT: Silvia with Pia Locatelli, president of Zaninoni Foundation, and students-researchers, May 2011.

“LEAD YOUR LIFE LIKE AN ADVENTURE”
JEAN-LOUIS ETIENNE

Whenever people ask her where she comes from Corinne, of course, answers “Marseille!” as the place where one grows up usually defines so many features of a person. On those rare occasions when her home town does not take over the conversation, she adds that since leaving her home city 14 years ago the other places she has lived have defined her just as much as her upbringing, and that this was made possible by the European Union. How? Well, her first leap abroad (to England) came in the form of an undergraduate student exchange program called Socrates-Erasmus, funded by the EU. Later, thanks to agreements at EU level, she was able to study for a PhD (in Wales, on the “behavioural ecology of marine turtles”) whilst paying the same (reduced) tuition fees as local students. For her first post-doctoral position, she returned to England to work on a cross-border research project with France, funded by the EU’s Interreg scheme. The project (called CHARM 1) was successful at gaining two further rounds of funding from Interreg; this allowed her to build strong working relationships as well as friendships with researchers on both sides of the English Channel. After returning to France with the beginning of the third phase of the CHARM project, Corinne now continues her EU adventure with a Marie Curie Intra-European Fellowship in Greece. This bursary allows her to entirely dedicate herself to working on her own research project, whilst improving her future employability through varied career development activities (e.g. training courses, conferences, etc).

In addition to the opportunities she has enjoyed from her personal mobility, Corinnes research work has greatly benefited from European funding through the availability of datasets (particularly sea survey datasets) that would not have otherwise been collected. She has participated in a number of surveys on-board oceanographic research vessels that collected data as part of multi-national research projects in the North Sea, English Channel and Mediterranean. She says that “I feel lucky to have had this experience of going to sea. Despite all the hard work in sometimes difficult conditions, I now know these datasets from within.”

By having lived and worked in three countries, she likes to say: “I can pick and choose the best of each country, be it English tea, French patisserie or Greek sea food”, though she also applies this philosophy to her work (currently, marine species spatial distributions and modelled habitats) and other aspects of everyday life. Granted, it is not easy to move to another country, leaving family and friends behind and having to learn all about the new place, everything from finding a good garage to service the car to the social security and fiscal systems, but along the way, new friends are made and new places are discovered as a local resident, giving a unique insight into the people and their culture. She admits that she feels very much like a citizen of Europe, and thinks that her children might well feel the same when they grow up, since, thanks to their Greek father, they are bi-national.

PHOTO: Corinne on-board a fishing research vessel in the Mediterranean Sea.

...HAVING LIVED AND WORKED IN THREE COUNTRIES, “I CAN PICK AND CHOOSE THE BEST OF EACH COUNTRY”
A WORLD FULL OF ADVENTURES

The study of Earth Science is one which lends itself well to world travel; not only do countries differ in climate and culture, the rocks themselves vary from one place to another.

Stories of adventures undertaken in the name of science, told by one of her undergraduate teachers of his days doing geologic mapping, inspired Reia to choose geology as her life’s work. Her own pursuit of such adventure, in turn, has led her to travel the globe doing research. Reia’s undergraduate degree was awarded from Southern Oregon University, in Ashland, Oregon, a town which is fortunate to have examples of all major rock-types within a couple of hour’s drive, making it an ideal location for a solid grounding in Geology. From there her love of learning lead Reia north, to Alaska, for her Master of Science degree, where she studied the Structural Geometry and Evolution of the Toyuk Thrust Zone, Brooks Range, Alaska. This is the furthest north mountain range in the US, and the arctic conditions and recent glaciation have resulted in spectacular displays of rock “outcrop” which reveal the folding and faulting of the layers which make up the range, making it an excellent natural laboratory.

Having studied in the far north Reia then travelled to the far south, undertaking a PhD on The Cambrian Metamorphic History of Tasmania, Australia’s southern-most state. Her Tasmanian research sheds light on the formation of some of the oldest rocks in the state (101 Ma). The contrast in the geology between Alaska and the island of Tasmania is profound, and her skills as a geologist are the better for having had the opportunity to work in both locations. After completing her PhD Reia accepted a 1.5 year contract in Europe, as a Marie Curie Research Fellow at the Università degli Studi di Milano in Italy, where she conducted experiments as part of the international research project “C2C” (Crust to Core) investigating “subduction-zone processes”. Her contribution to this project was an investigation of how different minerals will form from the same starting composition due to different temperatures and pressures. She accomplished this using a “piston-cylinder apparatus”, which can apply intense pressure to a powdered rock, permitting new crystals to grow therein. Examining those crystals, knowing the pressure and temperature at which they grew, helps us to better understand the conditions under which mineral crystals form in rocks deep within subduction zones. Having occasionally interspersed adventures outside of academia in between her years of research, Reia still counts as an “early-career researcher”, yet her career has already spanned three continents. As a result of this travel, in addition to learning about rocks and better understanding the processes involved in the formation of mountain ranges (plate tectonics) she has also learned that “No matter where your career takes you, there are always new and exciting things to learn. Being open to travel and mobility strengthens your ability as a scientist.” Thus far she has published four papers in peer-reviewed journals and contributed talks or posters to 14 different international conferences. She looks forward to seeing where her career takes her next.

BEING OPEN TO TRAVEL AND MOBILITY STRENGTHENS YOUR ABILITY AS A SCIENTIST

THROUGH MOBILITY YOU CAN LEARN MORE OF THE WAY OF LIFE OF PEOPLE IN OTHER PLACES

About 300 years ago, the people called Danube Swabians came from Southern Germany to establish themselves in the then—Habsburg governed Sâlciu and Banat areas. Maria Bostenaru Dan’s grandfather is a descendant of those people, but he studied veterinary medicine in Budapest and then lived in Romania in the northern part of Transylvania—an area which has often changed hands. At the beginning of the 20th century it was Hungarian; it then became Romanian, then Hungarian again during WWI, and finally it once again became Romanian. Maria’s grandmother was from the territory of contemporary Hungary, and came to Romania exactly during one of the times of transition, during WWII, as Hungarian language teacher for Romanian children. Thus, mobility has long been a part of Maria’s family history. In 1996 Maria applied for a TEMPUS scholarship to go to Southern Germany, to the Universitat Karlsruhe, where, in addition to her studies, she could learn something of her roots.

She liked it enough to wish to remain there, so she applied on her return to be regular student in Germany, and then, after graduating in 1999 as Dipl-Inge, (the title received by architecture graduates in Germany) she embraced a postgraduate study. During this time she was offered a research assistant position in a co-operation project with Romania regarding civil engineering designed to minimize danger from earthquakes, and opted to continue this topic with a doctorate, both Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation DFG) funded. This was not her first DFG funding, her very first contact with research and mobility, a short 2 week stay, had sent her to Myslowice, Poland, the country of Marie Curie, for a building survey.

While engaged in her research in Germany she noticed the importance that German companies were giving to experience abroad. She realized that any work experience she could have gained in Romania, would not have counted as such, since Romania was her home country.

Therefore she looked for opportunities that would count as “abroad” both from a German and a Romanian perspective, and found a Marie Curie host fellowship in one of the most renowned institutions in earthquake engineering, the ROSE School, located in Pavia, Italy. This location has its links to her family as well; the brother of her Hungarian grandmother emigrated in 1956, the year of the Hungarian Revolution, from Hungary to Canada with a long stop in Italy. So Italy did not feel completely foreign to her.

Maria Bostenaru Dan was a Marie Curie Fellow and a member of the research group at the Università degli Studi di Milano, where she worked from 2009-2010 and is currently a Marie Curie Research Fellow at the University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest (Romania).

What can you do to make sure your children have a good understanding of the world and its diversity?

When Maria was young her family had not travelled much, but had been “forced” to move as a result of the times of transition, during WWII. This was not only because of her grandfather’s professional job, which had him moving a lot, but also because of the political situation which meant that you could not always stay in one place. Maria Bostenaru Dan’s grandfather is a descendant of those people, but he studied veterinary medicine in Budapest and then lived in Romania in the northern part of Transylvania—an area which has often changed hands. At the beginning of the 20th century it was Hungarian; it then became Romanian, then Hungarian again during WWI, and finally it once again became Romanian. Maria’s grandmother was from the territory of contemporary Hungary, and came to Romania exactly during one of the times of transition, during WWII, as Hungarian language teacher for Romanian children. Thus, mobility has long been a part of Maria’s family history. In 1996 Maria applied for a TEMPUS scholarship to go to Southern Germany, to the Universitat Karlsruhe, where, in addition to her studies, she could learn something of her roots.

She liked it enough to wish to remain there, so she applied on her return to be regular student in Germany, and then, after graduating in 1999 as Dipl-Inge, (the title received by architecture graduates in Germany) she embraced a postgraduate study. During this time she was offered a research assistant position in a co-operation project with Romania regarding civil engineering designed to minimize danger from earthquakes, and opted to continue this topic with a doctorate, both Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Foundation DFG) funded. This was not her first DFG funding, her very first contact with research and mobility, a short 2 week stay, had sent her to Myslowice, Poland, the country of Marie Curie, for a building survey.

While engaged in her research in Germany she noticed the importance that German companies were giving to experience abroad. She realized that any work experience she could have gained in Romania, would not have counted as such, since Romania was her home country.

Therefore she looked for opportunities that would count as “abroad” both from a German and a Romanian perspective, and found a Marie Curie host fellowship in one of the most renowned institutions in earthquake engineering, the ROSE School, located in Pavia, Italy. This location has its links to her family as well; the brother of her Hungarian grandmother emigrated in 1956, the year of the Hungarian Revolution, from Hungary to Canada with a long stop in Italy. So Italy did not feel completely foreign to her.

The cover page of one of Maria’s published books, “The rediscovered green space”.

PHOTO ON TOP / Reia in the Field; James Dalton Mountain, Brooks Range, Alaska (USA).

Name: REIA CHMIELOWSKI
Nationality: Australian, US Citizen
Year born: 1986
Research field: Geology
Doctorate: University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania (Australia), 2009
Marie-Curie fellowships: University of Milan (Italy), 2009-2010
Recently: Marie-Curie Fellow, University of Milan (Italy)
Languages spoken: English, Swedish
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Name: MARIA BOSTENARU
Nationality: Romanian, Hungarian
Year born: 1974
Research field: Engineering
Doctorate: University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest (Romania), 2008 (on-going)
Currently: Researcher at the University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest (Romania)
Languages spoken: English, German, Hungarian, Italian, Romanian
E-mail: maria.bostenaru@aim.ro
During the time she spent in Italy she made links with fellow researchers, and after her scholarship expired in Germany, she applied for an experienced researcher individual fellowship under the Marie-Curie scheme, which was approved. It was hard for her to leave Germany after spending more than 9 years there. She would have liked to have remained and applied for citizenship, but it was not an option.

While the requirement for citizenship is eight years as a resident, time spent on a student visa does not count. To ease the “homesickness” of leaving Germany, she traveled once or sometimes twice a month between Italy and Germany that first year she was in Italy. Anticipating that this move would also be a long-term relocation she moved all her belongings to Italy. However, it did not work out that way, and she found herself needing to make quick decisions as to where to go next. After looking over the options she could find, she applied with the Foundation ERGoRoM’99 for a reintegration grant to return to her home country of Romania.

The application process was challenging. While she had links with the Ion Mincu University for Architecture and Urbanism, where she studied before her TEMPUS scholarship, they could not guarantee that she would be employed, so she had to look further afield. However, once she was back in Romania, she was offered a researcher position in addition to the reintegration grant at this university, which she still holds. She acknowledges that while she gained many benefits and much knowledge about other peoples and cultures in her many years away, in some ways her career lags behind those of her colleagues who never left. It is to be hoped that the same strength which saw her surmount challenges during the times of transition as she moved from one location to another will also see her through the challenges which await her now, and hopes that she will find an opportunity to return, once again, to Germany, once she finally finishes that doctorate degree, and in the mean time she has applied for a second citizenship (Hungarian). She admits that she chose science, in part, because it would give her these opportunities for world travel, and she has enjoyed the chance to learn about people who are both different, yet also tied to her own, personal, family history.

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I NEVER THOUGHT OF MYSELF AS THE KIND OF PERSON WHO WOULD DO THIS – START A COMPANY

( ... )

thought for herself: “If you don’t ask, you already have ‘no’ for an answer”. Thanks to that inspiration, she asked, and found an interested department leader; together they asked for a project with the German Research Association. However, she found it necessary to work temporary jobs for a year while waiting for the research proposal to be evaluated and approved. Once the project actually began she enjoyed “earning money while looking at minerals through the microscope”.

However, she also found that the requirement to achieve a “Habilitation” was not compatible with her interests and she found herself not motivated to try to stay long term at the university, which brought her to the crossroads once again. Fortunately, she was now quite familiar with the feelings that come with starting over, and this time she found it easier than it had been six years previously; she could speak the language, had a stable private life, and had learned that “when a door closes, a window opens”. Therefore, with appropriate preparation, she undertook a focused search for a new job that she enjoyed, and found one in only a few months.

She found herself a position in which she flourished – her experience, language fluency, know-how, and capabilities combined, giving her the freedom to try to stay long term at the university, which brought her to the crossroads once again. Fortunately, she was now quite familiar with the feelings that come with starting over, and this time she found it easier than it had been six years previously; she could speak the language, had a stable private life, and had learned that “when a door closes, a window opens”. Therefore, with appropriate preparation, she undertook a focused search for a new job that she enjoyed, and found one in only a few months.

Believe in yourself and follow your dreams

"The reason most people never reach their goals is that they don’t define them, learn about them, or even seriously consider them as believable or achievable. Winners can tell you where they are going, what they plan to do along the way, and who will.” Denis Waitley

When she was 14 years old, Svetlana read “Running on waves”, a romantic novel by Aleksander Grin, about a girl who can run on the waves of the sea to follow her dreams; because she believed in herself. Years later Svetlana still remembers how impressed she was by the message of this book: that – if you truly believe in yourself, you can make your dreams become reality. Chemistry, the science concerned with the composition, structure, and properties of matter, was a subject that Svetlana especially liked at school.

Studying the different substances and creating new compounds - what could be more interesting? Following her dream in 1978, Svetlana moved from Tiraspoli, a small town in the Ukraine, to Chisinau, the capital of the Republic of Moldova, where Svetlana began studying chemistry at the Moldova State University. Having defended her Master’s thesis “Photophysical deinterstitialization of Ferril III glyoxylate complex” supervised by Professor Gr. Iuica, Svetlana obtained her M.S. in 1984. With this master degree, she held in her hands “a pass” to her new world and it was so exciting. Having invited Svetlana to his laboratory in 1989, the renowned scientist, Professor N. Gerbelou, enticed Svetlana to study the template-controlled synthesis of macrocyclic compounds. Her doctoral thesis “Template synthesis, study and properties of hexaaluminum complexes of nickel(II)” with ligands based on S-alkylisothiocarbohydrazides” mainly dealt with various aspects of template synthesis of polycyclic compounds. Svetlana received a PhD in Inorganic Chemistry in 1996. In the same year, she was awarded the First Class Prize of the Praesidium of the Academy of Sciences of Moldova, conferred to distinguished young scientists in recognition of scientific achievement. After completing her doctoral degree Svetlana obtained numerous travel grants from various sources including the American Society of Chemistry, the Royal Society, the Swiss National Science Foundation, and the German Foreign Exchange Service (DAAD) in order to carry out postdoctoral research in laboratories in the USA, UK, Switzerland and Germany.

In 2005, Svetlana became an Associate Professor in Inorganic Chemistry at Institute of Chemistry, Moldova Academy of Sciences. In the same year, she was awarded a Marie Curie Incoming International Fellowship under FP6 to study the photophysical properties of polymeric coordination compounds with a focus on cyanidebridged coordination networks at the University of Sheffield, UK. There she, collaborated with Professor M. Ward and enjoyed a rigorous and unique cross-disciplinary experience that opened new opportunities for her to advance her scientific career. At Sheffield, Svetlana took part in some of a wide range of professional development courses provided by the university. These included language training, courses in information technology and in effective communication and presentation skills, report writing, managing and leading small groups, and time management.

RIGHT: Natalia and friends with motorbikes on the road (2010).
Upon returning to her home institution in Moldova, Svetlana implemented her newly acquired skills in two major ways. First, exposure to new physical techniques and methods associated with coordination chemistry (synthesis, photophysics, crystallography and so forth) allowed her to expand in several new directions. Second, the enhanced skills in other areas (such as language, management, presentation and communication) allowed Svetlana to engage more effectively in other collaborative ventures with an international component.

Several projects, in which Svetlana generated new ideas, were successful and supported financially by the various international and national scientific funds. One of the projects funded by German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, led to the second Marie Curie Incoming Fellowship for Svetlana under FP7 in 2010, allowing her to visit Professor P. Kögerler’s group at RWTH Aachen University for two years to develop functional materials via controlled assembly of coordination polymers based on metal-clusters and multiprotopic organic ligands. Recently, Svetlana’s daughter Ana, who had enjoyed a successful career as a professional ballet dancer, has also decided to follow her new dreams: “Mama, I always remember your favourite story about the girl who sailed on the waves to a beautiful magnificent and mysterious island to achieve her dreams” she recalled.

“All of the top achievers I know are life-long learners... Looking for new skills, insights, and ideas. If they’re not learning, they’re not growing... not moving toward excellence.”

Dennis Waitley


“NOTHING IN LIFE IS TO BE FEARED. IT IS ONLY TO BE UNDERSTOOD”, MME MARIE CURIE “Τα πάντα ρεί”, HERACLITUS

Theodota is currently a research scientist in High Energy Physics working at CERN, Geneva, Switzerland. Since 2008 she has been working with the University Autonoma de Madrid (UAM) on the discovery of Higgs particle in the ATLAS experiment at the LHC. Natural sciences fascinated Theodota from a very early age, so the decision came naturally, while she was still in high school, to study Physics. With it came an early realization that this is her way to better understand the fundamental workings of the world and the basis of life itself. Theodota comes from a very connected family of 3 sisters with parents who were supportive of the idea of their daughters pursuing scientific university studies. Her eldest sister followed the life sciences, biology, and her twin sister decided to study chemistry.

Theodota started studying Physics in 1987 in her hometown of Thessaloniki in Greece and then decided to specialize in nuclear and particle physics during her second year. She defended her diploma thesis on “Positron annihilation Studies of Point Defects in Neutron Transmutation Doped Czochralski-Grown Silicon” and graduated in July 1991. She then continued to work in the same group to study “Positron Annihilation Studies in High-π Superconductors Ψ+2 Ψ” a topic of considerable interest to better understand properties of these new materials. After several years of intense work Theodota received her PhD in Physics in May 1997. Even before the completion of her PhD, Theodota had her first positive experience with the EU mobility programs. She benefited from the ERASMUS program to learn more on her research subject during the summer months of 1994, working in Positron Physics laboratory of Helsinki University of Technology in Finland. This introduction helped her to realize that she liked to travel and meet people from other cultures and languages – a trait that she still holds today. A new research position in the nuclear physics laboratory gave her the opportunity to work, during the summer months of 1996, for the newly set up ATLAS experiment at the Large Hadron Collider (LHC) at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. This new, intriguing field of research that was opening up, with new high-energy physics experiments, immediately attracted Theodota’s interest. This field did not yet have possibilities for post-doc work in Greece, so Theodota successfully applied for a TMR Marie Curie Research Training Grant fellowship to pursue the area of interest elsewhere. She accepted the challenge to work in Germany though she didn’t know the language and was aware of that there would be a different culture and mentality of the German people as compared with what she was accustomed to in Greece. With the grant, Theodota worked in the ATLAS group at the Max-Planck Institut für Physik, in Munich, Germany (1998-2000); on the topic of “High-Accuracy Momentum Measurement of Muons in a new generation p-p Collision experiment”.

This work gave her the opportunity to explore the high-energy experimental physics domain with the ATLAS experiment. The grant gave her several opportunities to participate actively in various conferences and workshops – enriching her scientific knowledge and gave her various opportunities to present her work. Since her work also needed computing knowledge she attended the CERN School of Computing in Prague (Czech Republic) in 1997. She represented her institute at the 3rd Workshop of Marie Curie Fellows: Research Training in Progress that was held at the University Autonoma de Madrid (UAM) on the discovery of Higgs particle in the ATLAS experiment at the LHC. Natural sciences fascinated Theodota from a very early age, so the decision came naturally, while she was still in high school, to study Physics. With it came an early realization that this is her way to better understand the fundamental workings of the world and the basis of life itself. Theodota comes from a very connected family of 3 sisters with parents who were supportive of the idea of their daughters pursuing scientific university studies. Her eldest sister followed the life sciences, biology, and her twin sister decided to study chemistry.

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She realized that knowing the language of the place where you live is a very important step to come closer and understand the people’s mentality and integrate faster, something that she followed since then. Returning to her home institute in 2003 after the completion of her term in Germany, the Marie Curie Individual Fellowship Return Grant, allowed Theodota to continue for one year her research in this interesting area with the ATLAS experiment. She contributed significantly to the software to reconstruct and identify muon tracks in the ATLAS detector. She participated in various international conferences and schools like the CERN School of Computing in Krems (Austria) in 2003, where she met her future husband, also a CERN high-energy physicist and moved with him to Geneva, Switzerland. At the end of her return grant with Thessaloniki, Theodota received a post-doc position at Charles University in Prague (2004-2006) with the Marie Curie Research Training Network “The Third Generation as a Probe for New Physics: Experimental and Technological Approach”. This post allowed her to work on the muon trigger software of the ATLAS experiment and interact with the international scientific community presenting her work in the RTN workshops in Karlsruhe (Germany), Corfu (Greece), and in Prague (Czech Republic). She was member of the organizing committee of her host institute for the RTN workshop in Prague (2006). During these years she faced the difficulties of commuting between Prague and Geneva and without knowing the Czech language she found it more difficult to integrate in such a short term placement. In 2006 she was happy to get her current research position with the University Autonoma de Madrid based at CERN. Since then she is dedicated to hunting for the elusive “God” (Higgs particle) as a member of the ATLAS Higgs physics group. Working in such an international organization, like CERN with official languages of English and French, is another challenge. Theodota is coming into contact every day with people of different countries and cultures, so by now she is used to hearing English, French, Italian or Spanish spoken in the same room without getting a headache at the end of the day. She shares with her partner the same interests in physics and other areas; they are discussing and collaborating even if they work for different “competitive” CERN experiments. Theodota’s first motivation to follow the EU mobility programs was her desire to learn more on her scientific research subject and explore new research areas, initially hoping that it would be a good experience and it would help her to return in a short time to her home country, more advanced than before and perhaps fit for an academic post. However, in the meantime, things changed, and rather than returning promptly to Greece she found that the EU mobility programs were much more important for her scientific life than she had anticipated: as a matter of fact, they helped her to adjust faster and remember only the positive experiences after all is said and done. On her way she learned to be more open-minded and to not be afraid of the unknown. Catching the new opportunities she realized soon that nothing is static, everything changes, as Heraclitus said: “To nubos pin”. She feels now that EUROPE is a whole to her new home country.

Theodota has published about 60 papers in scientific journals and 20 in conference proceedings. She is member of the MCKA association, the MC Women in Science (m-WiSET) working group, the Hellenic High Energy Physics Society and she is member of the CERN personnel.

She is dedicated to the Higgs physics for the hunting of the elusive “God” (Higgs) particle.
...“ACQUIRE KNOWLEDGE, EVEN IF YOU HAVE TO CROSS COUNTRIES AND CONTINENTS AND GO TILL CHINA, DO IT”

( ...) At the end, she says “Thanks to MC Fellowship and MC actions programmes in RTN, it not only gave me an exposure to internationally challenging interdisciplinary research but also provided me an opportunity to travel to many European countries and broaden my ideas about different cultures, languages and professional work environments during the short 18 months fellowship. I attended a Marie Curie conference and ESOF 2008 in Barcelona and joined the MCFA administration board. Joining this board added several positive points about different cultures, languages and professional work environments during the short 18 months fellowship. I attended a Marie Curie conference and ESOF 2008 in Barcelona and joined the MCFA administration board. Joining this board added several positive points in my career.

For two years, on behalf of MCFA, I served as a science career editor in a springer journal, Reviews in Environmental Science and Biotechnology. It was a unique and interesting experience. Overall, my international exposure in various ways due to the MC Fellowship also had an effect in my selection in my next job in Japan and I again moved to a different country which has completely different work ethics, culture, language and overall system. Interestingly, I am again working on an interdisciplinary project on development of biomaterials for the growth and differentiation of human embryonic and induce pluripotent stem (ES and iPS) cells.”

“Although, it has been really difficult to relocate mentally and physically and read just to completely new system every two or three years it has been stimulating and challenging. I would have been more disappointed, had I not taken up these challenges however hard and demanding they have been. Last but not the least, thanks to my religious upbringing and teaching of the founder of my religion who instructs us To acquire knowledge, even if you have to cross countries and continents and go till China, do it, it always kept the light ignited in me to cross boundaries.”

“Dream anything that you want to dream. That’s the beauty of the human mind. Do anything that you want to do. That is the strength of the human will. Trust yourself to test your limits. That is the courage to succeed.” Bernard Edmond

“All you NEEd iS loVE

ELENA MARTINES

Name: Elena Martines
Nationality: Italian
Year born: 1977
Research field: Biomedical engineering
Doctorate: University of Glasgow (UK), 2005
Marie-Curie fellowships: University College Dublin (Ireland), 2010-09 going.
Currently: Marie-Curie Fellow at the University College Dublin (Ireland)
Languages spoken: English, French, Italian, Spanish
E-mail: elenamartines@gmail.com

I have lived abroad since I was 19. At times I have wished I settled in a place, and I have longed for stability. But each time an exciting opportunity showed up, I was never able to say no!”

Like many of the children who grew up on the Sicilian coast, Elena spent most of her childhood on the seashore, fascinated by the many shapes and colours of the marine world. Her interest in nature increased during high school where she was very lucky to have a science teacher who transmitted to the students a lot of passion for science and a general curiosity towards all the natural phenomena, from the reaction of chemicals to the eruption of volcanoes. Like many teenagers, Elena also longed for world travel, and the perfect opportunity appeared when the National Institute of Applied Sciences (INSA) in Lyon, France, advertised their international undergraduate program (EURINGA), where she enrolled in 1996. “The experience at INSA has completely changed my life and shaped my personality. I was only 19, coming from an island where most innovations arrive later than in the rest of the country, and I found myself in a thriving multicultural environment, with friends of different nationalities in a vibrant European city”. The initial adaptation was difficult. Of all the relocations that have followed, none was as hard as the first one. But after a few months Elena was perfectly integrated, fluent in French and very excited about the new travel opportunities that her studies were offering. In 1999 she was selected to spend a year as Erasmus student in the Kungliga Tekniska Högskolan, Stockholm, Sweden, where she specialized in Biomedical Engineering in collaboration with the Karolinska Institute.

When she returned to Lyon she had made two decisions. First, she wanted to work in the field of biosciences and second, she wanted to relocate again to a different country. As a result, she contacted the Centre for Cell Engineering at the University of Glasgow, UK, and asked to do her Masters’ thesis there. She was accepted, and after getting her MEng in Mechanical and Design Engineering from INSA in September 2001, she returned to the University of Glasgow to embark on a PhD. Her PhD was a second major life change, and not only because of the new Scottish lifestyle. In the Centre for Cell Engineering Elena entered the world of nanotechnology, studying the biocompatibility of nano-engineered surfaces, a completely different perspective than the macroscopic approach of her engineering background. As a PhD student in this extremely multidisciplinary field, sometimes termed “nanobioscience”, Elena gained hands-on experience in nanofabrication, advanced microscopy techniques, cell biology and surface chemistry.

Elena got her PhD in Cell Engineering in 2005. At this point she realized that she had been disconnected from her home country for too long, and she decided to go back with a postdoctoral contract in the Chemistry Department at the University of Catania, Italy. She felt happy at home. But one year later she still had a drive to discover the molecular mechanisms of cell adhesion, so she decided to relocate again, this time to Spain, to work in the Centre for Cooperative Research in Biomaterials (CICBiomaGUNE, San Sebastian, Spain).

Moving out from home is harder then moving from any other place and leaving Sicily a second time was difficult, but this time her husband followed her. Elena worked for over two years in CICBiomaGUNE, investigating the molecular mechanisms of HIV infection. She was very happy to contribute to the search for effective anti-HIV microbicides and she file two international patents in the field of Atomic Force Microscopy. But mobility is contagious and while in Spain her husband decided to move to Ireland.

Nusrat at work at the University of Kyoto (Japan).

Elena at work at the University of Catania (Italy).
When you love both science and your family, you will excel in both

( ... )

After more than one year of travelling between Spain and Ireland, eventually Elena moved to Dublin and a few months later she was awarded a Marie Curie Intra-European fellowship to study models of the molecules that might be involved in Alzheimer’s disease. “All my early interests seem to have come together today: I work in biophysics and I enjoy writing scientific papers. Working in a multidisciplinary environment is very exciting. As a scientist I learnt a lot, I moved across countries and across scientific fields.

Today I am able to communicate with people at all levels and with different backgrounds, I supervise a team of researchers and I manage my own research project.” In Ireland Elena also got involved in the setting up of her husband’s company, an adventure that they might have never started if they had not moved to another country. “Living abroad can give you a flare for opportunities that sometimes only a multicultural experience can help you seize. Starting up a company is a lot of work, but if you are a determined self-starter, it is incredibly exciting! In our case, we have solved the “dual career” issue by following each other in turn. We were lucky to be able to be that flexible.” In Dublin Elena had her first baby boy.

“He will have two nationalities and will speak two mother tongues. This is what my mobility is giving him as a legacy.” Today she is one of many women who are juggling work and family while establishing their career. Initially she was worried about finding time out to have a baby, but she was very lucky to have had role models during her PhD.

“Seeing the women postdocs in my lab work happily while expecting a baby, take maternity leave and come back to work with passion made me realise that having a competitive career is compatible with building a family. There are difficult moments, and sometimes I feel that I cannot keep up with everything, but then I always manage. When you love both your work and your family, you will excel in both.”

To date Elena’s publications have received over 300 citations and she has presented her work at several conferences across Europe. She is the National Marie Curie Group Co-ordinator for Ireland and a member of the MCFA Mobile Women in Science and Technology (m-WiSET) working group.

When you love both science and your family, you will excel in both.
collaborations with three cultural groups: the Cree of Eeyou Istchee in Quebec, the Inuit of Qamani’tuq in Nunavut and the Saami of Övre Soppero in Sweden. In each community, she teamed up with a local researcher. Her Inuit, Saami and Cree colleagues were all experienced women deeply involved in community counseling and development, who took ownership of the collaborative research processes, facilitated workshops on their own, and developed aboriginal research techniques and methodologies.

New questions and community-based projects were then co-designed addressing community concerns: the generation gap, language loss, the cumulative impact of mining, climate change and logging on reindeer and caribou populations, and adaptation strategies. Tourism was no longer a research priority, but instead was a point of entry. Together, Sylvie and these communities started exploring new ways to do research in aboriginal contexts, particularly cross-cultural research programs between communities and triangular research collaborations between community, academics and the private industry. With the support of the French “Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique” (CNRS), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and the French Polar Research Institute (iPEV), Sylvie was able to gather all her aboriginal co-researchers and their academic partners in three international workshops: a network of community-based research and interdisciplinary programs emerged. Northern communities have been somewhat over-researched in the past and have received little benefit from it. Researchers are not always welcome.

Sylvie’s previous background as a facilitator and local development officer, along with her knowledge of aboriginal issues, have helped her interact with and build trust within these communities. Her being a woman and a mother facilitated her integration and acceptance by her co-researchers. After two enriching years in Canada, Sylvie went back to France for her reintegration phase. The challenge was to find a full-time position to pursue her research projects. She completed a doctoral dissertation based on her work in Canada and accepted a job in Montreal. The Université de Québec À Montréal (UQAM) research position at the Transat tourism Chair is meant to address the Quebec tourism industry’s adaptation strategies to adjust to climate change. For this project, she left her family in Montpellier. But the challenge was worth it. Being back in Canada allowed her to pursue her collaboration with Arctic communities. Sylvie has since settled back to Canada to work for the French CNRS and the Ecology and Environment Institute (iNEE), to develop an interdisciplinary research program in the Arctic, a strategic vision, and a range of new tools such as the Human-Environment Observatories (OHM-observatoire Homme Milieu). The two-year stay in Canada benefited Sylvie’s whole family. Sylvie's husband, also a scientist, strengthened his Canadian research network and developed new research programs and collaborations that became key elements of his research activities once he returned to France. Her daughter came back fluent in English and returned to the French school system with a confidence in her ability to adapt to different cultural contexts.

Sylvie and her main research collaborators. LEFT: Sylvie and the late Vera Avaala, Inuit from Qamani’tuaq, Nunavut. CENTRE: Sylvie and Robin McGinley, Cree from Eeyou Istchee, Director of COFTA, the Cree Outfitting Tourism Association, www.creetourism.ca. RIGHT: Britt-Marie Labba, from Övre Soppero in Sweden, reindeer herder and owner of Min Eallin, www.mineallin.com.