



Letter to Members

The Association in May 2006

Welcome to another issue of the "Letters to Members" which summarises the recent developments in the Marie Curie Fellows Association. For your convenience we have created a pdf version of this letter with some additional information. The pdf version can be also downloaded from the MCFA home page: www.mariecurie.org.

MEMBERSHIP ISSUES

Preliminary call for the board

The new administrative board of the Association will be elected during the Annual General Assembly in autumn (most probably in October). However, we invite (non-binding) expression of interest to candidate for the new board already now. This gives the future board members the opportunity to learn in advance about the work in board, which in turn will make the transition easier.

The board members organise the daily business of the Association, participate at the conferences and meetings on behalf of the MCFA and work together with partner organisations such as European Commission, EURODOC, European Platform of Woman Scientists, or European University Association. Through their involvement in the board the members will gain new competence and experience (e.g. how to run an international organisation, current initiatives in science policy). The experiences collected may complement the scientific competence acquired through research and build up an attractive personal portfolio of skills and expertise. Please contact us at office@mariecurie.org for more information.

Membership Fees

This is another reminder that if you have not yet renewed your membership for 2006, you are invited to do so by your

earliest convenience. If you have any problem logging in the website, please get in touch with our office. In the pdf version of this letter (downloadable also from the MCFA home page) you may find a payment form to be submitted by fax or post. Online payment is also possible from the MCFA home page.

Blackboard and feedback form accessible from member area

The blackboard and feedback form are accessible now from the member area. The blackboard allows sharing of local information, tips and ideas among the members, and by doing so facilitate the collaboration and networking. It can be used to share experience, seek a collaboration, or announce interesting events. The board allows to search in the records according to a number of thematic and geographic criteria. The current version is a working prototype, we will improve its functionality according to your suggestions and comments.

INFORMATIONS FROM NATIONAL GROUPS

MCFA UK National Group meeting in London, 17th June 2006

The next regional meeting of Marie Curie Fellows will be held in London, 17th June at the University of London Union (ULU), Seminar Room 2D, from 12 pm to 4 pm. Marie Curie Fellows are welcome to attend

the meeting.

The agenda for the day includes a talk by the National Contact Point UK, Estelle Kane, and discussions on how to get the allowances tax-free in UK. Further details, including directions to ULU, can be found at the MCFA UK Blog, www.mariecurie.org/mcfa_template.

Attendance is free but we would like you to register by Sunday the 11th June 2006 by sending an email to office@mariecurie.org. We will be grateful if you could pass this message on to Fellows you know in your institution and also post it in the PostDoc/ PhD mailing lists.

We are looking forward to meeting you!

MCFA IT National Group meeting

Another regional meeting is prepared in Nord-East Italy (most probably in Padova). The date has to be confirmed. If you are interested in attending the event, please send an e-mail to office@mariecurie.org.

Election of new board MCFA-EL

The Greek MCFA national group (MCFA-EL) elected a new Administrative Board. The new board consist of Alexandros Savvaidis (Chair), Georgios Spyroulias (Vice Chair), Evangelia Chrysinia (Secretary General), Dimitra Gkilpathi (Treasurer), Evanthia Tazoglou, and Dimitris Charitos. Congratulation and good luck from all members of the MCFA administrative board! The outgoing board consisted of Andreas Drouzas, Alexandra Gogou, Alexandros Savvaidis, Konstantinos P. Giannakopoulos, Georgios Simeonidis.

ScienceCareers has recently published an article about *Andreas Drouzas* who is a founding member of MCFA Greece, and chaired the national group in 2005-2006. Besides he was a member of MCFA administrative board in 2002. The article is entitled "Seeing the Forest and the Trees" and can be accessed under

http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_development/previous_issues/articles/2006_06_02/seeing_the_forest_and_the_trees

SCIENCE POLICY NEWS

Later in this document you will find the **letter sent by ISE** (Initiative for Science in Europe) to the Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik earlier this year. The letter which was signed by presidents, chairs, and directors General of 57 European organizations in all scientific disciplines (among other by MCFA Chair), was published by SCIENCE, VOL 311, 3 MARCH 2006.

The MCFA supported the establishment of a new COST scheme dedicated to young investigators. The scheme called '**Young Investigators Network (YIN)**' was presented during the Marie Curie Conference in Manchester, April 2006, by Piotr Swiatek. COST obtained an important support for this and other activities by the Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik and many MEPs during the COST exhibition "A vision for European Science", Brussels, April 2006. See for more detail in CORDIS Focus Newsletter, No 266 May 2006, page 6. You may support the scheme directly by contacting the national COSST coordinator (names and contacts on COST web site www.cost.esf.org).

In the same issue of the CORDIS Focus Newsletter you can find also an article about the **next budget of the FP7** and its distribution over different areas. The section 'People' will probably be allocated 7,500 millions Euro, compared to 1,700 millions Euro dedicated to Marie Curie Actions in the FP6.

The European Commission has just launched a "**Public consultation on trans-national research cooperation and knowledge transfer between public research organisations and industry**" which might be of interest to some of you. Please find below the description taken from the website of the consultation:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=KTconsultation>

Deadline for online submissions is 19 July 2006.

The **European Platform of Woman Scientists** (EPWS) was officially launched on 28 March 2006. Last month the first newsletter of the EPWS was published. It can be accessed at http://www.epws.org/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=16

The first network event is planned for the 20th October 2006.

The European Commission has adopted a **communication on the modernisation of European universities**. For further information: http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/lisbon_en.html

Articles in Science careers

The next focus on the careers of the Marie Curie Fellows, published by Science Careers (former Science Next Wave), will be about UK. It will consist of several stories or a single article with interviews with several fellows. There is no deadline for contribution but early submissions are encouraged. Please contact Christina Vidinova at christinavidinova@gmail.com.

CONFERENCES, MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Intermediar PhD Career Event, 11th May 2006, Beurs van Berlage, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

The event, organised by Intermediar in collaboration with YER Campus Recruitment, Promovendi Netwerk Nederland, ERA-MORE the Netherlands and the MCFA, was attended by more than 750 young researchers. The MCFA was represented by a stand shared with ERA-MORE mobility centres in Netherlands. For MCFA Roslaie Luitenen attended the stand. More information about the event can be found at <http://www.intermediar.nl/html/2/phd/phd2006.html>

The electronic copy of the Intermediar

Orientation Guide PhD Edition 2006, presented at the event, can be accessed at <http://intermediar.republisher.modernmedia.nl/>

Conference "Il filosofo e il facchino. Università e Ricerca nella formazione del capitale umano", Venice, auditorium Santa Margherita, Campo Santa Margherita

The conference was organised by Società Italiana per la Ricerca Educativa e Formativa (S.I.R.E.F.) and moderated by Silvie Coyaude, a journalist from the newspaper Sole 24 Ore. From MCFA the workshop was attended by Achille Giacometti and Jaroslav Mysiak

Stakeholders meeting on EIT, 18 May, Brussels, Rue Van Maerlant 2

MCFA participated also at the second stakeholders meeting on the prepared European Institute of Technology (EIT), this time represented by Didier Baudewyns (MCFA Member). During the meeting the draft version of the EC Communication on EIT, due in June 2006, was discussed.

Additional documents about EIT can be found at EC web site http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/eit/index_en.html

Meanwhile the **second Communication about the EIT** was released and can be accessed under

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eit/comm_8_6_06_en.pdf

E-MRS Spring meeting 2006, Nice, France

The Spring meeting of European Materials Research Society was held in Nice, France in May 29 - June 2, 2006. The MCFA was represented with a stand attended by Konstantinos P. Giannakopoulos.

Missed opportunity

MCFA was invited to give a talk about the Marie Curie Actions during the general assembly of the BeWiSe, the Belgian network for women scientist, held on the 30th of May in Brussels (<http://>

bewise.naturalsciences.be/assembly2006)
at the museum of natural sciences
(Vautierstraat 29). Unfortunately, we were
not able to arrange our participation at
such a short notice.

Diary of events

**Conference on European Research
Council (ERC)**, Bologna, 20 giugno,
Absidale di Santa Lucia, via de' Chiari, 23 –
Bologna (<http://www.crui.it/link/?ID=3050>)

The conference is organised by the Italian
Universities' Rector Conference and will be
attended among others by Salvatore Settis,
Claudio Bordignon – both members of the
Scientific Council in the European Research
Council, and William Cannell from DG
Research. A session dedicated to young
researchers will be chaired by Renzo
Rubale, former president of EURODOC.
Among invited speakers there is also Maria
Pia Cosma, the winner of the last years'
Marie Curie Excellence Award.

ISE General Assembly, 15 July, Munich (Germany), 11:00 - 15:00

The event takes place in context of the
EuroScience Open Forum (ESOF) 2006
(www.esof2006.org). ISE organises also a
special session on the ERC on Sunday 16
July at 9:45. Panel consists of Fotis Kafatos
and Helga Nowotny, Chair and Vice-chair of
the ERC Scientific Council, Wilhelm Krull,
Secretary General of the Volkswagen
Foundation, and a representative of the
European Commission. The session will be
organised as a roundtable and will focus on
the philosophy, strategy and foreseen
programmes of the ERC as well as the
executive agency (legal aspects, structure
and role, staffing, funding system - grants,
etc).

Many thanks for your constant interest in
the Association,

Jaroslav Mysiak

PHOTOS FROM THE MARIE CURIE CONFERENCE, Manchester April 10-12, 2006 (for more photos see <http://www.jb.man.ac.uk/mc2/index.html>)

MCFA plenary session, Tuesday 11:00 - 12:30
was opened and chaired by **Jaroslav Mysiak**.



Panel speakers include (from right) **Ana M. Cerdeño-Tárraga**, **Dagmar Meyer**, **Maziar Nekovee**, **Antonella di Trapani** and **Piotr Swiatek**



Dagmar Meyer (MCFA Chair 2003-2005)



Ana M. Cerdeño-Tárraga, MCFA Chair 2000-200



Maziar Nekovee (MCFA Vice Chair 2000-2002)



Piotr Swiatek (from COST) and **Antonella Di Trapani** (MCFA treasurer since 2005)



MCFA Stand attended by **Natalia Balcázar** (MCFA German National Group leader)



Dagmar Mayer with members of organisation committee, from left **Jason Rutter**, **Frank Marx**, and **Liz Fay**, **Kerry Chantrey**





LETTERS

edited by Etta Kavanagh

Crucial Choices for the Nascent ERC

THE DIVERSE SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITIES SUPPORTING THE INITIATIVE FOR SCIENCE IN EUROPE (ISE) welcome the steps taken toward establishing the European Research Council (ERC), notably, the appointment of a Scientific Council of 22 outstanding scientists. Many important decisions must be taken in the coming months to ensure that the ERC meets the high expectations of the community as a truly autonomous agency that funds fundamental research in all disciplines on the basis of scientific excellence, while guaranteeing that the public funding provided for it will be prudently managed.

The choice of legal structure for the ERC will be vital. An "Executive Agency," established and staffed predominantly by employees of the European Commission (EC) recruited through open competition and detachment, is one option; the alternative is a structure that is independent of the EC but in which all member states are represented. The ISE agrees with the pragmatic choice of an Executive Agency structure, at least for the start-up phase of the ERC, with the possibility of changing the legal structure following an independent assessment after 3 to 5 years.

Despite the Commission's role in establishing the agency, the ERC must be substantially independent of the EC and, crucially, must be allowed to function outside the standard procedures of the Framework Programmes. In this regard, the leading role of the new Scientific Council must be rigorously respected; the Executive Agency must act under the authority of the Scientific Council. As a consequence, it appears imperative to us that the choice of the director of the Executive Agency must be based on proposals made by the Scientific Council. The alternative, whereby the EC chooses the key officers, would put at risk the trust between the Scientific Council and the Executive Agency that will be essential to earn, in turn, the trust and respect of the wider scientific community.

The new ERC has the opportunity to engage European researchers in a way that the Framework Programmes have so far failed to do. The Executive Agency must grasp this opportunity by choosing procedures that best serve the needs of science in Europe: Applications must be evaluated solely on scientific merit, the application and reporting procedures must not overburden scientists with administration, and funding must be through grants, like those of the national funding agencies, rather than, as is currently the case in the Framework Programme, through contracts with rigid deliverables and milestones, which are counterproductive to the unpredictable frontier research.

Finally, although no decision on the level of financing of the next Framework Programme has been announced, we know that budget negotiations point to a significant reduction in funds for research by the European Union, possibly including the ERC. In any event, the ERC must have a budget that is commensurate with the important task in hand—to stimulate basic research and

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increase the competitiveness of Europe. This budget should be at least €1 billion per year in the first years and grow quickly to €1.5 to 2.0 billion per year (the size of the larger national research council budgets) within the 7-year Framework Programme. A smaller budget than this could seriously undermine the ERC. Funding of this magnitude, i.e., at least €9 billion, should be earmarked for the ERC in the Framework Programme budget.

The temptation to reduce ERC funding to protect existing actions, however valuable, or to transfer to the ERC the charge of delivering other parts of the Framework Programme (without the associated budget) must be resisted. If the budget is inadequate, the success rate of applications will be too low, many important projects will not be funded, and the best researchers will not apply for grants or participate in the peer review process. All of these would doom the nascent ERC.

THIS LETTER IS ENDORSED IN A PERSONAL CAPACITY BY THE PRESIDENTS, CHAIRS, AND DIRECTORS GENERAL OF 57 EUROPEAN ORGANIZATIONS IN ALL SCIENTIFIC DISCIPLINES UNDER THE AEGIS OF THE INITIATIVE FOR SCIENCE IN EUROPE (FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, SEE WWW.INITIATIVE-SCIENCE-EUROPE.ORG). THE COMPLETE LIST OF SIGNATORIES IS AVAILABLE AT WWW.SCIENCEMAG.ORG/CGI/CONTENT/FULL/311/5765/1240B/DC1.

Objectivity in Science

OBJECTIVITY IS A CORNERSTONE OF SCIENCE. Bias can erode objectivity when unwittingly introduced into the reporting and teaching of discoveries and theories. This is evident in articles and books on evolution today and may contribute to difficulties in the acceptance of evolution by many supporters of intelligent design.

Science has not yet developed to the point of being able to assign purpose to activities in the natural world. In fact, it may never develop to that level. Yet purpose is often implied in descriptions of DNA replication, and this introduces bias.

Scientists generally agree that there is no purpose in evolution. The evolutionary process moves along as a result of interactions among and between components of various levels of organization: populations, organisms, molecules, atoms, and subatomic particles and



Credit Card Payment Form for MCFA Membership Fees

Name of the MCFA member:

Email address:

Address:

.....

MCFA membership number:

I agree that the Marie Curie Fellowship Association (Association des Boursiers Marie Curie a.i.s.b.l.) charges the following amount to my credit card:

MCFA membership fee 2005: EUR

+ voluntary contribution: EUR

total amount: EUR

Card type (please check): VISA (not VISA Electron) ☐ Eurocard-MasterCard ☐

Card number (16 digits):

Card expiry date:/...../.....

Name of the cardholder
(as it appears on the card):

Address of the cardholder
(as registered with the card):

.....

Date and place:/...../.....

Signature of the cardholder:

Please send this form to:

Antonella Di Trapani, MCFA treasurer, 31 Arlington House, Bath Street, Bath BA1 1QN, UK