

Marie Curie Fellows Association



Letter to Members

January-February 2010

Dear MCFA Member,

It is the MCFA pleasure to keep contact with you through this bimonthly letter by which we keep you posted about the association activities, upcoming events and careers, funding, and networking opportunities.

The MCFA board

Contents

Life of the Association	2
Careers, funding, and networking opportunities	3
Past meetings with MCFA participation	4
Publications.....	6
The Speaker's Corner	9
Upcoming events	9
News in Brief	10

Life of the Association

MCFA Extraordinary General Assembly

Ixelles, 21 January 2010

The Extraordinary General Assembly (EGA) was convened in accordance with the MCFA statutes, because no quorum had been reached at the Annual General Assembly (AGA) of the MCFA in Paris on 29 November 2009. The EGA took place in Ixelles, Belgium on 21 January 2010 in order to confirm the election on the new administrative board of the MCFA for the year 2010 and the approval of the statutes changes in front of Belgian authorities. The changes of statutes have been accepted and all candidates have been elected thus the new MCFA Administrative Board in 2010 will consist of 14 members with the following responsibilities:

Guggi Kofod - *Chair*

Maria Antonietta Buccheri - *Vice Chair*

Esperança Manuel - *Secretary General*

Yegor Domanov - *Vice Secretary General*

Eric Buchlin - *Treasurer*

Natalia Balcázar - *Vice Treasurer*

Anett Kiss - *Editor for the Letter to Members*

Nusrat J.M. Sanghamitra - *Science Career Editor in RESB for MCFA*

Fernando Pérez-Cruz - *National Groups Coordinator*

Gianna Avellis - *"Women in Science" Policy Group Coordinator*

Ninoslav Marina - *Science Policy Officer and Career/Mobility Advisor*

Eric Zimmerman - *Science Policy Officer*

Daniel Gromadzki - *Science Policy Officer*

Fuad Hajji - *Fund-raising Officer*

Membership renewal 2010

We would like to thank all of you who already renewed their membership for 2010 and also the new Fellows who have recently joined the Association. This includes the participants to the MCFA careers workshop in Paris, as the registration fee included membership fee for 2010.

We would like to remind fellows who have not paid the membership fee for 2010 to do it before 15 March. After this date all non-paying members will be considered "MCFA Affiliates", with very limited access to the MCFA membership benefits. If you are currently an Affiliate, we invite you to upgrade your status to Full Member. To do so, you only have to pay the fee for the current year.

Full membership benefits include access to the database of current and former Marie Curie Fellows (including contact details, professional profile, and contract data), access to the MCFA discussion forum, and access to internal documents (including administrative and financial reports, meeting minutes, collaboration documents). Furthermore, MCFA membership entitles you to vote at the Annual General Assembly and to participate actively in decision making, policy formulation, and contribute to MCFA publications. Full membership is also required in order to candidate for a position in the Administrative or Advisory Board.

Membership fee is payable either by international bank transfer or by credit card on our website (<http://mcfa.eu/site/memberArea/fees.php>). Please keep in mind that the MCFA membership is endorsed by the European Commission and the annual membership



fee can be charged to the Marie Curie project (eligible participation costs). Finally, if you know any other Marie Curie Fellows in your institution, please invite them to join the MCFA.

MCFA membership is open to researchers who have benefited from mobility research training grants by the European Commission (IEF, IOF, IIF, ERG, IRG, ITN, COFUND).

Thank you for your support!

Careers, funding, and networking opportunities

EMBO Young Investigator Programme

The [EMBO Young Investigator Programme](#) offers a number of unique benefits to support the young group leaders in establishing a reputation as excellent scientists. Applications are expected from researchers who have led their first independent laboratory for at least one and not more than four years in an EMBC Member State and work in the biology.

Deadline for application is 01 April 2010.

EMBO installation grant

The aim of the [EMBO Installation Grants](#) is to allow young scientists in Central Europe to install their independent laboratories in an environment that frequently does not provide a mechanism that offers true independence to scientists early on. The scheme is entirely funded by the participating EMBC Member States and successful applicants receive an annual support of 50,000 euro for three to five years. At present applications are accepted from Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Portugal, Poland and Turkey.

Application deadline is 15 April 2010.



HFSP research grants (Human Frontier Science Program)

[HFSP Research Grants](#) are provided for teams of scientists from different countries who wish to combine their expertise in innovative approaches to questions in basic life science research. Emphasis is placed on novel collaborations that bring together scientists preferably from different disciplines (e.g. from chemistry, physics, computer science, engineering) to focus on problems in the life sciences.



Two types of Research Grants are available:

Young Investigators' Grants are awarded to teams of researchers, all of whom are within the first five years after obtaining an independent laboratory (e.g. Assistant Professor, Lecturer or equivalent).

Program Grants are awarded to teams of independent researchers at any stage of their careers, although the participation of younger scientists is especially encouraged. The research team is expected to develop new lines of research through the collaboration.

Deadline of compulsory pre-registration, via the web site: 22 March 2010.

Deadline of submission of Letters of Intent: 31 March 2010.

L'Oréal-UNESCO UK and Ireland Fellowships For Women In Science

L'Oréal-UNESCO UK and Ireland Fellowships For Women In Science

are awards to promote, celebrate, enhance and encourage, the role and achievements



of women pursuing their research careers in the UK or Ireland in the fields of the life or physical sciences. Four

fellowships are awarded annually to outstanding women scientists in the early stages of their career pursuing postdoctoral research. The fellowships, each worth £15,000, are tenable at any UK or Irish university or research institute to support a 12 month period of research.

Deadline for applications: 07 April 2010.

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs

Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs is a new European exchange programme aimed at helping new entrepreneurs to acquire relevant skills for managing an SME by spending time working in another EU country with an experienced entrepreneur. Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs:



-offers new entrepreneurs the opportunity to learn from an experienced entrepreneur who is running a small or medium-sized enterprise (SME) in another EU country;

-enables the exchange of experience between new and experienced entrepreneurs;

-facilitates access to new markets and the search for potential business partners;

-enhances networking between business people and SMEs;

-allows experienced entrepreneurs to develop new commercial relations and find out more about opportunities in another EU country.

British Academy Small Research Grants

Grants are available from the British Academy to support primary research (collaborative or individual projects) in the humanities and social sciences. Funds are available to facilitate initial project planning and development; to support the direct costs of research; and to enable the advancement of research through workshops, or visits by or to partner scholars. Applicants may seek support for any combination of eligible activity and cost up to the overall limit of £7,500 over two years.



Applications from international groups of scholars are welcome, provided there is a UK-based scholar as lead applicant.

Deadline for application: 15 March 2010

Past meetings with MCFA participation

ALLEA meeting – Towards Young Academies across Europe

February 8- 9, 2010, Madrid, Spain

Gianna Avellis from the MCFA attended the ALLEA (ALL European Academies) Member Academies' consultative meeting in Madrid. ALLEA is the European

Federation of 53 National Academies of Science and Humanities in 40 countries. It prepares authoritative analyses and proposals aimed at improving the framework conditions for research and higher education in Europe. With its Member Academies, ALLEA strives to

- exchange experiences and information, promoting best practice on how science can best serve society;
- analyse issues of relevance to higher education that have European dimensions;
- address science policy and science foresight challenges at the European level.

ALLEA offers a platform to Member Academies to discuss their multilateral science and science policy engagements in Europe and beyond. Some ALLEA Member Academies have successfully established "Young Academies". In order to allow the next generation of scientific leaders to make their voice heard in European science and science policy debates, ALLEA is exploring the possibility of establishing a European Young Academy. In this context, the ALLEA meeting was perceived as a main contribution toward the construction of a European Young Academy, bringing in the same place the existing National Young Academies in Europe and the international initiatives, among them MCFA.

After the welcome by the President of the Istituto de Espana, where the ALLEA

meeting took place, and a representative of the Ministry, National Young Academies in Europe were presented as structure and projects and their contribution to new ways of developing science perspectives. Very interesting was the session on National patterns of support for young scholars and perspectives for National Young Academies, where Nicolas Mann, British Academy, Vice-President ALLEA, gave an introductory ALLEA survey 2009 followed by extended tour de table with short presentations of National Academies.

The second day of the conference was devoted to International perspectives and presentation of the EYA (European Young Academy) and other international initiatives, such as WAYS (World Association of Young Scientists), EURODOC, EDISYN (European Dialect Syntax Network), GYSA (Global Young Science Academy), and MCFA. Gianna Avellis presented the MCFA and some gender issues on mobility science policy. In reply to a question about the relationship of MCFA with other associations, Gianna pointed out our contacts with EURODOC.

The participation of MCFA to the ALLEA meeting was useful for both the parties: for ALLEA to grasp our structure and services, and to MCFA for the contacts made, in particular Philippe Lacour, a MC fellow, who presented WAYS.



Publications

Call for special feature articles on “Science Careers” in RESB Journal

In Collaboration with MCFA, the journal Reviews in Environmental Science and/Biotechnology (RESB) has started a section having feature articles on “science careers” from 2009. The articles describing the career and research topic of the Marie Curie grant of the MCFA member should be within 2-4 printed pages. The article should not have any original results but a form of feature article, a mini review of the project description aiming at a broader range of readers. The feature article on ‘science career’ starts with a short abstract, a short introduction about the project and how you or your network aims at achieving it, the working principle and application fields (use of Illustrations and figures are encouraged in this section), the detail of the network (if it is a Marie Curie Network) followed by a small paragraph highlighting how this particular project or network influences the career of the fellows. The article may include 5-6 references under the heading ‘further reading’. Further, while preparing their manuscript the authors are encouraged to have a look at the published articles in this category which can be found in the links below:

Nusrat J. M. Sanghamitra: [FluRox based biosensors](#)

Philippe Zinck: [One-step synthesis of polyesters specialties for biomedical applications](#)

Karthick Babu Sai Sankar Gupta: [Towards spin torch experiments and artificial reaction centers](#)

We thereby invite articles from our members which would not only be a

source of inspiration and valuable for the readers but also strengthen our alliance with RESB.

Nusrat J. M. Sanghamitra

(nusrat.sanghamitra@gmail.com)

Science Career Editor in RESB for MCFA

The Costs of Mobility

[Lab Times](#) consulted national and local service offices for mobile researchers, the Marie Curie Fellows Association (MCFA) and the RINDICATE study of the European Commission to highlight the common problems that internationally mobile scientists are confronted with. It is undisputed that professional training abroad promotes scientific and language skills and potentially enhances international networking and collaborations. However, the practicalities of working and living in several European countries make mobility less appealing.



Guggi Kofod, MCFA Chair, interview in International Innovation

In an exclusive interview by Sarah Anderson from Research Media Ltd, **Guggi Kofod**, Chair of the MCFA speaks about the association and the vital importance of cross-border collaboration for the advancement of Science. (The following 2 pages were duplicated from International Innovation, December 2009 with permission)

Marie Curie Fellows Association



In an exclusive interview, Gugli Kofod, Chair of the Marie Curie Fellows Association (MCFA) talks to International Innovation about the vital importance of cross-border collaboration for the advancement of Science

Can you begin by outlining the founding principles of MCFA? How crucial is it to foster a mobilised scientific community of researchers, free to conduct their work across borders?

The MCFA is an association of people who have received a personal grant from the European Union in the Marie Curie Actions scheme. As the MCA funding structure has changed over the years, so have the eligibility criteria, though it remains a core principle that the grant should last for more than a year.

The idea of a cross-border community is essential to scientific progress. Mobility is a means to strengthen the interchange of ideas within this community, it is not a goal in itself. Researchers become mobile to visit

the best laboratories and groups, knowing that their mobility can catapult them towards the centre of their respective research fields. This will help them and their host achieve new results faster. Thus mobility is strongly beneficial to the researcher, as well as to the place of visit, and even more so to the international society as a whole, since it is the achievement and dissemination of fresh ideas which brings us all forward.

How important is international collaboration and knowledge transfer to MCFA members? Do you think that the future of research relies upon cross-border collaboration?

All MCFA members have been internationally mobile, and will often collaborate with their previous



labs. With this experience, it is natural that our members will find and collaborate with the best researchers internationally. Research has always been a collaborative effort, be it within a country or internationally, this will not change. However, it is important to realize that internationally oriented research is costly: people must meet for instance at conferences, establish common interests and realize their complementary talents. Proper interaction during such a project requires more travel, which takes time from research. For expensive research a very large effort must be made to secure the funding. Ultimately, funding agencies and politicians must realize that every minute a researcher does not perform his research, society is wasting its money.

Is the majority of your work focused on a strategic level, aimed at changing policy? What impact does your feedback to European policy-makers achieve?

Our work ranges from advising our members and creating networking opportunities for them, to engaging with policy-makers and the European Commission. We have a very good relationship with the European Commission, we help disseminate information, and provide information and advice based on the help requested by our members. The Commission is very attentive to our suggestions, although we are often told that our wishes cannot be met due to national prerogatives. Taxation, pensions, social and health insurance are still very difficult matters to solve across borders, even within the EU.

How far has the recent global economic situation put a strain on research budgets, and how do you strike a balance between technological development and financial viability concerns?

Generally speaking, many countries have responded to the situation by claiming to increase their budgets for public research. In fact, there have been cases when previous programs with yet unallocated funds have been closed and renamed as new efforts. Also, inflated numbers have been produced by announcing programs with unreasonably long lifetimes. Today's crisis is not solved by funds made available in 10 years. On the whole, publicly funded research seems to be in good shape, whereas privately funded research is doing much worse. Many companies are forced to cut deeply, which can strongly affect inter-sector research and of course the future innovativeness of these companies. For a company, short-term viability is essential, but stock-holders should allow their companies to preserve more cash to pay for research, since this will create stronger companies later on. An investment in research is long-term, but as we have seen over the past year, it is the people with the long perspective who have done better. Raiding the research department will hollow out the company from within.

In terms of drawing doctoral students to further a career in science, how much of an influencing factor is their concern about job security? Moreover, would you say that expanding the geographical possibilities for researchers has a significant beneficial impact on their emotional wellbeing?

This question is hard to answer. For a young researcher, job security equates with scientific results in the form of papers and patents. On the other hand, although it is often claimed that international experience is a must to obtain a given academic position, many institutions still fill their positions via informal internal networks. A transfer may also set back a young researcher many months, especially if new equipment has to be collected or built. Hence, surprisingly, mobility can in some cases be a negative influence. An international experience can be exhilarating, with access to new methods and ideas, but can also be stressful.

What are the main barriers to success that MCFA members have encountered in terms of the logistics and financial concerns underpinning their work? How much influence can the MCFA exert to address these issues?

A common barrier is connected to the extra costs due to the mobility itself. The grants contain a mobility allowance to cover extra costs, however, many institutions place the Fellow on a local payscale and absorbs any surplus, including the mobility allowance. Problems also occur when rigid taxation is applied to the mobility allowance, when it is actually meant to offset costs due to mobility. This makes a very large difference when the Fellow has dependents. Socially, in some countries the grant can lead to envy, when the total payout including extra allowances exceeds the highest local salary.

Basically, if the grants were always paid out as intended by the Commission, financial problems would rarely occur, except for couples travelling with children. The MCFA is always available with advice, though the more difficult cases are always passed on to the National Contact Points or the Euraxxess help desk.

What are the main criteria by which you evaluate the success of your work? Is it contingent upon uptake of your suggestions at an institutional level, or feedback from members on the benefits they glean from the MCFA?

We tend to use our membership numbers (full and associate) to ascertain our success directly. These have grown over the past year, such that our membership publication now reaches several thousand subscribers. We have always enjoyed good connections with the Commission, which is the main institution affecting our members, hence we have the feeling that our recommendations and ideas are always listened to.

How far have we come in the past half century in terms of opening up scientific borders? Are there particular regions where more work needs to be done in this regard, and how optimistic are you that future improvements can be made in this endeavour?

The great scientists of past enjoyed no limits to their mobility, apart from longer travel times. Today, there are still limitations within Europe, though they tend to be less obvious. With the possible future implementation of the Scientific Visa, intended to provide third-country nationals borderless travel within Europe, and the likely appearance of borderless pension plans, scientists will find Europe an accommodating place to work. That said, borders can be found in the difficulty for non-nationals and non-residents to understand national funding mechanisms. Therefore, we would strongly recommend countries to align their funding programs with that of all European countries, maybe on some sort of common platform, in order for programs to attract the brightest scientist and achieve the highest impact.

The main problems for young, mobile scientists arise when they want to continue their academic careers into tenured positions. Regarding academic tenure, we would recommend all countries to actively promote international versatility in its academically staffed public institutions, perhaps through quotas or with other mechanisms. Such simple measures are politically difficult to apply in practice, yet they would strongly benefit the countries that adopt them.

What is your vision for the future of research and development in the EU, and what kind of strategies would you like to see implemented over the next decade?

Europe should work harder to become a knowledge economy. The Lisbon agenda targets must be reached, though it should be up to each country to decide how. Europe should be a completely open market for knowledge exchange, for member and third-country nationals alike. Exercising intellectual property rights should be simplified. National science funding should be structured to ease intra- and extra-European collaborations, also with developing countries. This would benefit young mobile scientists as well as all of Europe. Finally, we would like for countries to address the problems young mobile scientists have in finding permanent positions after their stretch of mobility. Especially, we would like to see countries persuade secondary and tertiary learning institutions to hire academics also on the basis of explicit mobility experience.

The Speaker's Corner



We would like you to share with us your experience as a Fellow, good or bad: has your funding been taken away by someone else in the lab? Were the conditions of the contracts different than promised? Did you feel a lack of support from your lab or the EC management? Or on the contrary

everything went fine and the MC fellowship helped you start a successful career. More generally, we also welcome articles about your views on European Science policy. Please send an email to office@mariecurie.org (Subject line: "Speaker's corner") to be published in this section in the next Letter to Members.

Upcoming events

International Talent Programme



International
Talent Programme

The International Talent Programme for Life Sciences & Health (ITP)

invites international top talent to explore their career possibilities in the growing Dutch Life Sciences sector and to find their next job here. Up to 50 high potentials will be selected for a 4-day VIP programme that will allow them to get in contact with many renowned Dutch research institutes and companies. The participants will receive a travel bursary and a free stay during 17 to 21 May 2010 in the Netherlands.

The International Talent Programme is especially designed to help foreign researchers to get insight in their career possibilities in the Netherlands. It aims to recruit new employees for the Dutch Life Sciences sector by bringing international talent in contact with renowned research institutes and companies. From 17 to 21 May 2010 the participants will visit several Dutch Life Sciences hot spots, participate in BCF Event - the largest career event in

the Netherlands for the Life Sciences - and meet many Dutch employers.

In total 50 persons will be selected for participation. The registration is open to MSc and PhD graduates and students with a background in Life Sciences & Health, who are resident outside the Netherlands, but are seriously interested in a career in the Netherlands.

Application deadline is 10 March 2010.

Brain Awareness Week

Brain Awareness Week (BAW) is the global campaign to increase public awareness about the progress and benefits of brain research. Every March BAW unites

the efforts of universities, hospitals, patient groups, government agencies, schools, service organisations, and professional associations worldwide in a week-long celebration of the brain.



Founded and coordinated by the Dana Alliance for Brain Initiatives and European Dana Alliance for the Brain, BAW is celebrating its fifteenth anniversary campaign in 2010.

During BAW, campaign partners organise creative and innovative activities in their communities to educate and excite people of all ages about the brain and brain research. Events are limited only by the organizers' imaginations. Examples include open days at neuroscience laboratories; museum exhibitions about the brain; lectures on an array of brain-related topics; displays at malls, libraries, and community centers; classroom workshops; and many other activities and programs.

For more information about the activities organised in your country you can search it in the online international [calendar of events](#).

ESOF2010

The Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) 2010 will be held in Torino, 2-7 July 2010. At the meeting leading scientists, researchers, young researchers, business people, entrepreneurs and innovators, policy makers, science and technology communicators and the general public from all over the world discuss new discoveries and debate the direction that research is taking in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. The MCFA is glad to announce that 2 of its proposals for sessions have been accepted:



-Dual Career: how many computations to transform it into an advantage?

-Project management for young researchers: A fallacy spelled out

Early registration is until 31 May 2010.

News in Brief

Launch of the JRC Enlargement and Integration Action 2010

In support of the EU enlargement and integration, the Joint Research Centre (JRC) promotes the integration of organisations and experts from the two new Member States Bulgaria and Romania as well as candidate countries, potential candidate countries and non EU countries associated to FP7 within its research and technical activities. The [JRC Enlargement and Integration Action](#) is promoting training, mobility and joint projects addressing specific needs of these countries and regions. Focus is on complex scientific and technical issues underpinning EU legislation in areas such

as sustainable energy, biotechnology, nuclear safety and security, food safety and quality, environment.

Marie Curie Actions - New publications page

The Marie Curie Actions site now has a page for [publications](#), the most recent being "[Marie Curie Actions - Inspiring Researchers](#)". The projects featured in this book show that scientific excellence depends on nurturing the human factor and tells the inspiring stories behind the researchers funded over the years by the EU Marie Curie programme.

Challenging Futures of Science in Society

The [report of the MASIS Expert Group](#) (Challenging Futures of Science in Society – Emerging trends and cutting-edge issues) represents a collective overview and reflection on emerging trends and important cutting-edge policy and research issues, priorities, strengths and weaknesses that influence the ‘Science in Society’ dimension in the European Research Area (ERA) and which could develop further into trans-national activities.

From Science Careers

Tooling Up: What's Your Mission?

A writer and speaker on career issues worldwide, Dave Jensen describes how your unique philosophy is important to the career success and job satisfaction you will experience and gives some tools to start writing that philosophy.

Making Science and Family Fit

A mother of three and winner of a European Research Council starting grant, Michal Sharon tells how she managed to have both a family and a scientific career.

A Husband and Wife Play Science on the Same Team

It is not unusual for both halves of a two-scientist couple to work in the same field, and it can be a painful dilemma to forge parallel but separate careers. Two post doctoral researchers in developmental

biology share their strategy on keeping their careers and professional identities separate.



Reaching Gender Equity in Science: The Importance of Role Models and Mentors

The number of women embarking on science careers has been increasing steadily during the past several decades. Although women scientists continue to be underrepresented at the faculty level, many women have established rewarding and successful careers in science – thanks in part to having had role models and mentors whose paths they could follow.

Other Career-boosting articles

How to Build a Motivated Research Group

Motivated group members experience a full sense of choice: of doing what one wants. Such behavior shows high performance, is enjoyable, and enhances innovation. This essay describes principles of building a motivated research group.

How To Choose a Good Scientific Problem

Choosing good problems is essential for being a good scientist. But what is a good problem, and how do you choose one? The subject is not usually discussed explicitly within our profession. Scientists are expected to be smart enough to figure it out on their own and through the observation of their teachers. This lack of explicit discussion leaves a vacuum that can lead to approaches such as choosing problems that can give results that merit publication in valued journals, resulting in a job and tenure.

**Four stages of a scientific discipline;
four types of scientist**

In this article Alexander M. Shneider proposes the classification of the evolutionary stages that a scientific discipline evolves through and the type of scientists that are the most productive at each stage.

**How to succeed in science: a concise
guide**

In his article, Jonathan W. Yewdell., head of laboratory of viral disease, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, Bethesda, MD, have pointed to indispensable tips a scientist should be aware of while designing, performing and interpreting his experiments.

Please feel free to forward this Letter to Members to your colleagues and friends, even if they are not Marie Curie Fellows!

We also remind you that you are encouraged to use the MCFA flyers, available from the Internal Documents: <http://mcfa.eu/site/memberArea/internalDocuments.php>.

We finally would like to thank you for your readership and support with all our wishes for a well-aimed research for the sake of amelioration of our society and families. And “Good luck”...but remember as famously attributed to Louis Pasteur, “Dans les champs de l’observation, le hazard ne favorise que les esprits préparés” (in the fields of observation, chance favours only the prepared mind).

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/>. Editors: Anett Kiss (anett.z.kiss@plantphys.umu.se) and Samer Zaky (shz33@pitt.edu) 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