

# Marie Curie Fellows Association



## Letter to Members

*January February March 2015*

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Dear MCFA Member,

Welcome to a new issue of the Letter to Members with news concerning our Association!

*The MCFA Board*

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## Life of the Association

### Save the date: 29<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 MCFA Extraordinary Annual General Meeting 2015

At the MCFA annual general assembly, held in London on 28th February of 2015, the quorum was not reached, therefore votes on the agenda items could not be validated. Hence, an extraordinary general assembly for MCFA members will be held in Eindhoven, on 29th of April of 2015 at 13:30 pm local time. The meeting will take place at Grand Café De Zwarte Doos (<http://www.dezwartedoos.nl/en/grand-cafe>). The Grand café De Zwarte Doos can be found within walking distance of the Eindhoven Central Station, right at the beginning of the Campus, just before the Vertigo building with the TU/e logo on the roof.

The second run for the candidacies to become part of the MCFA 2015 Administrative Board is open until 22.04.2015. You can become a candidate by filling up the following form:

<http://goo.gl/Mf6DUu>

As Board Member, you will be part of the decision making team that will implement the outcome of the general assembly during the next year(s). The candidacies are only open to MCFA full members in 2015 (including lifetime members).

You can become part of:

- the Women in Science group
- the Science policy group
- the Letter to Member Editors team
- fund-raising team (to help us raising funds to organize meetings and workshops, strengthening our networking activities)
- You can propose us any activity you think will be valuable for our association!

We strongly encourage you to candidate!

We will also revise our statutes during this General Assembly, making them more up-to-date with the changes in the Marie Curie Actions over the years. Please consider the proposal that is available on our website <http://mcfa.eu/files/statutes2015-ym9f/> for a constructive debate during our session. Let us know if you already have any comments!

The agenda of this meeting is (start at 1:30 pm local time):

- Bienvenue, approbation de l'ordre du jour / Welcome of the Chair, approval of the Agenda
- Approbation du rapport moral / Approval of the activity report
- Approbation du rapport financier et du budget / Approval of the financial report and budget
- Décharge aux administrateurs / Discharge to the current board members
- Modification des statuts / Statutes change
- Élection des nouveaux administrateurs / Election of the new board members
- Summary and closing the meeting

Expected finishing time 15:30 pm local time.

You can register here: <http://goo.gl/FSmuvZ>

We will be happy to meet you in Eindhoven.

The MCFA Administrative Board  
[office@mcfa.eu](mailto:office@mcfa.eu)

### **Report on the Annual General Assembly and Career Workshop**

**London, 28 February 2015**

The MCFA board represented by the chair and organizer Rui Guimaraes, with the organizing team by administrative board members Eric Buchlin, Natalia Balcazar, Gianna Avellis, Maria Bostenaru Dan and advisory board member Maria Antonietta Buccheri gathered with about 30 Marie Curie fellows at the Punch Tavern in central London.

The first part of the day was dedicated to the Career Workshop. We experienced a participative talk of Chris Armbruster about alternatives to research in holding MOOCs. It was followed by a talk of Natalia Balcazar on communication strategies, based on the newest publications. After a coffee break Andreas Dahlen from the European Commission held a video conference, under the technical setup of

Rui Guimaraes on the RESAVER pension fund (more details are also available in the respective publication and events sections). It was followed by a provocative presentation of Margaux Kersshot from Eurodoc about the future of PhD holders.

After the lunch break two presentations by board members were done in the forefield of the General Assembly: on the ESOF sessions run by Maria Bostenaru Dan and Maria Antonietta Buccheri and on the activities of the mobile Women in Science and Technology Working group.

The General Assembly followed and was moderated by MCFA Chair Rui Guimaraes. It included the financial report done by Eric Buchlin (state, past expenses and future budget plan), the activity report by Rui Guimaraes and a lively discussion about the future of the association (including improvements to the website) and the presentation for the statutes by

Natalia Balcazar, who also took the detailed minutes which are available upon request to members. There was no election of the future board, but participants were encouraged to apply until the Extraordinary General Assembly.

*The MCFA Administrative Board*



### **Meeting to define the framework for an GERI application**

**London, January 2015**

Gianna Avellis participated at a meeting about which you can read in the events with MCFA participation section.

### **iGIANTS - impact of gender/sex on innovation and novel technologies summit**

Following the cooperation with genderSTE, Maria Bostenaru Dan submitted the application of the m-WiSET group to this initiative of the White House. At the moment an inventory of initiatives for better study of gender impact is being prepared.

## **Careers, funding, and networking opportunities**

### **New COFUND programme**

Train-2-move is a new fellowship programme of the University of Turin, open for those who are in possession of an MSc degree, have a PhD of not more than 7 years or experience in research between 4 and 10 years.

Deadline: 5<sup>th</sup> of May 2015

<http://www.train2move.unito.it/login.html>

### **Call for expressions of interest:**

#### **Researchers - Function group IV - COM/1/2015/GFIV – Research**

The Joint Research Centres of the European Commission have a permanent call for temporary research positions (up to 6 years) open at

<https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/working-with-us/jobs/vacancies/function-group-iv-researchers>

## Past meetings with MCFA participation

### RESAVER meeting

**20 November 2014, Brussels, Belgium**

Rui Guimaraes, the chair, was invited to represent the MCFA at one presentation of RESAVER, the new Pan-European Pension plan. In turn, Andreas Dahlen gave a video conference at the MCFA AGA. More documents can be found here:

<http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/ri gh ts/resaver>

### Equality and diversity: progress and challenges in leading researchers

**25 January 2015, London, UK**

Gianna Avellis attended the conference of VITAE on the 25th of January followed by a meeting on the 26th of January 2015 to investigate possible participation to Horizon 2020 Calls.

This flagship Vitae conference reflected on successes around equality and diversity for staff and researchers in UK HEIs, whilst also taking a realistic view in highlighting the challenges to ensure a mainstreamed approach for all nine protected characteristics. This conference is aimed at senior decision makers and after the publication of the REF outcomes in December 2014, this will be an important time to take stock and consider institutional strategy for equality and diversity.

The rhetoric supporting equality and diversity and the need to improve make real change to ensure maximum success has never been clearer. This is supported by established law and a group of well know initiatives for example the UK Equality Act 2010, the Concordat and Athena Swan. Alongside these forthcoming new initiatives will ensure that mainstreaming equality and diversity will

become a priority for UK HEIs in the forthcoming years.

Building on expertise gained through the Every Researcher Counts regional conference programme and developing resources for the sector, this conference unveil Vitae's list of top actions that can be taken in institutions in order to improve equality and diversity now. Speakers will represent policy makers, those with high level institutional experience, practical initiatives and the European context, all of whom will address where we are and what we need to in the future alongside practical steps your institution must start to consider addressing.

Speakers included:

- Professor James Wilsdon, University of Sussex: HEFCEs recent independent review on metrics
- Equality Challenge Unit - The rationale for equality and diversity: How vice chancellors are leading change
- Alan Percy, University of Oxford - Mental health amongst researchers
- Professor Dianne Berry, University of Reading
- Professor Athene Donald, University of Cambridge
- Professor Yvonne Galligan, Queens University, Belfast
- Hayley Parker, Stonewall
- Professor Michelle Ryan, University of Exeter

Vitae has been asked to convene a meeting by partner organisations to engage in a preliminary exploration of the H2020 call 'GERI.4.2014-2015 - Support to research organisations to implement gender equality plans' with a view to gathering together a

strong European consortium of partners with complimentary knowledge, skills and expertise to effectively address this call in all its aspects. In the meeting we explored the call in some detail, shared our viewpoints, capabilities and potential contributions, identified other potential partners and set out next steps and an action plan.

*By Gianna Avellis*

## **Initiative Science Europe General Assembly Meeting**

**17 February 2015, Leuven, Belgium**

Rui Guimaraes, the chair of the MCFA participated to the GA of the partner of the MCFA.

## **Publications**

### **Role Models eBook**

Support was given to Gianna Avellis to publish an eBook of the Role Models booklet. This ebook on MCFA Role Models has been developed inside the Living Lab SMARTPUGLIA 2020 project, namely ICT and eLearning 2.0, aiming at addressing young people and woman with e.learning 2.0 tools and role models for young woman. It was developed by Dario Fazio, publisher in Bari, Italy, and it is available from our website.

<http://mcfa.eu/site3/?q=women-science-working-group-mwiset>

*By Gianna Avellis*

### **Language Acquisition in Study Abroad and Formal Instruction Contexts**

The topic of this book edited by Carmen Pérez-Vidal connects to the workshop proposed with Eurodoc. While the Eurodoc is focusing on a survey on gendering of language, the MCFA will

embrace exactly this, how the new cultural environment is reflected in a language to be learned.

The book is available here:

<https://benjamins.com/#catalog/book/s/aals.13/main>

### **The chances of digital higher education**

This publication also connects to a topic touched by the Career Workshop in London: Digital teaching.

The book was published by the DAAD with the title in original German: „Die internationale Hochschule. Die Internationalisierung der deutschen Hochschulen im Zeichen virtueller Lehr- und Lernszenarien“, Editors Birgit Michels, Alexandra Schäfer, Martin Schifferings, Felicitas Schnabel, Felix Wagenfeld

Available to be downloaded as PDF at [https://www.wbv.de/download/shop/download/0/\\_/0/0/listview/file/-direct@6004449w.html](https://www.wbv.de/download/shop/download/0/_/0/0/listview/file/-direct@6004449w.html)

## 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](mailto:office@mariecurie.org) (Subject line: "Speaker's corner") to be published in this section in the next Letter to Members.

### Letter for the Marie Curie Fellowship Association

Going abroad is a rewarding experience which allows personal development and brings a positive impact on your life. There are some factors you should consider when you want to study in another country.

Communication is fundamental in any kind of environment and for any activity. People generally want to share their experiences, points of view or feelings. They may also want to contribute with ideas or discuss their proposals and potential projects. Moving to a foreign country where the native language is different from yours is difficult. Finding the right words, building sentences, presenting results in a meeting and so on become major challenges to overcome. However, these tasks do not seem so daunting over time.

Cultural differences must be appreciated. The more you travel, the more aware of other cultural perspectives you are and the more open minded you become. The world is not as big as you think when you have got the desire to learn from any trip you take. When travelling around the world you gain a multitude of valuable experiences and you will be more than ready for different challenges and new experiences. Learn what is positive and useful, every single new experience will help you grow. Accept anyone as they are and act with respect and responsibility.

Never let rejections or unexpected results get to you. It is normal to get negative answers from a supervisor when applying for a postgraduate position, or if you are already doing a PhD the unexpected should be expected. Setback is an inherent part of life, and of research in particular, the only way to be successful is to accept that you will fail at some point but also you will find how to get over the situation and become stronger afterwards.

Funding is a really important issue, especially when going abroad. As South Americans we have to look for scholarships that are available for us. Look for opportunities and keep knocking on doors; depending on the topic, the subject, the university, the country, the group; all these factors have to be considered when applying. Life abroad is expensive so always secure funding before making any decision.

Transcripts and a CV are very important but more important is what you really know, the ability you have to get things done, to look for solutions, to work as a team member, to explain your results, to defend your project. Work hard, give it

your best and make sure to always leave an open door in every place you have been working at, make contacts and get along with people and the most important thing, never give up.

When looking for a PhD position, be methodical, and carefully select the topic, the group and the supervisor. After all, a PhD is a once in a life time decision and you will have to be related to it for the rest of your career. Any single application needs the recommendation letter of the places you have been working in, so always be a hard working person, a professional researcher, accept your mistakes but find the way to overcome them. Everybody starts out as a beginner but only the most dedicated will become experts.

Research is a pleasure for people who like it but it is not an easy activity. It can be frustrating because sometimes things don't work out as you expect. Nevertheless if you love what you are doing you will get over any obstacle on your way and make it a worthy experience. There is no doubt that at some point, any researcher's life will be problematic, there will be difficult situations to solve and challenging answers to find. The key is to be persistent enough to overcome all of them and show yourself you can learn more and do better if you keep trying.

Thanks to the Marie Curie program, today I have got the opportunity to conduct my doctoral studies in one of the best universities in the UK, my group is excellent and we have a very professional and friendly environment in St Andrews.

*By Paola Andrea Forero Cortes*  
[pafc@st-andrews.ac.uk](mailto:pafc@st-andrews.ac.uk)

Paola was born in 1987 in Bogota, Colombia. She received her undergraduate degree in chemistry from the Universidad Distrital Francisco Jose de Caldas

(UDFJC), writing her dissertation at the Fundacion Instituto de Inmunologia de Colombia. She went on to earn her Magister of Science from the National University of Colombia, completing the thesis at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. After teaching fundamental chemistry at UDFJC she moved to Mulheim an der Ruhr in Germany for an internship at the Max Planck Institute fuer Kohlenforschung. Following this, she worked on an industrial project at the University of Bordeaux, France, in collaboration with the company UCB Pharma. She then decided to return to academia, and was offered a PhD position at the University of St. Andrews (UK), in the group of Professor Paul Kamer on a Marie Curie Scholarship, where she is currently working.

### **Back to Italy**

I first visited Italy in 2002, I had a friend from my TEMPUS scholarship times doing her PhD there, following a scholarship of the Romanian state at the Accademia di Romania a Roma. I was attending a conference in Nice, France, took a night train, and then went for 5 days to Rome. It was in May; full out tourists, but long days, and I thought I've seen all of Rome that time, and that I will not return. I returned in November 2002 though, with my first Marie Curie fellowship. Full records of this stay were published by Science Careers at a special career series together with the MCFA ([http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career\\_magazine/previous\\_issues/articles/2004\\_09\\_10/nodoi.9604490115099705061](http://sciencecareers.sciencemag.org/career_magazine/previous_issues/articles/2004_09_10/nodoi.9604490115099705061)). Only that I was mistaken in that story. I thought all recognition of the stay in Germany will go well, and it did not. I submitted my doctorate, but it was never evaluated, and I run out of funds and

applied for a Marie Curie Intra-European fellowship (you can read about it in the MCAA newsletter). Since Science Careers liked my story, I wrote one about Nice, the city where I went to many conferences including when I first did a trip to Italy...

After the Intra-European Fellowship, which started almost 10 years ago, I returned to my home country of Romania, instead of Germany (how everybody expected) where I stayed almost 10 years as well, with a Marie Curie Reintegration grant. During the grant I also got a second job at the university, which is now my first job. My first task at this was dealing with glass plates of photographs for art history lessons of Alexandru Tzigara Samurcas, who studied in Germany, but instead the first exhibition went to the Romanian Cultural Institute in Venice, comparing Romanian and Italian landscape. And since connections in architecture, are close with Italy, much ongoing cooperation with Italians spending time in Romania, I did my doctorate based on the Italian experience, comparing conservation practices in Italy and Romania. Next year I have a secondment from my university to go to the Accademia di Romania a Roma. I wrote in my doctorate about former scholars there, and the nephew of one of them is even living in Karlsruhe, the German city I was in, and I was proud that I have Italy experience, but it is not the same with being properly at the Accademia. I read about the life of those who established these scholarships in Italy (there are some in Venice as well), and saw that they wrote journey notes - I am thinking in the light of the Science Careers articles that a piece of literature of seeing the world through mobility would be valuable. As the Women in Science Working Group, we work at similar records. The founders of the scholarships studied in Germany as well, but were attracted by Italy then.

I wanted to go back to Italy even after my reintegration grant, and applied for the ICCROM fellowship, was admitted as first Romanian, but found no accommodation then. Now, it will be possible to do this non stipendiary fellowship as well.

The connections I made in Italy during the Marie Curie fellowship are useful for this stay, and I am looking forward to meet the regional groups. In fact, my first appointment at the Marie Curie Fellows Association was to represent the Association at the meeting of the National Group in L'Aquila back in 2003. I then learned the national contact point in Italy and we remained friends even after she returned in the Netherlands. I participated to several national group meetings even after (ex. Pisa).

While supporting mobility of women in science through the work of the group, I am also looking to mobility of women in architecture. The first woman architect in Romania was Virginia Haret, who went from Romania to Italy even before the Accademia was founded. My secondment will be exactly about women in architecture in Italy, so a further connection between the Marie Curie experience (this time that in the association) and the country of the fellowships.

I am sorry I could not participate to the meeting of Marie Curie Fellows under the Italian presidency, although I applied to Science Communication, but I was at the genderSTE (women in science) meeting in Rome.

I'm looking forward for more experiences in Italy coming next, like the Milan expo and the Venice biennale, and recommending them to all other fellows. In Italy you will find scientists ready to collaborate with, and a rich cultural context.

*Maria Bostenaru Dan*

## Upcoming events

### **Eurodoc conference**

**27-30 April 2015, Cluj-Napoca,  
Romania**

The Eurodoc conference will take place this year in Cluj-Napoca, Romania, which is at the same time Youth Capital 2015.

The Eurodoc working group on Gender Equality has invited Maria Bostenaru Dan from the m-WiSET of the MCFA to this time in turn organise together a session on "Improving Gender Equality in Junior Researchers Career Development". The focus will be on the language of gender.

More information is available at

<http://eurodoc-cluj2015.org/index.php/conference>

### **Women's International Research Engineering Summit 3**

**16-19 June 2015, Trondheim, Norway**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Women's International Research Engineering Summit (WIRES) [has been postponed for 2014 with changed location](#).

Aim of the Summit is to promote international collaboration. Application deadline: Still open

<http://wires.womenandtechnology.eu>

The WIRES Network hosted in 2013 on-line discussions with WIRES participants as earlier presented using the "Go-To-Meeting" software to host the on-line meeting. This will allow participants to share information with the other participants. Each on-line discussion will be facilitated by different WIRES women.

The outcomes of these on-line meetings will be identification of other researchers interested in forming collaborative teams, identification of funding sources for international collaborations and identification of interesting research questions that can be addressed by WIRES participants.

### **Gender Summit Europe**

**6 - 7 November 2015, Berlin, Germany**

After extending last year to North America, this year marks also Gender Summits in Africa and Asia-Pacific. The 7<sup>th</sup> Gender Summit in Europe will have the topic:

**Mastering gender in research  
performance, contexts, and outcomes**

The call will open soon at

<http://gender-summit.com/g7-about>

### **EuroScience Open Forum**

**22-27 July 2016, Manchester, UK**

The EuroScience Open Forum will take place next in Manchester, the UK. The MCFA is thinking of preparing proposals. At the moment the call for the science programme is open, but it also includes Research careers in a science policy approach.

More information is available at

<http://www.esof.eu/>

## News in Brief

### Women of National Geographic

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/explorers/women-of-national-geographic/>

### FROM EUROSCIENTIST

#### About RESAVER

<http://www.euroscientist.com/mobility-more-attractive-due-to-new-pan-european-pension-pot/>

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/site3/sites/default/files/flyer-bw.pdf>.

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This Letter is edited by the Association des Boursiers Marie Curie a.i.s.b.l. (Marie Curie Fellows Association), <http://mcfa.eu/>. Editors: Maria Bostenaru Dan ([Maria.Bostenaru-Dan@alumni.uni-karlsruhe.de](mailto:Maria.Bostenaru-Dan@alumni.uni-karlsruhe.de)) and Anett Kiss ([anett.kiss@gmail.com](mailto:anett.kiss@gmail.com)). Director of publication: Rui Guimaraes. Please send requests about articles in this Letter and submissions for the next Letter to Members to [office@mcfa.eu](mailto:office@mcfa.eu).