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Dear MCAA members,

We are pleased to present to you the third issue of the Marie Curie Alumni Association Newsletter.

First of all, mark the following date in your agenda! The MCAA Board met for the first time on 24 January and agreed to hold the next General Assembly on Saturday 22 November 2014.

Check out the third issue of the MCAA Newsletter! Like past editions, the Newsletter rounds up useful information for researchers and above all, first-hand tips, advice and stories from Alumni for you, the Marie Curie Community. Here is a sneak preview of what you'll learn from this issue:

- **Definition of the day: Smart Specialisation Strategy.** An easy-to-understand overview of this innovation concept.
- **Meeting one of the pioneers of the Marie Curie Actions.** Currently Head of the European Commission's Representation in Luxembourg, Georges Bingen helped create the Marie Curie Actions and of the MCAA. Check out our video and a print version of our conversation with him.
- **Special coverage on ESOF.** In June, ESOF and the MSCA Satellite event “Transferable skills: MSCA added value for your CV” will take place in Copenhagen. For you, we met the ESOF Champion and the ESOF Chair Career Committee to learn more about this exciting event.
- **Special coverage on Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).** An overview of SSH under Horizon 2020 and testimonies from Fellows who explain what this field of research represents for them and their aspirations.
- **Ten Websites you need to know to find research partners.** Looking for a project partner and no idea on which doors to knock? Browse 10 websites to find your ideal future co-worker.
- **During my Marie Curie project, my host country was....the United States.** Tips and advice from Marie Curie Fellows who have worked or are currently working in the United States.
- **I benefited from a Marie Curie Action: Career Integration Grant (CIG) in the spotlight.** Seven Fellows share their experiences of this Marie Curie Action.
- **Five top tips on how to create an efficient international network.** The key to a successful researcher's career is explained by two talented Fellows.
- **Ten minutes with...Andrada Lazea-Stoyanova.** For this regular one-on-one feature, we meet an Alumna from Romania.
- **Working on a Marie Curie project: from Asia to Europe.** These two Alumni moved from Asia to Europe for their project. They share their tips and memories.
- **All you need to know on the Innovation Union (IU).** Find out about one of the targets for the European Union 2020 Strategy.



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- **Keep in touch...what's coming up in the next newsletter?** See what's in the pipeline for the next newsletter!

Yours,

The MCAA Team

MCAA Newsletter Disclaimer

These articles do not legally bind the European Commission. They do not claim to be exhaustive and do not represent official interpretations of texts formulated by the European Commission. For correct information the original documents should always be consulted. The links provided can be used for such consultations.



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Definition of the day: Smart Specialisation Strategy

Smart Specialisation Strategies contribute to the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth by enhancing EU regional and national potential in research and innovation.

Smart Specialisation is an innovation policy concept that aims to boost regional innovation, contributing to growth and prosperity by helping and enabling regions to focus on their strengths. Smart Specialisation is based on partnerships between businesses, public entities and knowledge institutions.

Definition of Smart Specialisation Strategy established by the Regulation (EU) N° 1303/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council:

'Smart specialisation strategy' means the national or regional innovation strategies which set priorities in order to build competitive advantage by developing and matching research and innovation own strengths to business needs in order to address emerging opportunities and market developments in a coherent manner, while avoiding duplication and fragmentation of efforts; a smart specialisation strategy may take the form of, or be included in, a national or regional research and innovation (R&I) strategic policy framework.

The Smart Specialisation Platform (S3 Platform) provides information, methodologies, expertise and advice to national and regional policy makers, as well as promoting mutual learning and trans-national cooperation, and contributing to academic debates around the concept of smart specialisation. It proposes services such as:

- Providing guidance material and good practice examples,
- Organising information sessions for policy makers and participating in conferences,
- Providing training to policy-makers,
- Facilitating peer-reviews,
- Supporting access to relevant data,
- Participating in high quality research projects to inform strategy formation and policy making.

The S3 Platform is hosted by the Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTs), which is part of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC).

More information

DG Research and Innovation – Smart Specialisation
http://ec.europa.eu/research/regions/index_en.cfm?pg=smart_specialisation

Smart Specialisation Platform
<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home>

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Timeline

1957: Georges Bingen is born in Luxembourg.

1981-1985: Research Fellow at the Free University of Brussels (UBL) and at the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in Italy.

1986: Consultant for the Directorate-General for Energy, European Commission.

1987-1994: Economic Advisor in the Central Statistical and Economic Study Department at the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Luxembourg.

1994-1999: Scientific Officer at Directorate-General for Research, European Commission.

2000: Head of Unit for Marie Curie Fellowships (“Improving Human Potential Programme”) at Directorate-General for Research, European Commission.

2004-2010: Head of Unit for Strategy and Policy (Human factor, mobility and Marie Curie Activities) at Directorate-General for Research, European Commission.

2010-2011: Head of the “People” Programme unit at Directorate-General for Education and Culture, European Commission.

Since 2011: Head of the European Commission Representation in Luxembourg.



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1. The Marie Curie Actions (MCA) will soon be 20 years old and there are some 70 000 fellows so far. You were scientific officer at the time of the MCA launch, and later involved in their management for many years as Head of unit. How do you see their evolution?

Marie Curie Actions have come a long way since initially starting as an opportunity for researchers to go abroad. Over time, mobility has become more and more systemic and now, it is part of a “typical” researcher’s career.

Marie Curie Actions originally focused on individual fellowships and then became more oriented towards structured training and hosting fellowships. The latest evolution is COFUND, which looks for partners, funding, and partnerships with national programmes, with the sole aim of creating a bigger impact. It has become the usual path to a fellowship and to becoming internationally involved in research in this way.

2. You were involved in European charter for Researchers and the Code of conduct for recruitment (published in 2005). What was the purpose behind this initiative?

The Researchers’ charter was a very important initiative at that time as researchers were often underpaid, under valued, and had no systematic consistent career perspectives.

So the purpose was therefore to allow researchers better working conditions and to follow a relevant career pattern. It was also intended to make researchers aware of their responsibilities, such as ethics, publications, and transfer of knowledge. There was a code of conduct for the recruitment of researchers, which required organisations to act fairly.

Furthermore, all institutions had to sign up and commit to better working conditions for researchers. Since then a lot has changed for the better, as far as I can see. Nowadays, researchers’ organisations know they need to be attractive and to offer better conditions. The initiative of the Charter and the Code contributed to that and subsequently continues to do so.

3. From 2010 to 2011, you were Head of the “People” Programme unit at the Directorate-General for Education and Culture. The Programme sought to develop human resources for research. Can you tell us more about the move from DG Research to DG EAC? How were Marie Curie Actions reorganised?

This move was strictly a matter of administrative arrangement and had absolutely no impact. It was just a choice to bring Marie Curie Actions to DG EAC because most of the mobility actions are run by it (the Erasmus Programme, for example). But the Horizon 2020 programme (and previously the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7)) is run by seven or eight DGs. So it was not natural for Education and Culture to not have a Programme in research; DG education and culture is responsible for universities, which represent 40% of research contractors.

4. How do you expect the new Programme Horizon 2020 and the new Marie



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Skłodowska-Curie Actions to help better researchers' working conditions?

The new Framework Programme Horizon 2020 is focused on innovation and growth, which can be considered as key. Fundamental research is also important under this Programme. Horizon 2020 has managed to increase its budget compared to before. The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions have been simplified to correspond better to different types of needs (for early-stage researchers, experienced researchers, etc.). However, difficulties remain at a European level, which cannot cover all the needs. The national levels also have a role to play for researchers, and are encouraged by COFUND. I would add that moving in this direction would be a good strategic move in the long run.

5. How important are public-private partnerships in research under Horizon 2020?

It is clear the private sector has to be involved in innovation. Public-private partnerships are substantial and important in contributing to research dynamism. Mobility between the private and public sector has already been encouraged in the past, in fact even more now. I need only to refer to industry-academia partnerships to give an example of successful collaboration. These partnerships are a priority.

6. Do you have some tips for researchers who would like to apply for a fellowship under the new Horizon 2020 programme? On which aspects should they focus to be successful?

For individuals, my recommendation has always been “*Try a European fellowship, they expand your experience and they are really valuable in a CV*”. I think they offer a high level fellowship.

My second recommendation would be “*Invest in your project and in your proposal*”. Even if an applicant ranks among the best, this involvement is necessary to encourage evaluators to select a project over others.

I would add “*Get help from experienced people for your proposal*” and above all “*Don't give up!*” I would give the same piece of advice to institutions wanting to apply.

7. Having worked yourself on the creation of the Marie Curie Alumni Association back in 2011, can you tell us about the European Commission's expectations at that time? What should the Board do to optimise the role of the Association?

The Association was a long-term ambition. Researchers are funded under a significant, ambitious programme to get mobility experience. During their Marie Curie fellowship, they get high-level training at the best institutions, and are considered as the best people in research. But when this experience is over, there is no follow-up, no networking, and no more benefits. The best way we imagined a follow up was to create an Association of Alumni which would not only generate additional services, but also networking potential. The purpose was to create an association which would allow the Alumni to continue working together. Now the Association is operational, it is an excellent tool and I hope that it will meet this ambition.



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8. What would you advise Marie Curie Alumni to do to improve professional collaboration between them?

Networking has always been important...but now it has become even more important. Look at professional social networks! They hold the keys for jobs and careers. Beyond this, the Association will allow Alumni to collaborate across disciplines. These cross-sector collaborations represent huge potential for Alumni, as does international networking.

9. How do you believe communication between National Contact Points (NCP) and Fellows can be made as effective as possible?

It is a very interesting point, and I must admit that we have not thought too much about the role that National Contact Points could play. NCPs have as their main mission to help applicants. But it is also true that the NCPs are taking on new roles – and they are encouraged to do so. We have in the past helped NCPs to build a network on their own. NCPs are trained and they meet regularly with DG EAC (once or twice a year).

After their fellowships, there was no contact between Fellows because they were not linked. There was no database. A meeting between ex-Marie Curie Action beneficiaries was consequently not possible.

I think that NCPs can play an interesting extended role, but we need to be aware that NCPs have a mission established under Horizon 2020, which is to support applicants. There could be additional support from the Commission. But in this case, it should be recognised as an extra. As a good starting point, a discussion could be held by Alumni at a local level on how to interact with NCPs as efficiently as possible.

10. Since the launch of the Marie Curie Alumni Association web-portal in summer 2013, have you consulted it? What remarks or suggestions do you have for the Association?

I have consulted it and it provides relevant services. I think that the relationship with the European Union should be more visible on the website, as it represents a key value of the Marie Curie Fellowships and Actions. I strongly encourage Fellows and Alumni to take the European level into consideration as it can offer them the opportunity to play a more important role. There is a consensus that innovation and research are crucial for the EU and I also believe that the “European spirit” has to be promoted among Alumni.

I understand that it is a website dedicated to Alumni. In this regard, it should protect Alumni's data, as a protected area will encourage more information exchanges. This is a sensitive issue and it is important to ensure Alumni have a secure space.

In the past, some countries in Europe set up an internal database of researchers so as to help them establish contacts. I hope that the website's Alumni database will contain advanced research criteria to facilitate contacts between them – especially in



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the framework of cross-sector collaborations. This represents an added value and I also hope that this database will be one of the website's greatest achievements.

On this basis, events should also be organised. The Association should have at least an annual event with the Board and other members.

11. What would you advise Alumni regarding the creation of chapters?

Fellows and Alumni need to know that they exist. In this regard, NCPs can play a role in helping the Association organise meetings and events. For example, there are a lot of Fellows in Luxembourg working, thanks to co-funded programmes, who usually organise an annual event. Once created, Chapters could also organise this kind of event on an annual basis. Any event is possible thanks to an efficient database. Campaigns are needed to encourage people to register and to participate in the Association's activities.

12. What in your eyes is the future for the profession of 'researcher' in Europe?

I would say that the last few years have showed the weakness of Europe in a globalised world. There was a recession for five or six years, which meant limited growth here and advancement in other parts of the world.

It is recognised broadly in Europe that only innovation can help to sustain a high standard of living in comparison to other parts of the world. It is more and more important that people get high level jobs, to generate added value and innovation in Europe, otherwise Europe will gradually be behind compared to the rest of the world. Research is therefore becoming more and more important and all governments have recognised that it represents added value compared to 10 years ago. Competition also needs to be taken into account as other parts of the world, such as Asia, are indeed very productive in research. So research will show the dynamics of future generations.

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Events for Marie Curie Alumni – Don't miss them!

Special coverage - Euroscience Open Forum



- MSCA Satellite event “Transferable skills: MSCA added value for your CV” (19-20 June), Copenhagen, Denmark
- 2014 Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) (21-26 June), Copenhagen, Denmark

Mark these dates in your agenda: from 19 to 20 and from 21 to 26 June, two exciting events for Marie Curie Fellows and Alumni will take place in Copenhagen, Denmark!

Event 1: Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) satellite event “Transferable skills: MSCA added value for your CV”

Where and when? The MSCA satellite event will take place from 19 to 20 June at the Copenhagen Business School, in Copenhagen, Denmark.

What will happen? The theme of the event is “**Transferrable skills: MSCA added-value for your CV**”. Both days will focus on non-research skills such as management, working in a team with colleagues, interview skills or transitioning from academia to industry. Plenary sessions are foreseen as follows:

- Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions under Horizon 2020,
- Deciphering a job description: which skills are needed?
- Presentation of Marie Curie Fellows' projects,
- Presentation of the European Research Council (ERC) starting grant and testimonials from former MSCA fellows, who now have an ERC grant.

Parallel workshops will address the following topics:

- Managing team dynamics,
- Working within a team: giving and receiving feedback,
- From idea to business: business platform on entrepreneurship,
- Transitioning from academia to industry – the basics.

Who will be there? Marie Curie Fellows and Alumni from all over Europe and beyond are expected to attend the event and to share their experiences.

Who will lead the discussions? Snezana Krstic, Chair of the Marie Curie Alumni Association will speak at the MSCA plenary session. Representatives from the European Commission, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou and the Head of Unit Alessandra Luchetti will also lead discussions. ESOF representatives, the Danish



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Minister of Higher Education and Science and the President of the Copenhagen Business School will also participate.

I want to attend this event... Fellows and Alumni are invited to register here (please take into account that the number of participants will be limited). Any questions regarding the programme, accommodation and transport can be sent to msca_esof2014@teamwork.fr.

These costs were not foreseen in my budget.... Good news, participating in the MSCA satellite event is free of charge!

More information

<http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/msca-satellite-event-esof-2014-conference>

<http://esof2014.org/programme-1/esof2014-satellite-events/marie-skłodowska-curie-conference>

Event 2: 2014 Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF)

Where and when? The 2014 Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF) will take place from 21 to 26 June in the Carlsberg City District, Copenhagen, Denmark.

What will happen? ESOF 2014 will incorporate a number of activities (science programme, media programme, exhibition, etc.) dealing with 8 scientific themes as follows:

- The healthy society,
- A revolution of the mind,
- Global resource management,
- Learning in the 21st century,
- Green economy,
- Material and virtual world,
- Urbanisation, Design and Liveability,
- Science, democracy and citizenship.

Marie Curie Alumni and Fellows are strongly encouraged to participate in the Career session.

Who will be there? ESOF 2014 should attract more than 2 000 scientists, 1 000 early career scientists, 1 000 participants from policy, science administration and industry, and 500 from science communication and journalism.

Who will lead the discussions? Approximately 400 speakers from more than 40 countries will share their insights and take part in the debates on global science and



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science policy.

I want to attend this event... Participants are invited to register here.

These costs were not foreseen in my budget... We are pleased to inform you that Alumni and Fellows benefit from a discount of €100!

More information

<http://esof2014.org/>

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Special coverage - Euroscience Open Forum



1. After Stockholm (2004), Munich (2006), Barcelona (2008), Turin (2010) and Dublin (2012), Copenhagen will be the next city to host the Euroscience forum – ESOF2014. What are your expectations for this special event in terms of the number of participants, quality of debates and the exhibition?

In Copenhagen, we will do our utmost to build on the strong ESOF legacy by delivering a forum and a festival that will put science on the agenda far beyond the scientific community. Our vision is “Science Building Bridges” which means that ESOF2014 will be a very inclusive event where citizens, students, industry and policymakers engage in and discuss research. We expect 4 500 delegates at the conference and 30 000 visitors at the Science in the City festival. There has been a huge demand for sessions in our scientific programme and in the other programmes. There has also been a huge demand for spaces in our festival and exhibition area, so I can guarantee there will be more than enough to choose from.

2. ESOF2014 will have eight scientific themes, recurrent across all of the programme tracks (healthy society, a revolution of the mind, global resource management, learning in the 21st century, green economy, material and virtual world, urbanisation, design and liveability, science, democracy and citizenship). How were these themes selected?

The ESOF2014 Programme Committee decided on the eight scientific themes with the purpose of creating an inspiring programme. The scientific programme presented these themes in order to raise societal issues that need to be addressed by science. In particular, the health sciences at large were designated a dedicated theme and focus was given to themes that invoke a broad discussion on sustainability and planetary resources.

3. Can you tell us about your role as ESOF champion?

It is a great privilege to be champion of ESOF2014. A key part of my role has been to work closely with the very competent committees that advise us on how best to organise the event. The ESOF concept is based on a very open and inclusive structure where external partners from the universities, industry and media, play a crucial role in shaping the event. It has been wonderful to experience how dedicated



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the partners and the friends of ESOF have been. It is their contributions that make this European science gathering such a great event. It simply would not be possible without the involvement of the partners, sponsors, supporting institutions and individuals who have volunteered just to be a part of it.

4. As the ESOF champion, you are responsible for the success of ESOF, both regarding the organisation and the impact of the event. How do you intend to ensure this success?

Right from the outset clear targets have been set in terms of organising the event and the quality of the programme. The ESOF2014 organising team, which is part of the Danish Ministry of Higher Education and Science, works with a range of professional partners to make sure that all guests at ESOF2014 will have a wonderful experience. Great efforts are being made to make sure we reach out to the very best speakers and contributors, and that both Danish and international media are on board to bring news and the discussions from ESOF2014 to a wide audience.

5. What are the benefits for Marie Curie Fellows or Alumni of participating in an event such as ESOF2014?

ESOF2014 is a fantastic networking opportunity. Delegates will experience a global showcase of the latest trends, developments and discussions across all the main scientific fields, and have the opportunity to meet the people behind the research. There will be a range of networking opportunities including a Horizon 2020 Matchmaking event and a Career Programme. Finally, we hope that delegates young and old will have a good time. Both our festival and the forum will take place in the Carlsberg City District, the former main production site of the Carlsberg brewery, an area which is now transforming into a new, vibrant urban district. We hope the venue will also inspire our guests to meet and socialise outside the conference rooms.

Read the greetings from Professor Klaus Bock, the ESOF2014 Champion

<http://esof2014.org/info>

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An interview with Christine Heller del Riego, ESOF2014 Chair Career Committee

Special coverage - Euroscience Open Forum



1. The ESOF2014 Career Programme aims to provide a platform to discuss opportunities and obstacles affecting a career in research. Can you tell us about your expectations for the 2014 edition of the Career Session planned for ESOF?

I believe that several changes in the structure of the programme will benefit the participants and the outcome of their ESOF experience. The principle modification is that it will take place on the weekend prior to the official ESOF2014 opening ceremony, which is scheduled for Sunday afternoon. This means young researchers will no longer have to choose between a session that could advance their career and one that could rekindle their passion for science.

A Career Plenary session is also planned after the European Young Researcher Award Ceremony on Saturday evening. This will be followed by a choice of evening activities at the Science in the City Festival, such as Science and Cocktails.

2. Did the number and quality of applications for the Career Programme fulfill the ESOF2014 Career Committee's expectations?

Yes, the committee was very pleased with the quantity, quality and relevance of the proposals that were submitted. With a success rate of 28%, it was challenging for us to make the final selection.

3. As the Chair of the ESOF2014 Career Committee, can you tell us about your role and how work is organised within the Committee? Does your previous experience as a Marie Curie Fellow (as a research assistant working towards a Ph.D. in Electric Engineering) help you anticipate researchers' expectations for the Career Programme?

The committee began its assignment by deciding on the content (in the open call for career proposals) after a very fruitful discussion on the trends in career developments. The proposals were distributed to the members who graded them against an evaluation criteria. The committee then met in the fall for a review meeting and selected the appropriate session proposals for the programme based on their evaluation results.

We met again to propose speakers for the Career Plenary session and topics for



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invited career sessions. The committee was also asked to give guidance on other ESOF career-related issues, such as travel grants for young researchers and the Picnic with the Prof ESOF event, which in this edition will consist of a traditional Danish lunch. As the Chair of the Career Committee it was my role to lead the proposal selection process, moderate the discussions of the committee and serve as a link between the Career Committee and the Programme Committee.

My background as a Marie Curie Fellow gives me an obvious advantage in understanding the problems, the pitfalls and the opportunities for young researchers studying abroad. Additional skills and the network from a foreign country may or may not be valued when you return. In addition high expectations and brilliant ideas may face austerity and a change in research priorities. On the other hand, there are opportunities even during difficult times for those who are flexible and open minded regarding new opportunities.

4. As a preview of the ESOF2014 Career programme, could you list some of the most recent career development trends?

The present focus in career development for researchers is centered on preparing them for employment in other sectors other than academia. The fact that only a very small percentage of doctoral students obtain a permanent academic position raises means we need to revise the different forms of doctoral training.

Furthermore, it is clear that young researchers should be encouraged and prepared to be ‘creative, critical and autonomous intellectual risk takers’, as these skills are important in promoting innovation and employability. Aspects of doctoral education will be debated in several sessions – from transferable skills, environmental requirements, skill sets, and mobility – based on the principles for Innovative Doctoral Training.

5. Marie Curie Fellows and Alumni are strongly encouraged to attend the Career Programme. Can you tell us how they will benefit?

The Marie Curie Fellows will have the opportunity to learn about the recent trends, consult specific issues with career advisors from different European countries and compare career paths within different fields. In the career sessions they can voice their needs, expectations and concerns, as well as contribute to changing the future research community.

During the core event they will have the opportunity to be inspired by recent scientific results while networking with researchers, industry representatives, decision makers and journalists. I sincerely believe that ESOF is a transformative event, especially for a young research fellow.



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<https://esof2014.pathable.com/#meetings>

For more information on the ESOF 2014 Career Committee

<http://esof2014.org/info/esof-2014-committees/career-committee>

For more information on the Call for Career session proposals (closed)

<http://esof2014.org/calls-for-proposals/2CallforCareerproposals.pdf>

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Special coverage - Social Sciences and Humanities



Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) is one of the Research & Innovation themes identified for funding by the European Commission. It encompasses a wide range of research fields, including history, architecture, sociology, psychology and political sciences, among other areas.

SSH and Europe 2020

The key societal challenges facing the European Union are identified within the “Europe 2020” Strategy. A quick glance at the list shows clearly that SSH can provide an evidence base for policies to address the Europe 2020 priorities and its flagship initiatives related to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

SSH and Horizon 2020

The EU Research and Innovation Programme Horizon 2020 reflects the policy priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy. Under the pillar “Societal Challenges”, funding will be channelled into finding solutions for challenges such as:

- health, demographic change and wellbeing;
- food security, sustainable agriculture, marine and maritime research and the bioeconomy; secure, clean and efficient energy;
- smart, green and integrated transport;
- climate action, resource efficiency and raw materials;
- inclusive, innovative and secure societies.

The Vilnius Declaration – Horizons for SSH

The conference “Horizons for Social Sciences and Humanities” took place from 23 to 24 September 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania. The event highlighted the fact that integrating SSH into Horizon 2020 offers a unique opportunity to broaden understanding of innovation, realigning science with ongoing changes in the ways in which society operates. The ensuing Vilnius Declaration establishes the basis for the integration of the SSH into Horizon 2020.

Join the Network of National Contact Point for Socio-economic Sciences and the Humanities!

An international network of National Contact Points (NCPs) for Socio-Sciences and Humanities (SSH) was established under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme. Known as NET4SOCIETY, it aims at increasing SSH visibility, facilitating knowledge exchanges and improving support to researchers. Under Horizon 2020, the network mainly comprises National Contact Points dealing with Societal Challenge 6: “Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies”.



Special coverage - Social Sciences and Humanities

Being a Marie Curie Fellow in Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH)

Angela Bellia (Italy), Cristina Castellano (Mexico), Elisabetta Crocetti (Italy), Maria Pichou (Greece) and Silvia Riva (Italy) are Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) researchers. Here they explain what this field represents for them and what their expectations are for their future research, especially in relation to the Horizon 2020 Programme.



Angela Bellia, Cristina Castellano, Silvia Riva, Maria Pichou, and Elisabetta Crocetti

Diversity in fields of research. The research conducted by our five Fellows spans a large range of topics. Having benefited from an International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES), Castellano's project is creating a permanent interdisciplinary research and training network in the field of gender studies. Crocetti is a psychology researcher and spent his Intra-European Fellowship (IEF) studying how adolescents develop their identity. Also a psychology researcher, Riva received funding to join a Research Training Network (RTN) forming a pool of experts in health and disability research and management. Bellia's project (International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development – IOF), spanning both musicology and archaeology, is dedicated to the musical culture of Selinus, one of ancient Greece's biggest cities, famous for its cult and religious practices. Pichou's project is co-funded by the Marie Curie Actions for two years; it focuses on the role that national courts play in the development of International Criminal Law.

An added value for research and innovation. To Castellano, SSH research can help create a better society *"more inclusive and fair, in terms of gender, for example"*. Conducting research in SSH is for Crocetti above all a passion. She explains that *"understanding psychosocial development of adolescents and young people is a truly fascinating enterprise"*. The fact that outputs can be used to implement social policies represents in her eyes and added value that only SSH can bring. To Bellia, SSH generate *"growth, employment and competitiveness in a knowledge society through technology"*. Pichou takes a different approach, pointing to the roots of democracy *"The study of humanistic topics has been at the heart of a democratic education since the ancient Greeks first used them to educate their citizens. To this extent, research in SSH expands our horizons, opens our minds and helps us understand our society, economy, legal system, history, art and finally ourselves, which is the ultimate goal of each human being."*

The Vilnius Declaration establishes the basis for the integration of the SSH into Horizon 2020. Crocetti is quite optimistic that the Vilnius Declaration will

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support research in SSH. Nevertheless, she stresses the importance of “*shaping new joint communities of scientists, able to research the same issue from different, but integrated, perspectives*”. Our other Fellows admit that they were not aware of the Declaration. Riva points out that research opportunities remain limited for psychologist and social researchers in general.

The Network of National Contact Points for Socio-economic Sciences and the Humanities (NET4SOCIETY) aims at increasing SSH visibility, facilitating knowledge exchanges and improving support to researchers. Again, our Fellows were largely unaware of the network and of the many opportunities it can offer SSH researchers. To Crocetti, the network should foster cross-sector cooperation, and especially connections between SSH and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the “third sector” (associations, non-governmental organisations, etc.).

Expectations for Horizon 2020. Our SSH Marie Curie Fellows share high expectations for the new framework programme. They hope to see new funding for their respective fields of research (Law, Psychology, Archeology, etc.) and for young researchers. Bellia hopes for “*larger attention for Cultural Heritage in Europe*”. Pichou also aspires for SSH under Horizon 2020 to contribute in building “*societies that are not technocratic but also ethical*”.



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Most EU-funded projects are collaborative, with at least three organisations from different EU Member States or Associated countries taking part. Maybe your future project partner belongs to one of the following databases?

1. CORDIS – EU Research Partners

CORDIS is the European Commission's primary public repository and portal to disseminate information on all EU-funded research projects and their results in the broadest sense. It offers one of the largest databases of partner profiles (self-registered profiles).

<https://cordis.europa.eu/partners/web/guest/home>

2. Ideal-ist Partner Search

Ideal-ist is an international ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) network, with more than 70 ICT partners from EU and non-EU countries. These include: Associated States, Eastern European Partner Countries, Mediterranean Partner Countries and emerging countries like China, Brazil, India, and South Africa.

<http://www.ideal-ist.eu/partner-search/pssearch>

3. Partner Search for Nanosciences and Nanotechnologies, Materials and New Production Technologies (NMP)

The core objective of the 'Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and new Production Technologies (NMP)' theme is to improve the competitiveness of European industry, and generate the knowledge needed to transform it from a resource-intensive to a knowledge-intensive industry.

<https://www.nmp-partnersearch.eu/index.php>

4. Fit for Health 2.0 – Partner search

Fit for Health 2.0 aims to sustainably enhance the participation of European industry, in the health-related theme of Horizon 2020 in particular research-intensive, high-



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technology small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

<http://www.fitforhealth.eu/user?ReturnUrl=http%3a%2f%2fmm.fitforhealth.eu%2fcommon%2fcontactshome.asp>

5. Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI) Partner Search Tool

IMI supports collaborative research projects and builds networks of industrial and academic experts to boost pharmaceutical innovation. There are also opportunities for SMEs, such as innovative biotech enterprises.

<https://cloud.imi.europa.eu/web/eimi-pst>

6. Enterprise Europe Network

The Enterprise Europe Network is a key instrument in the EU's strategy to boost growth and jobs. Bringing together close to 600 business support organisations from more than 50 countries, it helps small companies seize the unparalleled business opportunities in the EU Single Market.

<http://een.ec.europa.eu/services/going-international>

7. NET4SOCIETY – Partner Search Support

NET4SOCIETY is the international network of National Contact Points for Horizon 2020's Societal Challenge 6 (“Europe in a changing world: inclusive, innovative and reflective societies”) and Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH). The NET4SOCIETY database will offer both profiles of partners interested in becoming involved in existing or currently forming consortia as well as partner searches of research consortia looking for specific additional partners.

<http://www.net4society.eu/public/pss.php>

8. Innovation Place – Find partners for research and innovation projects

Innovation Place is a European consultancy organisation that advises on innovation management and grants. It can help you in connecting to the right organisations for your projects all around Europe, see how.

<https://www.innovationplace.eu/find-partners-research-projects>



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9. EUresearch – Swiss guide to European research and Innovation – Partner Search Platforms

Euresearch is a Swiss network mandated by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation to provide targeted information, hands-on advice and transnational partnering for European research and innovation programmes.

<https://www.euresearch.ch/en/euresearch-services/we-connect/partner-search-platforms/>

10. European Long-Term Ecosystem Research Network (LTER)

LTER helps development management options in response to global change challenges while contributing to Europe's knowledge base. Search for both sites and people.

<http://www.lter-europe.net/find-sites-and-or-people>

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Pierre Jehel, Marina Kvaskoff (both from France) and Markus Valtiner (from Austria) have benefited from an International Outgoing Fellowship (IOF). They worked or are currently working on their Marie Curie project in the United States. Marie Curie Fellows interested in having such an experience should read their stories to make their American dream a reality!



Marina Kvaskoff



Pierre Jehel

The United States (US), is a country of prestige, well-known for its pioneering methodologies

Kvaskoff's project aims to investigate the potential genetic overlap between endometriosis and melanoma in two American cohorts and in a French cohort of women. She has always been interested in gaining valuable experience in the US *“because so many pioneering methodologies and original findings come from there. Also, there is a general optimistic spirit in the US that always appealed to me”*. She also considers herself lucky that her mentor is one of the world's leaders in epidemiological research on endometriosis and has joined her research group in Boston. Meanwhile, Valtiner worked in Santa Barbara, unravelling the complexity of the macroscopic world based on molecular-level details. – for example understanding the scaling of single molecular interactions towards integral interactions. These are mediated through a large number of simultaneously interacting molecular bonds. He believes the *“best place for supporting this project was in the US”*. Jehel is currently working in New York City focusing on the quantification of uncertainties in the numerical simulation of how buildings behave in the event of an earthquake. He considers the US an attractive destination because *“Universities ranked among the best in the world are in the US”*. He also wanted to discover a new culture *“I was willing to learn more about the American people: their culture, their way of life, and how they interact with the rest of the world. We hear so much about America in Europe so I wanted to get my own idea of it”*.

Do you want to see the US and its research for yourself? Apply for a J-1 visa!

Jehel pointed out that *“Columbia University administration was well aware of the Marie Curie Actions and everything went very smoothly”*. He had to provide a copy of his passport, a health acknowledgement form, the Marie Curie fellowship grant



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agreement, a Curriculum Vitae and an application for a DS-2019 form to obtain a J-1 visa. Kvaskoff also had to obtain a J-2 visa and a work permit for her husband. She was also asked to provide a translation for each diploma. But having acquired all the required documents, “*everything was pretty straightforward*”.

Subscribe to a medical insurance policy that covers 100% of your medical bills!

Registering to medical insurance is key when you decide to work in the US, according to Kvaskoff; she says “*You cannot work in the US without providing proof that you have medical insurance*”. She encountered some difficulties when she initially applied for international insurance “*My husband and I had a bad experience with a cheap international insurance policy. We once ended up with a total invoice of \$15 000, and the company refused to reimburse our costs because of a ‘pre-existing condition’ clause. Dealing with this has been very long and terrible*”. That's why she strongly recommends that all Fellows take out medical insurance that covers 100% of the medical bills, and to check carefully “*the rate of co-pay that is deductible and the maximum amount you may be out-of-pocket!*”.

Demonstrate that you can cover all your expenses and your family's expenses!

Jehel explained that the American administration asked him to demonstrate that he could cover expenses of up to \$2 400 per month (in 2012) during his stay. He added that if a Fellow decides to settle with his/her wife/husband and children, \$800 should be added to this amount for the spouse and for each child.

Accommodation can become a tricky issue, depending on the city chosen

Jehel stressed the difficulty of finding accommodation in New York City “*In NYC, the apartment rental market is very tough and very expensive. When moving to NYC, you have to prepare a rental application with as many details as possible about your income, the purpose of your stay in the US, and your status in the US as a foreigner, etc.*” He added nevertheless that “*many useful tips can be found online to get prepared*”. Kvaskoff's experience was totally different, as she found her apartment in Boston without too much difficulty “*We found an apartment very quickly and easily, in just four days and with no deposit requested – these things are much easier in Boston.*”

Efficient processes at work and involvement

Kvaskoff highlighted the efficiency of the way the work is organised in her institution, “*Each procedure is constantly improving. I'm not sure if this can be considered as a difference with Europe, as I was coming from a small team in France. In any case, here, there is a particular procedure for everything to ensure efficiency and quality of each step of the research process*”. She also stressed the reliability of the quality system “*Each research idea, proposal, or finding is thoroughly discussed with the whole lab, and internal quality checks or reviews are performed routinely and before any finding can be published or any grant application can be submitted*”. Jehel was amazed by the involvement of students from an early level “*From their first year, students can volunteer for research work under the supervision of a Professor*”.



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Enjoy working in a dynamic atmosphere!

Our three Fellows enjoyed working in the US for different reasons. Kvaskoff particularly emphasised the opportunity to train in various fields related to her research “There is always someone in the lab with different expertise who can teach you something new. Also, in my institution, most investigators are teaching (at Harvard School of Public Health), and I was able to audit some classes and learn and practise new techniques during the first year of my fellowship”. Valtiner liked above all working in an “egalitarian work atmosphere”. Jehel appreciated having access to any publication, especially in the well-known Butler library of the Columbia University. “Catching up on a deadline in the inspiring Butler library is just much more relaxing and efficient than anywhere else,” he added.

Interesting places to work in the US

If you are applying for a Fellowship in the US, our Fellows recommend several interesting places to work. According to Kvaskoff, “There is a very high concentration of research institutes and hospitals, but also of technology companies and universities mainly spread across **Boston** and **Cambridge** (most affiliated with Harvard or MIT, Boston University...), and some other locations in **Massachusetts** such as **Waltham** (Brandeis University), **Worcester** and **Amherst** (UMass). The research environment is very dynamic, and the proximity to certainly facilitates collaboration between groups”. Jehel recommends the place where he is currently working “I definitely enjoy working in an institution like **Columbia University!**”.

Advice for Fellows who would like to work on a research project in the US

Kvaskoff, Jehel and Valtiner all agree that working on a research project in the US is a fruitful experience. Kvaskoff recommends that Fellows “take advantage of everything that the American research culture has to offer. In particular, it is very easy here to find access to professional development workshops and seminars. At my institutions (Brigham and Women's Hospital, and Harvard Medical School), a multitude of seminars are being offered to employees free of charge, and career development is strongly encouraged”. Jehel added that it is important to believe in your ideas because “nobody will try to stop you nor do it for you”, whereas Valtiner's last point is simply “Go for it!”.

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Anastasia Bochenkova (Russia), Christian Igel (Germany), Daniel Montesinos (Spain), Giorgios Stoilos (Greece), Hayley Swedlund (United States), Vincent Terrapon (Switzerland) and David Nicolas Waldman (Israel) have all benefitted from a Career Integration Grant (CIG). Here they share with us their tips on making this experience a springboard in a researcher's career.



Hayley Swedlund, Giorgios Stoilos, David Nicolas Waldmann, Christian Igel, Anastasia Bochenkova and Vincent Terrapon

What is a Career Integration Grant? The Marie Curie Action Career Integration Grants (CIG) are open to experienced researchers of any nationality with at least four years of full-time research experience or a Ph.D. The aim is to support researchers in the first steps of their European research career. This action should also allow the transfer of knowledge that the researchers have acquired prior to the CIG, as well as the development of lasting co-operation with the scientific and/or industrial environment of the country from which they have moved. This action has a particular emphasis on countering European ‘brain drain’ to other third countries.

Researchers have to work on a project hosted by:

- a national organisation (universities, research centres, etc.);
- a commercial enterprise, in particular an SME;
- a non-profit or charitable organisation (Non-governmental organisations, trusts, etc.);
- an international European interest organisation (CERN, EMBL, etc.);
- the Joint Research Centre (JRC);
- an International Organisation (WHO, UNESCO, etc.).

The host organisation must be established in the European Union (EU) or in an Associated Country. However, researchers can't have carried out their work in the country of their host organisation for more than 12 months over the last 3 years. They must have never in the past benefitted from a European or an International Reintegration Grant (ERG or IRG) nor from a CIG.

For the application, researchers have to apply jointly with the host institution. If selected, researchers get a grant for 2 to 4 years and a separate grant agreement is signed with the host with a view to lasting professional integration.



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Applying for a CIG after a postdoctoral experience or during an assistant professor position.

Montesinos, Waldmann, Stoilos and Bochenkova applied for a CIG after a postdoctoral experience, whereas Swedlund and Terrapon benefited from this Action as they were holding an assistant professor position. Igel specifies that he applied “during the transition process from a junior to a full professorship”.

Diversity and long-term projects. Some of our Fellows decided to work on their project as a continuation of their previous studies and work. Working currently on a long-term, cross-national research project on donor-government relations in Sub-Saharan Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Ghana) aimed at understanding donor-government relations and recent changes in the aid landscape, Swedlund considers her Action helpful in framing her research. So does Bochenkova, who studied the catalytic role played by proteins in the light-induced, ultrafast reaction dynamics of biological photoreceptors, and in self-regulation of their photophysical properties at the atomic level. She considers she was only able to carry out the research because she received a CIG. To Montesinos, his research on adaptation and evolution of invasive weeds was a “logical continuation” of his first post-doctorate. Waldmann also chose his project based on his previous postdoctoral experience on the connection between deep hydrocarbon reservoirs in the Levant Basin (East Mediterranean) and shallow gas reservoir systems in the continental shelf off-Israel. Terrapon's project is intended to increase understanding and the ability to predict the impact of viscoelastic rheology on the dynamics of turbulence. “This topic is the continuation of my PhD thesis”, he says. Igel took a different approach – his project, “Advanced Kernel Methods for Medical Imaging”, combines his research interests with the competences of his host institution.

Choosing a host country and organisation: a compromise between professional and personal expectations.

Stoilos and Waldmann used the opportunity to return to their country of origin “I chose Greece because it is my home country and I wanted to come back after almost three years abroad after obtaining much experience, which I wanted to transfer” says Stoilos. Waldmann, on the other hand “wanted to go back to Israel (I am an Israeli citizen)”. For Igel, choosing his host country reflected a desire to combine working opportunities and quality of life “I chose the host institution based on scientific quality. My wife and I discussed the move, and we agreed that Denmark was a nice and friendly place to live for the family.” Swedlund and Terrapon were already employed in their host country before benefiting from their CIG.

An application that requires one to three months of preparation. Terrapon explains that his proposal was not accepted the first time he applied “I spent about two additional months (not full-time) redefining and improving my initial project. I was successful at my second attempt.” That is why the application needs to be carefully prepared, as Bochenkova echoes: “The aim of the project has to be clear and the project has to be concise. Besides, the application includes a detailed project plan and dissemination activities for a few years. The preparation certainly takes time, but it is a rewarding experience both scientifically and for writing future applications.” Montesinos points out the sub-criteria and the difficulty linked to them “Many criteria look very similar but they have a different focus depending on whether they are, for instance, in the ‘implementation’ or the ‘impact’ sections. I found that part particularly difficult.” According to Swedlund, it can be very helpful if your university



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has experience in dealing with Marie Curie Actions and especially CIG. Unfortunately, this wasn't the case for her: “There was so much documentation and so many things to look through, to know where to find it. And my university had no experience with this type of grant.” Igel found writing the proposal a learning curve: “I was lacking experience in writing European Commission grant applications and especially describing the ethical aspects of my work in the domain of medical imaging.”

Be prepared to work individually. Some CIG recipients, such as Swedlund and Terrapon, work alone on a project. “My duties as an assistant professor in the host institution are completely independent of the grant. The project is something I initially worked on by myself. Eventually, I found additional funding for a PhD student to carry out part of the work. I am actually still looking for additional funding and people to join,” Explains Terrapon. Other Fellows, like Montesinos, find themselves in working groups: “I am integrated into a research group, which is helpful because it provides a functional structure in which, for instance, ideas are debated in lab meetings.” Stoilos was nevertheless pleased to have “the opportunity to conduct independent research and thus to develop an independent way of thinking” thanks to his CIG.

No financial stress. Our Fellows are satisfied with the financial support received through their CIG. However, Terrapon and Igel agree that supplements could have been useful for funding PhD students. Otherwise, “additional funding must be obtained from elsewhere. This takes time and effort.”

Many benefits. Swedlund is still working on her project but is satisfied with the amount of data that she has already collected “My CIG allowed me to work on my project much quicker than I had foreseen and so I didn't have to worry about funding.” Terrapon is also still working on his project, and highlights how his CIG has helped him to grow his professional network: “I had the opportunity to go to conferences, to meet other colleagues who work in the same field, and to develop new collaborations. It was, and still is, a tremendous help and I am glad I had the chance to benefit from this grant.” All of the other Fellows have finished their project and consider their CIG as a career boost. “I secured a five year contract as a researcher at my host institution,” says Montesino. Stoilos is happy to report that he is “currently a research associate in the National and Technical University of Athens, where I supervise PhD students and conduct personal research.” Bochenkova is also feeling very positive about the future: “My employment has been extended for two more years, giving me a solid perspective for obtaining a permanent position at the host institution.”

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Five top tips on how to create an efficient international network

Blanca Hernández Ledesma (Spain) and Axelle Viré (Belgium) have taken advantage of their experience abroad during their Marie Curie project(s). Read on for their “Five tips” on transforming your mobility experience into an international and sustainable network – the key to a successful researcher’s career.



Blanca Hernández Ledesma



Axelle Viré

Hernández Ledesma worked on a project focused on the chemopreventive properties of the food peptide lunasin in the context of colon cancer. She was based in Berkeley (United States) thanks to an Outgoing International Fellowship (OIF) from 2007 to 2009, and then in 2010, after one year of employment in her host institution.

Having conducted research in developing computational models (that can reproduce the behavior of fluids interacting with structures) Viré (MCAA Vice-Chair) went on to benefit from an Intra-European Fellowship (IEF) (October 2011 - September 2013) and then from a Career Integration Grant (CIG) in October 2013 (which runs until September 2017). She worked in London (United Kingdom) and is currently in Delft (the Netherlands).

Tip 1: Conduct research in different countries

Viré highlights how she was given the opportunity to actively conduct academic research in two countries (thanks to two Marie Curie Actions) and believes that this experience has been extremely beneficial for her career. Hernández Ledesma stresses that more professional experiences are obtained abroad, ensuring more researchers can become open-minded to different people, cultures, languages and above all, ways of working.

Tip 2: Collaborate with people around the world

Hernández Ledesma is happy to have benefited from a Marie Curie Action because it gave her the opportunity to collaborate with different groups around the world. Viré echoes, “The Marie Curie funding provides the freedom to attend conferences and visit collaborators worldwide.” Thanks to this mobility, she disseminated her work on three continents, in countries from Hong Kong to Alaska.



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Tip 3: Work in diversified areas of research

According to Viré, working in different environments with various people and on diversified areas of research has helped in “building scientific independence and creativity as a researcher”. She adds it is also “key in developing long-term collaborations”.

Tip 4: Network at several levels

Viré considers that national, as well as inter-institutional, collaborations are crucial for researchers. According to her, these kinds of collaborations should now be improved thanks to the Marie Curie Alumni Association, its web-portal and especially the creation of chapters.

Tip 5: Get inspired by people

To Hernández Ledesma, her supervisor was “a very important person” in her scientific career, and was always available to support her. She also describes her postdoctoral lab mate from Taiwan as “the best person with whom I have collaborated for 15 years”. Viré considers herself lucky to have met a number of people that inspired her in the various aspects of her work (research, teaching, outreach).

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Ten minutes with...Andrada Lazea-Stoyanova



1. When you started your project through the Marie Curie initiative, what were your expectations?

When I began my Marie Curie fellowship in 2006, I was not well acquainted with the initiative and, hence, I had few expectations about it. I was just excited that I would study abroad and for me this was the challenge to get out of my comfort zone.

2. When you started your placement, did you imagine that you'd be where you are today?

Taking the decision to obtain a PhD abroad, I hoped it would accelerate my career development. So, definitely yes.

3. If you had to choose the most memorable moment during your Marie Curie project, what would it be?

The very first Marie Curie project meeting when I discovered that one of the students was a former university colleague of mine. Both of us were astonished by what appeared, back then, to be pure chance – to meet and collaborate even though we were affiliated to institutes in different countries – Belgium and France, respectively.

4. Three words that sum up your Marie Curie Actions experience?

Self-confidence, networking, edutainment (education + entertainment)

5. How do you see yourself in 10 years?

I see myself as the founder of an innovation-based company, most probably in the domain of material science.

6. Is there a famous researcher who inspires you?

Ana Aslan – a Romanian biologist and physician who founded the Geriatric Institute of Bucharest, the first of its kind in the world, and which is recognised by the World Health Organisation.



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7. What is your favorite quote by a scientist?

“Imagination is more important than knowledge. For knowledge is limited to all we now know and understand, while imagination embraces the entire world, and all there ever will be to know and understand.” – Albert Einstein

8. Your advice to a researcher who would like to apply for a Marie Curie Action?

A Marie Curie Action is significant as it outweighs all other training programmes for the professional experience gained.

9. Imagine your ideal Marie Curie Alumni Association event. What would it be and where?

In a sunny location and organised in a fully transparent manner with regards to agenda, elections (nominations, voting), funding, memberships, etc.

10. If you could introduce us to another Marie Curie Alumni, who would it be?

My former colleagues from DRIVE (“Diamond Research on Interfaces for Versatile Electronics”) project: <http://www.eu-drive.com/5.html>

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Working on a Marie Curie Project from Asia to Europe

Yan Ning (from China) and Tonni Kurniawan (Chinese overseas by origin) have decided to work on their Marie Curie projects in Europe. They both agree this experience has been a really unique opportunity.



Yan Ning



Tonni Kurniawan

Kurniawan has received a Marie Curie Host Fellowship for the Transfer of Knowledge to investigate a number of water technologies to treat contaminated water. These technologies include adsorption to remove heavy metals from industrial wastewater and an electrochemical method for treating bleaching effluents from the pulp and paper industry. Kurniawan had the opportunity to work on this project in Mikkeli, Finland, hosted by the Kuopio University, from December 2008 to September 2010.

Yan Ning spent his International Incoming Fellowships (IIF) working on his project “Tandem catalysis for the production of biofuel-related chemicals from biomass derived polyols” from May 2010 to April 2012 at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Excellence and good reputation. Our Alumni selected their host organisation in Europe because they were looking for a place where they could enhance their professional skills. According to Yan Ning, the head of his host laboratory in Switzerland, Professor Dyson, is highly respected in his research area and it was extremely pleasant to work with him. Kurniawan states that Germany and Finland are “on the world’s map of excellence for water technologies” and he selected Finland because the country has “advanced equipment required to capture water directly from non-traditional sources, such as municipal wastewater, and to restore it to near drinking water quality”.

Applying for a Marie Curie Action from Asia to Europe is relatively simple.

Preparing for their project, Yan Ning and Kurniawan had to provide the standard documents required for a Marie Curie Action application. Kurniawan also had to describe the potential for innovation of his project, knowing that the track record of individual applicants would be evaluated. He then submitted his proposal with his resume and degree certificates. The application from Asia to Europe was considered straightforward by our Alumni. English is the language of science for research worldwide and so neither Kurniawan, or Yan Ning needed official translations. However, Kurniawan advises potential applicants to spend time carefully identifying a host laboratory that can provide the equipment needed.



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High level infrastructures and total freedom at work. Yan Ning highlights the high level of infrastructure at his host organisation in Switzerland, describing them as “state-of-the-art”. He benefited from the fact equipment was always readily available.. What's more, both Yan Ning and Kurniawan stress the freedom in which they conducted their research “As scientists, we had the freedom to think, and independence to pursue and complete our own projects, totally free from any political interference from the host country. Scientists who live in developing countries may not have such privileges,” according to Kurniawan. He also describes the research environment in Finland as efficient due to the synergy of many projects' outcomes and benefits.

Nice memories. Both Alumni have nice memories linked to their stay in Europe during their Marie Curie project. Yan Ning remembers the birth of his child in 2010, whereas Kurniawan had the privilege to enjoy watching the Northern Lights in Lapland over 100 nights.



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All you need to know about the Innovation Union (IU)

The Innovation Union is one of the targets for the European Union 2020 Strategy (increasing research spending to 3% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is one of many goals). It is considered a crucial investment for the future of the European Union.

What is the purpose of the Innovation Union (IU)? The aim of the IU is to create jobs and growth by improving conditions and access to finance for research and innovation. This is achieved by:

- Focusing on innovations that address the major societal challenges identified in Europe 2020;
- Pursuing a broad concept of innovation;
- Involving all actors and all regions in the innovation cycle.

Key initiatives to implement the IU. Over 30 actions are in the pipeline, corresponding to the following objectives:

- Promoting excellence in education and skills development;
- Delivering the European Research Area;
- Focusing EU funding instruments on IU priorities;
- Promoting the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) as a model of innovation governance in Europe;
- Enhancing access to finance for innovative companies;
- Creating a single innovation market;
- Promoting openness and capitalising on Europe's creative potential;
- Spreading the benefits of innovation across the Union;
- Increasing social benefits;
- Pooling forces to achieve breakthroughs: European Innovation Partnerships;
- Leveraging policies externally;
- Reforming research and innovation systems;
- Measuring progress.

How does the EU monitor the IU? The EU uses several tools to analyse the implementation of its key initiatives. Among these tools, the IU scoreboard highlights the differences between Member States, whereas the Innovation Output Indicator measures the extent to which ideas from innovative sectors are able to reach the market, providing better jobs and making Europe more competitive.



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What is the state of play for the IU? The last Communication from the European Commission – State of the Innovation Union 2012 – Accelerating changes unveiled its priorities for the IU, such as:

- Accelerating structural change within existing sectors;
- Closing the innovation divide between European regions;
- Working on innovation-friendly framework conditions for innovative businesses;
- Identifying concrete ways to boost innovation through the public sector;
- Developing a coherent policy approach for open innovation and knowledge transfer;
- Accounting for the value of intellectual property;
- Driving retail innovation;
- Combining new technologies and services using innovation within business models.

More information

Innovation Union Website

http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm

Key documents about the Innovation Union

http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm?pg=keydocs



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Dear MCAA members,

We hope you enjoyed this third edition of the MCAA Newsletter.

Continue watching this space for the next edition, when we will bring you news of the new MCAA chapters.

We wish you success in all of your projects and collaborations over the weeks to come.

The MCAA team