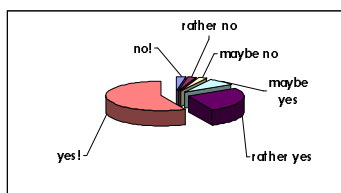


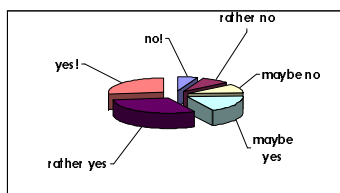
## MARIE CURIE FELLOWSHIPS WHAT DO WE REALLY THINK ABOUT THEM?

### The MCFA poll

With the 5<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme (FP5) being almost over, it is a good time to have a brief look on the theory and practice of Marie Curie Fellowships. We asked our members to share their opinions; specifically, to express what they liked and what were the main problems encountered during their fellowship. With the statistical results on one side and the individual opinions on the other, we can have a clear picture. The scientific component of the fellowship is nearly always the strong point; however, there is no end to problems associated with administration of the fellowships! Concerning the first issue, the opinions range from “*excellent science*”, “*a very good place to do science*”, “*good laboratory*”, “*OK*”, right up to “*no space to develop scientific career*”. The latter negative opinions are a minority, but still evident. Most of us would recommend the Host institute. It might be an idea to establish a list of “recommended institutions” – just to make sure that the new Marie Curie Fellows choose their respective host knowing what to expect? It is not only the issue of scientific excellence that should be taken into account, but also should the “human factor”. Is the host research group helpful and friendly? Is there evidence of teamwork or more individualised research? The answers to these and other similar questions are often only found out once the MC Fellow has been installed in the Host institute and not before.



Would you recommend your host institute from the scientific point of view ?



How would you judge the management of your fellowship, was the administrative staff helpful ?

While the scientific side of the Marie Curie fellowship scheme was found to be quite satisfactory, one should note the high degree of disappointment with the administrative side. It appears that many Host institutions still have not learned how to deal with the fellowships properly. Indeed, there were numerous complaints concerning contractual issues, management of the fellowships, as well as general administrative problems. One should regret that so many years after the introduction of *European postdocs* and so many discussions about the common (or particular) problems, we are still far from smooth application of the fellowship scheme. It is definitely not a good sign for the future of European research! The very basic complaints concern the management of money. Despite clear rules in the contract, it happens quite often that the host institution wants to manage the grant money without taking due care of the needs of the fellow. Sometimes, it is just that the fellow is unaware of the amount of research money that he/she can use. In other situations, he/she is prevented from using these research funds, putting the fellow in a very delicate position - it is difficult to fight your Host institute! We believe that there is still much to do. There needs to be concerted effort to reduce the number of institutions that “*show a clear lack of knowledge on what MC fellowships are and their importance*”, as somebody expressed it in the poll.

We asked also about the “country factor”, i.e. whether the fellows encountered any general problems, whether administrative, language-based and/or cultural.

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Full results and answers are available on the MCFA web :

<http://www.mariecurie.org/surveys/fellowships/results.html>

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## MCFA in transition

Dear reader of the MCFA news,

Almost exactly six years ago, Edith Cresson, then European commissioner for research, invited a group of young scientists to a seminar in Brussels. The invited participants were holders of an individual fellowship granted by the European Commission. The superordinate aim of the meeting was to give the EU fellowship programme a clear identity. Like many other well-recognised fellowship schemes, the fellowships awarded by the European Commission should be made recognisable by a name - a trademark - that stands for the quality of the grant recipient. The name “Marie Curie Fellowships” was chosen and it was decided to establish an organisation that would contribute to the public awareness of the Marie Curie Fellowships. The Marie Curie Fellowship Association (MCFA) was born. The aims of the association were even extended. Not only was it envisaged to spread the word about Marie Curie Fellowships and to brand them as a trademark for scientific quality, but it was also planned to build up a network amongst Marie Curie Fellows that could be useful for personal and scientific contacts and to make the voice of young excellent mobile researchers heard in discussions on science policy. The association was equipped with a generous grant from the European Commission from which an office with personnel, several annual general assemblies and many other international and national meetings could be covered or financially supported.

The association grew fast to one of the largest multidisciplinary scientists organisations in Europe. Many MCFA volunteers were enthusiastically working for the ideas of the association, organised conferences and meetings, wrote various articles for newspapers, organised the scientific publication of the MCFA, the MCFA Annals, collected information that would be useful for new fellows and much more.

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