

MCFA poll

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It was encouraging to hear opinions like “a pleasant country to live”; however, it is difficult to accept that still many fellows are complaining about bureaucracy and the inevitable tax problems. The schematic diagram below indicates clearly the countries in which National Contact Points (NCPs) would need to work even harder during the next Framework Programme. While talking about NCPs, we must note that only 25% of Fellows were in contact with their respective Contact Points – and for more than 70% of these the contact was more or less helpful. Still, there remains much to be done as the opinions about the competence and willingness of NCPs to solve both practical and contractual matters are often mixed.

Finally, we obtained some interesting feedback from our members could constitute nice guidelines for the forthcoming FP6. More than 70% of Marie Curie Fellows are interested in participating in this Programme in one form or another. We treat this statistic as a general indication of the success of the European research programs and we believe that the voice of fellows, with their remarks and suggestions constitutes a significant guideline both for the practice of FP6 as well as for the construction of the European Research Area.

Dr. Andrzej Sitarz

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Do you want to stay in touch with other MC Fellows ?

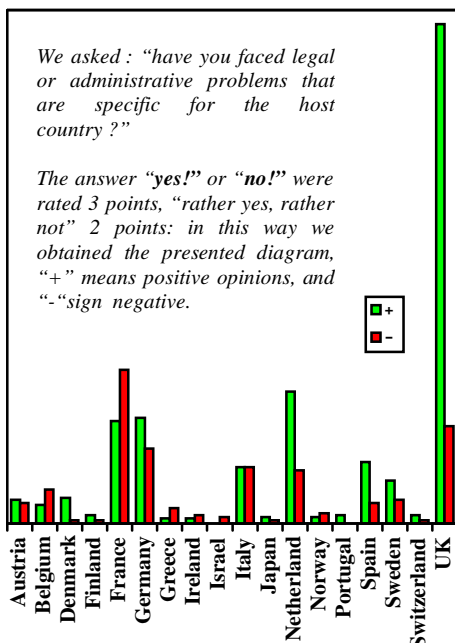
Yes, 84% No

Do you think EC should facilitate support of Marie Curie Fellows to stay in touch with their host institute after their fellowship ?

Yes, 86% No

We asked : “have you faced legal or administrative problems that are specific for the host country ?”

The answer “yes!” or “no!” were rated 3 points, “rather yes, rather not” 2 points: in this way we obtained the presented diagram, “+” means positive opinions, and “-” sign negative.



SWAP 2002

A successful Euroconference on “Science for Water Policy (SWAP), the Implications of the Water Framework Directive” was held on 2nd – 4th September 2002 in Norwich, UK. It was jointly organised by the Marie Curie Fellowship Association (MCFA) and the University of East Anglia (UEA), and sponsored by the European Commission through their High Level Scientific Conferences programme (contract Number HPCF-CT-2001-00351), as well as the Environment Agency for England and Wales.

108 participants met at the University of East Anglia and discussed the potential contribution of science to the implementation of European water policy, covering all aspects of water management from groundwater to surface water, and from freshwater ecosystems to estuaries and coastal waters. Plenary sessions were dedicated to keynote speeches from major players in the European water sector, including industry, NGOs, and national organisations in charge of implementing the Directive. Scientists from 20 different countries, including a large number of young scientists, presented 29 posters and 50 papers, on topics ranging from defining good water quality status and monitoring to economic analysis, public participation and integrated river basin management. Conclusions were discussed in a final round table session. The meeting will result in recommendations for further areas of research.

A clear overarching conclusion was that research would need to take place on two different time scales. Deadlines for implementing the directive are very tight, and in the first instance what is needed is not further data collection and complex modelling, but harmonisation of existing models, integration of available knowledge and translation of current research into operational tools. For further implementation and iterative steps, however, there is a real need for further research to make sure the right scientific questions are addressed. Scientists must face the challenge of providing timely and practical information to decision makers. This is a historical opportunity to shape policy based on sound science, while also addressing sustainable development issues. Proceedings will be available from the following conference web site around mid October:

<http://www.mariecurie.org/swap>

Laure Ledoux

Laure Ledoux, former Chair of MCFA, holds an ESRC research post at the Centre for Social and Economic research on the Global Environment at the University of East Anglia.

Why should the MCFA (NOT ?) “dissolve” in Euroscience ?

Joining Euroscience (ES) was discussed a few months ago in a quite enthusiastic way. ES offered to take over the Marie Curie Fellowship Organisation (MCFA) and create a specific subgroup in ES, where the old MCFA would be organised within. As ES requests membership fees (€35/year), ES agreed on settling the annual fees for MCFA members for the first few years (the exact number of years was something to be determined). This proposal was discussed when the MCFA was in a very critical state and had problems in motivating members not only to provide scarce feedback but also to invest some time in the organisation to secure its existence. The second alternative favoured by me was to cut back the organisation from the form people are accustomed to from the early years. To be honest, I did not have that much trouble with that concept, not knowing the old form. I tried to point out that joining ES is more a way of resigning than keeping the MCFA alive. However, some advantages of joining ES were pointed out as well (see later on in this article). In order to inform the discussion and facilitate a conclusion, this article summarises the pros and cons for joining ES. The article includes my view that a decision should not only be based on the sum of advantages and disadvantages, but should also reflect our current situation and potential to develop.

What is the current situation of the MCFA?

Currently, the MCFA is not readily visible. There are several national groups with national co-ordinators like myself, which are not very visible to the fellows. During the last few weeks, quite a lot has changed; this newsletter is a product of this change. However, there are still many parts of the MCFA that are dormant and, due to lack of activities, there is no consistent feedback from the base either. This has to do with, on the one hand, the fact that most co-ordinators are not dedicating any, or at least not enough, time to ensure visibility of the national groups and MCFA to the members. The second cause is due, as many have indicated, to lack of current finances to fund any activities. The second cause could perhaps be overcome by creativity, as you can see with our example in The Netherlands. However, this affords again some time dedication from the national co-ordinators; giving rise again to a vicious circle. Above them, there is an international board of several quite active people, who are suffering under constant work overload due to lack of personnel.

At present, the MCFA cannot mobilise its members. Attendance at national or international meetings is very low, as the MCFA does not have the finances available to refund the travel costs of members attending such meetings.

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