

MCFA, Eurodoc, PI-net and EuroScience joining forces to reach a common goal.

At the Young Scientists Programme of the EARMA-EuroScience conference JCEE2002 (Budapest, June 14-16, 2002), for the first time representatives from the MCFA, Eurodoc, PI-net and Euroscience got together to discuss a topic of prime importance to all four organisations: the emergence of a Europe-wide labour market for young scientists, and the adaptation of training programmes in Europe to new employment opportunities. The MCFA was represented at this event by myself and Bernd Ohlmeier.

During the Young Scientists Programme, each group gave a short presentation on what was perceived as missing or inadequate in the current situation with respect to the training of young scientists. Although there were some nuances in the selection of the main points, there was a principal agreement on the following issues:

- there is a clear lack of long-term perspectives within academic research;
- many young scientists are not aware of the many career opportunities that exist outside of academic research;

- University training is often perceived as too specialised by those who do not want to pursue an academic career;
- training in transferable skills does not usually form part of the PhD programme;
- research training programmes often do not take into consideration the personal or family situation of the young researcher.

It was also noted that Young Scientists are often unaware of their own political power which they could exert, for example, through increased involvement in organisations such as MCFA, Eurodoc, PI-net or EuroScience.

The Young Scientists Programme of JCEE2002 was to some extent intended as a preparation for the EuroScience conference "New Science and Technology based Professions in Europe" that will take place in Bischenberg, France, on 6-9 November 2002 (see www.euroscience.org for details). MCFA, Eurodoc and PI-net will be represented at that conference and actively contribute to it through concrete recommendations concerning the training of young researchers in Europe. In order to

have a solid basis for these recommendations, the four organisations have formed a Joint Working Group which has set up a survey on questions related to the quality of the PhD training in the different European countries, the general flexibility of young scientists, and mobility issues. The survey can be found at

http://www.mariecurie.org/surveys/YS_survey

Please consider taking part in it. It will continue to run for some time even after the Bischenberg conference; its results will be presented in the next MCFA Newsletter. The Joint Working Group has also set up a public discussion forum at

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

where you can post comments on the survey as well as on any other topic related to the theme of the working group. Your input and feedback is very much appreciated.

Dr. Dagmar M. Meyer

Dagmar M. Meyer is working as a research assistant in Pure Mathematics at the University of Göttingen, Germany. She has been involved in the MCFA since early 1999 and is currently the Secretary General and Treasurer of the association.

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Letters and contributions may be shortened for clarity, please include your postal address in your mail.

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