

# Marie Curie Fellowship Association

Information document

## Introduction

The Marie Curie Fellowship Association (MCFA) is an association of scientists who have successfully completed a Marie Curie Fellowship or other European Community research training grant. Marie Curie Fellows are selected by means of an independent peer-review system. The principal aim of the MCFA is to strengthen the identity of Marie Curie Fellows as mobile European researchers at the forefront of science. Its broader aim is to advance science in Europe through the organisation of high-profile thematic and scientific events, and interdisciplinary discussion forums.

## History of the MCFA

The MCFA originated from an initiative of a group of Marie Curie fellows, meeting other fellows, to discuss and exchange experiences. Several national subgroups emerged from these meetings, which eventually led to the legal establishment of the Association at European level. The major dates in the development of the Association include:

- *October 1996*: The MCFA is launched at an inaugural conference in Brussels.
- National groups form in countries such as France, the UK, and Germany.
- *March 1997*: Creation of a temporary governing board.
- *November 1997*: Legal establishment of the MCFA, under Belgian law, as a non-profit making, international association.
- *May 1998*: The MCFA receives a one-year grant from the European Commission.

## Structure of the MCFA

As members of the Marie Curie Fellowship Association are mobile, a highly flexible structure to support and facilitate communication between fellows is necessary. The Association is organised along hierarchical lines with regional/local groups, national groups and a governing board at European level, supported by a staffed secretariat in Brussels. Horizontal structures, such as scientific subgroups, task-forces and working groups also exist.

### *The Administrative Board*

The MCFA Board is the governing body of the Association and is elected at the Annual General Meeting. The board is composed of the chairperson, vice-chairperson, treasurer, secretary, the directors of committees which carry out the main activities of the association, and a representative from the European Commission. Its principal role is to stimulate, co-ordinate and support the international committees, the national groups and any spontaneous initiative of members. Another function is to elaborate general, long-term strategies, and to search for funding in tandem with the Secretariat of the Association.

### *National Groups*

Members are organised into national subgroups, which deal with country-specific issues. Local and national meetings are regularly organised by co-ordinators, who supervise the work carried out at the national level and maintain the national web pages and mailing lists. The main functions of the subgroups are to provide information and support for newcomers and to promote interaction between current fellows and alumni through social and professional networks.

### *Horizontal structures*

Task-forces and working groups exist at European level to work on specific projects and it is anticipated that scientific subgroups will be created. A major attribute of the MCFA is its interdisciplinary character, which will be exploited in the organisation of future scientific events.

### *Electronic Communications*

The exchange of information between Marie Curie Fellows, mentoring activity, assistance in career development, and scientific forum are a few examples of the MCFA activities made possible by the extensive use of Internet Pages, Electronic Mailing Lists, and remotely-accessible Common Working Spaces.

## **Composition of the MCFA**

The MCFA is an international association of scientists from all disciplines, from Economics to Physics, from Information Technology to Human Sciences, working in industry and academia throughout Europe. The number of members currently living and working outside the European Union, such as the United States and Japan, is expected to increase in the future and indicates the global role the MCFA will play in the 21st Century. The Association represents young European researchers in current debates

At present (as of 1 September 1998), the MCFA has 1050 registered members, the majority of whom are current holders of a Marie Curie Fellowship. However, 45% of fellows have completed their projects and the Association is evolving towards an alumni association. The MCFA aims to represent fellows at all stages of their careers. ( See Annex 1).

The MCFA expects to attract one-third of its potential membership by the end of 1999 and will probably reach two-thirds within the subsequent 3 years. The mentorship activity of the MCFA will attract 80% of the newly appointed Marie Curie Fellows in Framework Programme 5 and the Association seeks to establish contact with recipients of former European Programmes (see annex I).

## **Activities of the MCFA**

### *MCFA Symposia, Conferences and Workshops*

The principal means chosen by the MCFA to increase and promote its scientific reputation are symposia, conferences and workshops, which bring a group of people together to discuss a specific topic and to produce general conclusions in the form of a document.

The importance and uniqueness of the interdisciplinary nature of the MCFA has often been emphasised and will be exploited to its full potential. The formation of a forum, where scientists from different disciplines could exchange ideas and initiate joint projects, has been suggested. The MCFA Annals will produce a special edition on such forum organised by the MCFA.

Other objectives of the MCFA are: to create a debate on the challenges facing European, scientific research in the new millennium; to discuss major current issues such as the role of international exchange in the research community; women in science; education and training of young researchers.

Forthcoming activities in 1999 include: a workshop on research and multimedia technologies, to be held in Munich; a symposium addressing the difficult research situation found in Southern Europe, to be held in Spain; and an interdisciplinary forum on the human dimensions of environmental problems.

## *The Annals of the Marie Curie Fellowship Association*

After a rigorous selection the most outstanding achievements obtained by Marie Curie fellows, will be published as an annual Scientific Journal, “The Annals of the MCFA”. The articles will be sufficiently broad so as to appeal to both the specialist and the educated non-specialist.

### *MCFA Survey*

A general membership survey is planned with the results and statistics to be used in developing the direction and activities of the Association.

### *Collaboration with other associations*

Collaboration with other associations is encouraged. There has been an initiative in Spain for collaboration with the AACTE (Asociación para el Avance de la Ciencia y la Tecnología en España), which shares an interest in addressing the research situation in Southern Europe.

Plans have been made to contact other European organisations, such as the European Science Foundation, and European scientific groups with similar objectives, such as the European Fulbright Group.

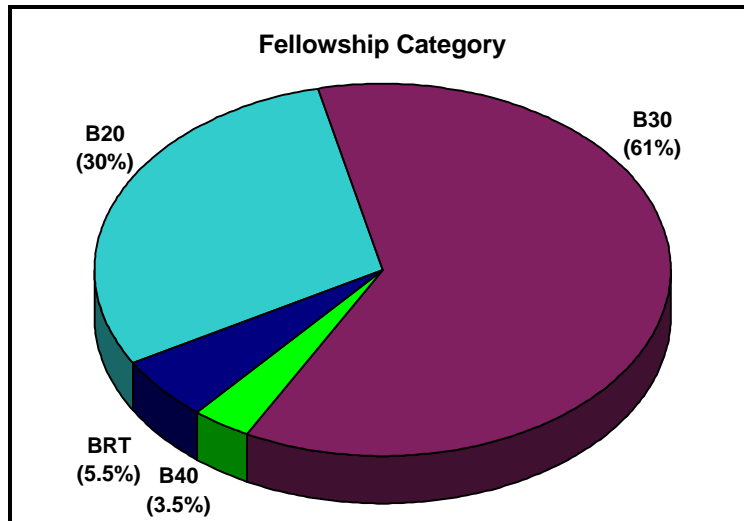
## **Conclusion**

The twenty-first century will see Europe complete its transition to a “knowledge-based society”. The MCFA will grow in size and influence, and aims to contribute towards an enhanced interface between science and society.

## Annex I - Statistics of the MCFA.

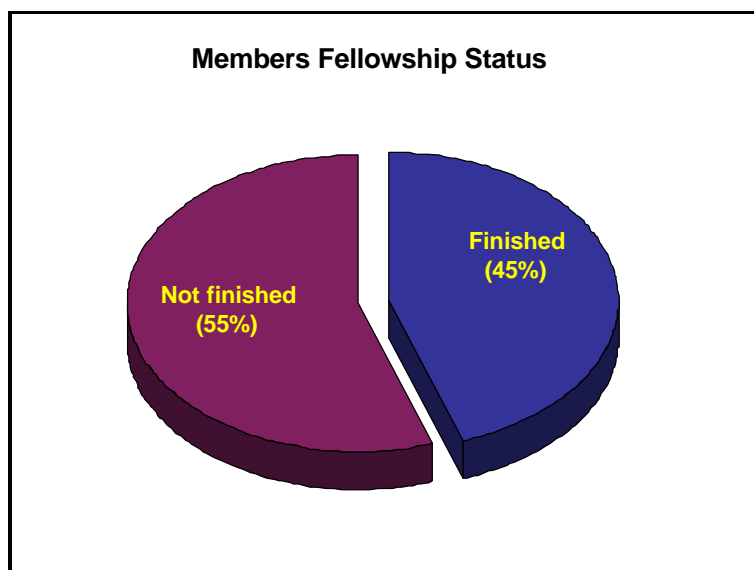
The European Commission has already funded 9000 fellows through a succession of European Research programmes. With an expected membership of 2000 by the end of 1999 and a steady increase thereafter, in view of the Marie Curie Fellowships which will be awarded during the Fifth Framework Programme, the Association is soon likely to represent the largest body of scientists in Europe.

### Composition of members by category

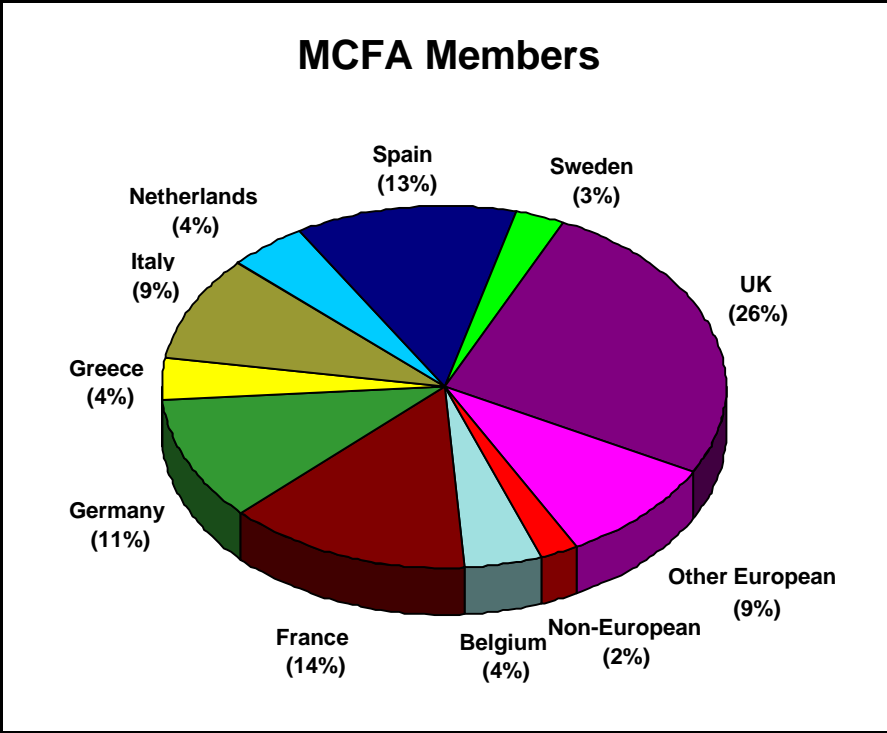


|     |                |     |                         |
|-----|----------------|-----|-------------------------|
| B20 | Doctorate      | B40 | Experienced Researchers |
| B30 | Post-doctorate | BRT | Return Fellowships      |

### Composition of members by status



**Composition of members by country of residence:**



**The future: Target membership**

