



June 2019

NEWSLETTER



Mental illness has long been considered a taboo topic among academics. But it's vital for researchers to start conversations about mental health challenges they may face.

The newly elected Chair of the France Chapter, Thomas Bonnard, shared with us a few insights from the successful Career Symposium that took place in Paris on 20 May.

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Giovanna Avellis, Italian Women Innovators and Inventors Network President and member of the MCAA Gender Equality and Diversity for Mobile Researchers' in Science working group, tells us about this highly-praised event.

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MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD



The summer holiday season is upon us. We have spent time during the year working hard in laboratories, offices, and even in field studies to discover new knowledge, to understand the mechanisms of nature, and address social challenges to make a better future. Summer can offer us (we hope) some time to rest, be with family and friends, and gather more energy for the coming year.

The MCAA board is happy to report some of the major highlights,

activities, and events during the last year. The most outstanding event was MCAA's General Assembly and Annual Conference, which hosted over 650 participants.

The 2019 GA was MCAA's most successful to date, and we look forward to as great a GA in Zagreb, in March 2020. Participants benefited from **24 interactive sessions** ranging from AI, to researchers' mental health, keynote speeches, networking events, a career fair, and much more. Attendees from 60

different countries came together to exchange ideas, share knowledge, and inspire others. The event showcased 110 experienced speakers, and the University of Vienna proved to be an inspirational location.

On behalf of the board and MCAA, we are grateful to the organisers, particularly to MCAA's Vice-Chair Dr Mostafa Shawrav for supervising the planning and execution of the event, to the University of Vienna for a wonderful venue, and to our team of volunteers for their valuable contribution to creating such an amazing atmosphere. I believe this team will bring the experience and knowledge to make MCAA's 2020 GA & Conference in Zagreb even bigger and better.

In addition, we are happy to announce two recent positive developments. First, MCAA Newsletter was given an ISSN (2663-9483). Articles can now be formally considered as publications for science communication and public dissemination. This will add further value to the visibility and recognition of MCAA and its members. We hope that this great development will encourage you to contribute more in future.

Second, MCAA is proud to be a partner organisation to DohART-NET, an MSCA International Training Network (ITN) coordinated by MCAA member Dr András Dinnyés and funded through the Horizon 2020 MSCA-ITN-2018 call. MCAA will contribute to transferrable skills

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

training for the Early Stage Researchers in DohART-NET. We look forward to this opportunity, and hope that our involvement will lead to future opportunities on high-quality proposals such as this one.

During the year, MCAA's chapters continued to organise their annual meetings. Swedish chapter members and North America Chapters members held meetings in May. The Austrian Chapter and the Turkish chapter recently organised their annual gatherings. The French, Israel, and Spain-Portugal Chapters held very successful Career Development Events.

One of the key missions of MCAA is to keep members united through their local chapters. Therefore, we continued to support chapter events throughout Europe and abroad. Our board members, Chapter chairs, and WG chairs have been very helpful in assisting with these events, particularly Marco Masia, Pavlo Bazilinskyy, and the German Chapter Chair Marina Rantanen Mod  r. The Western Balkans Kick-off Meeting, organised by the Chair Radenka Krsmanovi   Whiffen, took place on 7 June in Podgorica at the premises of the Montenegrin Ministry of Science. Vice-Chair Mostafa represented the board, welcomed members to the meeting, and discussed opportunities for researchers in the Western Balkans scientific community. We hope to continue to support additional chapter events in the coming year and encourage chairs to contact us for ideas and assistance.

In addition, MCAA's working groups were very active this year. Bridg-

ing Science and Business (BSB) working group, chaired by Dr Pavlo Bazilinskyy, held the first of the 'Researchers Meet innovators' event series on 19-20 April in Kyiv, Ukraine. The main focus of the event was to establish a discussion between startups in Ukraine and the EU on the pros and cons of managing projects on the cusp between business and science. The second event in this series will be held at [TU Berlin](#) and is organised by board member Dr Marco Masia. During this two-day meeting participants will learn how to contribute to innovation and will participate in a wide range of workshops aimed at providing them with skills and knowledge. The event is designed for people from the research community, start-ups, not-for-profit organisations and corporate environments who want to learn more about innovation and ways in which researchers and innovators can synergistically and successfully work together.

MCAA is proud to note that we were invited to participate in the Marie Sk  łodowska-Curie Actions Presidency Conference (MSCA) organised under the auspices of the Romanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in [Bucharest](#), on 4-5 June. This is a flagship event for the MSCA Programme. Vice Chair Mostafa, Board Member Maria Mathiass from Policy WG and myself successfully represented MCAA as reporters of the sessions. Last but not least, MCAA also organised 'Towards Sustainable Research Career Workshop' moderated by Mostafa. Fellow board member Dr Maria G  rna and I were speakers representing MCAA, together with

Vice Chair of MSCA Advisory Board Anita Tregner-Mlinari  , and Policy Officer of MSCA Stijn Delaur  , who contributed valuable information at the round table session.

On behalf of MCAA's board, I would like to thank you for your contribution and for being a part of the MCAA community. As board members, we represent a diverse range of research fields, from academia and industry, and are proud to serve this role and to represent our amazing and diverse global membership. We will continue to do our best to help you through organising scientific and outreach activities, to unite members with other members and non-members, experts, and create outstanding networking opportunities.

We wish you a happy and relaxing summer.

MURAT G  NE  
SECRETARY
MCAA BOARD

PARTNER

LOOKING FOR A CAREER IN SCIENCE?



The **Vienna BioCenter** is a leading life sciences campus, offering a unique combination of basic research, scientific education, and biotech companies in a single location.

If you are passionate about science, the Vienna BioCenter offers a fantastic environment for growth, both professionally and personally.

10 REASONS TO WORK AT THE VIENNA BIOCENTER

1. The Vienna BioCenter institutions are **global leaders** in their fields: the research institutes

GMI, IMP, IMBA and Max Perutz Labs excel in molecular biology and the 24 biotech companies on campus are experts in vaccines and immunology.

2. Some of the **best scientists** in the world perform their research at the Vienna BioCenter: excellent scientific track record of key discoveries and two Breakthrough Prizes among our alumni.

3. **Competitive funding**: national and international funding sources include FWF, FFG, WWTF, aws, Vienna Business Agency, EMBO, HFSP, and the European Research Council. Vienna BioCenter scientists have

earned 49 ERC Grants in total, which amount to €85 million.

4. **State-of-the-art scientific facilities**: the Vienna BioCenter Core Facilities and additional scientific services in the research institutes provide technology, infrastructure, and support beyond expectations.

5. **Publication record**: 350 publications in peer-reviewed journals per year.

6. **Intensive scientific exchange**: 200 renowned speakers per year and a community of 1,300 scientists create fantastic collaboration and networking opportunities.



PARTNER

7. **International atmosphere: 70 nationalities** from six different continents. English is our working language. (So, don't worry if you don't speak German!).

8. **Collaborative culture:** dedicated and enthusiastic researchers provide for a flexible and collaborative work environment. Open-door culture, curiosity, flexibility, flat hierarchies, and academic freedom are our core values.

9. **Kindergarten:** if you have children between 3 months and 6 years of age, they can attend the child care center on campus for a very competitive fee.

10. **Location:** The Vienna BioCenter is centrally located in the world's number one most livable city. Excellent connections by public transport (bus, tram, suburban train) to the city center (10 min) and to the airport (20 min).

CAREER OPPORTUNITIES AT THE VIENNA BIOCENTER

24 biotech companies currently situated on campus.

For young candidates who would like to pursue an academic path, the **Summer School** program and the **VBC PhD Programme** offer fantastic chances to launch their careers.

Experienced researches will find many exciting opportunities as **postdoctoral fellows** or as independent **Group Leaders**. There are currently 96 research groups at the Vienna BioCenter.

In addition, there are always interesting jobs for **laboratory technicians** and **research assistants**.

Last but not least, for scientists interested in the **biotech industry**, Vienna BioCenter offers many professional opportunities across the



MORE INFORMATION: www.viennabiocenter.org/career

SPECIAL COVERAGE MENTAL HEALTH

BREAKING THE SILENCE ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH IN ACADEMIA

Mental illness has long been considered a taboo topic among academics. However, the Team Leaders' Mental Health session at the 6th MCAA General Assembly & Annual Conference brought awareness to the issue, which until now has only been dealt with outside academic circles.



More and more physical and emotional demands are being placed on professionals in leadership and management roles that can lead to stress and anxiety. Leaders often have to handle group conflict, overcome bureaucratic hurdles and deal with internal and external pressures.

It's against this backdrop that the ground-breaking, 90-minute closed-door workshop took place. Overall, the aim was to discuss ways to maintain good mental and physical health and well-being in a stressful research environment.

The following questions set the tone for the workshop:

- Are you a team manager or supervisor?
- Do you work in a high-stress environment where you regularly face internal and external deadlines and pressure?
- Are you responsible for other team members? If so, are you looking for better ways to address your team members' needs and anxieties?

SPECIAL COVERAGE

MENTAL HEALTH

- Would you like to have better tools and coping mechanisms to minimise the stress and anxiety you feel at work?

The restricted and confidential nature of the session ensured that attendees could freely talk, and openly express and discover what they were feeling in a secure setting. Nearly 30 people attended, most of which were academics in group leaders or supervisors or academic managers/coordinators. Most of them were in a research environment, typically a stressful and competitive workplace. This setting's hierarchical structure only exacerbates matters.

The workshop was conceptualised, organised and run by Sara Ricardo (junior team leader and MCAA Board member), Francisco Goncalves (psychologist and founder of mental health platform RUMO) and Mark Robinson (psychologist and counselling specialist at Trinity College Dublin).

"I began by discussing why this important issue hasn't been directly dealt with until now," said Ricardo, who also served as rapporteur. "By providing a taster session, we hoped to open peoples' minds to the subject and initiate the process of talking about these issues more openly in their own professional lives."

Goncalves followed with a role-playing exercise that involved posing questions to volunteers. The objective was to enable them to gain self-awareness and understand

where they stood on several of the themes: stress at work; healthy vs non-healthy stress; trigger points; external vs internal pressures.

Robinson collected the answers and wrote key points and messages on a large blackboard at the back of the room. He then addressed the main themes arising from the activity that volunteers struggled most with – oftentimes unaware that this was the case.

- feeling responsible vs being responsible;
- identification of external vs internal pressures;
- communication and vulnerability;
- allowing to be vulnerable;
- role and responsibility of institutions;
- idea that we're still a long way from implementing actions at institutions;
- isolation and importance of peer groups;
- how peer groups can be organised organically by each interested party;
- fear of asking about peer groups because of taboos.

Robinson demonstrated some concrete ways to deal with these issues and also provided follow-up references. He stressed they should be brave and speak up about their vulnerabilities, as there will always be someone to respond in a positive manner and offer encouraging feedback.

Robinson urged the volunteers to continue the self-awareness activity introduced in the workshop, and take time off to consider things if

needed. People in positions of authority should understand that students may need to express their feelings. In this case, the authority figure needs to simply listen and not judge, and then look into practical solutions. Some practical strategies for different real cases presented by participants were also offered.

Attendees were keen on continuing with learning tools and strategies to deal with stress and anxiety in the workplace for them and others. They expressed interest in follow-up workshops, an idea that will be taken into consideration by the MCAA organisers.

THE MCAA
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SPECIAL COVERAGE MENTAL HEALTH

PUTTING A SPOTLIGHT ON MENTAL HEALTH IN ACADEMIA

The Sanders Hall at the Postdoc Centre at Eddington in Cambridge recently welcomed researchers to an open discussion around the themes of mental health within academia. One of the organisers, Dr Donata Iandolo, tells us more about it.

An open and frank discussion about mental health in an academic setting. This is how Dr Iandolo describes the April 26 event, which she co-organised together with Goncalo Rosas and Maria Laura Greco.

Sponsored by the UK Chapter of the Marie Curie Alumni Association and the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs at the University of Cambridge, the event shed light on this issue – one

that is affecting many of those working in academia but is often pushed aside and not spoken about.

SHARING EXPERIENCES, RAISING AWARENESS

Talking about the event, Dr Iandolo explains, “its main purpose was

to increase awareness on this very important topic – mental health within academia.” It aimed to bring together researchers at different stages of their career and give them the opportunity to share their own experiences about how different aspects of their work impact upon their everyday life.

In addition to this, the event wanted to give researchers the opportunity



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MENTAL HEALTH



to develop an understanding of the diverse factors involved in mental health and the ways they can work together to make changes. Dr landolo adds, “creating a place where people could share their experiences and understand they are not alone was also essential.” This is because it is only through discussion that people can discover commonalities between their lived and academic experiences and those of others.

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EVENT

A range of speakers from academia, policymaking institutions and funders came together at this event.

To kick off, an ice breaker session lead by Judita Vivas, a physical theatre trainer, guided participants through several exercises aimed at building trust. “This helped to create a relaxing environment so that people could open-up and share their experiences,” notes Dr landolo.

This was followed by the interactive workshop ‘stop before acting: mental health issues in academia’, a collaborative effort by Airi and Rumo, two organisations working around the topic. Participants took part in a sociodrama session and were later given suggestions on how to tackle issues such as stress and anxiety. “Some suggestions included doing activities that would

help you connect to people, doing physical exercise, or activities that help you relax like meditation,” adds Dr landolo.

“Dr Ben Bleasdale (Wellcome Trust), Dr John Tregoning (Imperial College) and Prof. Edward Bullmore (Cambridge University) gave presentations related to themes connected to mental health,” says Dr landolo who further adds, “they gave us insights into the need for a change in the research culture and the work done by charities like Wellcome Trust, the journey of an academic in academia, the role played by resilience, a new perspective on depression and the role played by immunology”. The panel discussion and final remarks provided further opportunities for participants to get involved in the discussion and share their own experiences of mental health in their career within academia.

“Overall the event was a success and was well received by participants,” confirms Dr landolo. Most importantly, researchers were able to listen, reflect upon and contribute to discussions on an important topic that many people in academia face. It also further spread the message that mental health should not be silenced.



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NEWS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS

SIX FACTS ABOUT THE GRANTS & AWARDS WORKING GROUP

Janos Kriston-Vizi is leading the MCAA's Grants & Awards Working Group. He tells us about this year's award ceremony which took place in Vienna. He also unveils some exciting changes!



'WE REALISED THAT SEVERAL OUTSTANDING MCAA CONTRIBUTORS DIDN'T PARTICIPATE BECAUSE THEY ARE TOO MODEST AND HUMBLE. THE PEER NOMINATION WILL THEREFORE FILL THIS GAP.'

A few words about Janos Kriston-Vizi

Originally from Hungary, Janos studied in the field of life sciences and decided to specialise in Information Technology (IT). This took him to the Kyoto University (Japan), where he learned robotics and worked as a Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) fellow. After four years in the country, he moved to Singapore to conduct research on microscopy and image processing. In 2011, he received an International Reintegration Grants at University College London (UCL) in London to work on his Marie Curie project "3D image analysis tool development for high-content screening".

He said: "My Marie Curie grant supported not only my research project, but also its dissemination, which was very helpful for my career."

NEWS FROM THE WORKING GROUPS



1. WORKING GROUP

The Grants & Awards Working Group was created by [Anett Kiss](#), who was an Ordinary Board member of the first MCAA Board between 2013 and 2015. Asked about Anett's work, Janos said: "Our first Working Group Chair contributed hugely to its foundations. I brought slight modifications, but the structure was already in place."

2. AWARDS CEREMONY

"A typical year of the Working Group is a bit different from the MCAA or

the dynamics of another institute as it starts in August," says Janos. During the summer months, the members of the Working Group and the Board discuss the organisation of the Awards ceremony which usually takes place at the yearly General Assembly. As such, the Call for Awards and the application form is ready in September. In November 2018, the Working Group received 30 applications.

Then, the Working Group suggests the members of the Awarding Committee with the help of the Honorary members.

The Awarding Committee plays an important role, as it shortlists the

potential candidates for the Awards. The members of the Committee gather a first time in the framework of an orientation meeting, and decide in a second meeting on the selection of the first two or three best candidates for each Award.

"The Board members take the final decision about the award winners," explains Janos.

3. HONORARY RECOGNITION

The Honorary recognition aims to reward the persons who contributed to the development and growth of the MCAA Association. The Awardees of this year's general assembly are:

- [Anton Zeilinger](#), quantum physicist working at the University of Vienna;
- [Theresa Lindahl](#) and Lil Reif, national contact points for MSCA working at the Austrian Research Promotion Agency;
- [Gareth O'Neill](#), president of Eurodoc.

4. FOUR TYPES OF AWARDS

1. The Outstanding Contributor Award recognises members who have contributed the most to the Marie Curie community, in general, and to the MCAA, in particular. The Outstanding Contributor Awardee of this year is [Fernanda Bajanca](#), who is the Chair of the Policy Working Group and deals a lot with its activities. "The participants

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of the MCAA General Assembly were very happy to hear Fernanda's name as the winner of the Outstanding Contributor Award, as she is very active and popular," says Janos.

2. The Career Award recognises members leading excellent careers. Stefka Fidanova was rewarded for her successful activities in the institution of information and communication technology. "The competition was particularly hard for this Award, as it is one of the most popular. My heart is bleeding because of course all competitors were excellent, but we could reward only one!" explains Janos.

3. The Innovator Award focuses on members presenting the best innovation approach in their project. Pavlo Bazilinskyy, the recipient of this award, conducts research in robotics driving. Janos described him as "very active in the MCAA and very popular".

4. The Social Impact Award highlights the positive social impact of the MCAA members' work. Francisco Valente Gonçalves who received the Award created a company, Rumo, which provides wellness services and counseling via an online service platform for people in an immigration status.

5. COMING UP

Junior Career Award

At the next General Assembly, it is possible that not one, but two candidates will receive the coveted Career Award. "So far, the Career Award tended to reward well established researchers against younger ones with shorter career records. We are currently working to introduce a Junior Career Award. However, we still need to define the criteria, to take into account some breaks that the researcher may have in his or her career like maternity leave or the military service, and at the same time keep the evaluation manageable," explains Janos.

Peer nomination

So far, participants can only nominate themselves, but very soon, MCAA members may have the possibility to present the candidature of another Alumnus or Alumna. "We realised that several outstanding MCAA contributors didn't participate because they are too modest and humble. The peer nomination will therefore fill this gap," says Janos.

Medals

The Awards aim to highlight the work done by members who are shortlisted, but not part of the final

selection. "In many cases, the second and the third winners are almost as good as the first one. Those medals would aim to reward them as well," noted Janos.

6. BEHIND THE SCENES

Janos makes special mention of the collective approach of his working group and the important role each member plays:

- [Anett Kiss](#), first Chair
- [Pierre Jehel](#), Deputy Chair
- [Asunción López Varela Azcárate](#)
- [Edit Szekely](#)
- [Kiran Kumar Chereddy](#)
- [Monica Cartelle Gestal](#)
- [Simone Linz](#)

Janos also thanks all MCAA members for their voluntary contributions.

The board of the Grants & Awards Working Group will be renewed soon. A new board will be formed in September. So stay tuned!

Interested?

Learn more about the [Grants & Awards Working Group](#)

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NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

FRANCE CHAPTER ORGANISES CAREER SYMPOSIUM



The newly elected Chair of the France Chapter, [Thomas Bonnard](#), shared with us a few insights from the successful [Career Symposium](#) that took place in Paris on 20 May.

Thomas, in his own words

I am French, but also British (on my mother's side). I studied material engineering at school in Grenoble and then earned a PhD in medical research in Paris. I then moved to Australia thanks to a Marie Curie COFUND Individual fellowship with Melbourne's Monash University. There, I learned specific nanomedicine synthesis techniques which I am now applying in my current lab in Caen, France, to improve stroke diagnosis and therapy.

A NEW CHAIR

I was elected chair in February this year, right before the General Assembly in Vienna. This was perfect timing as it ensured the best hand-over. We met in Vienna with all the board and the previous Chair. The General Assembly was also a great opportunity to better understand the potential of the MCAA network.

OBJECTIVES

Our previous chair, Yves Verherbruggen, did a great job at rejuvenating the France Chapter, which was not as active when he took over. Our chapter counted 115 members



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in September 2018 and this number is exponentially increasing. We are currently counting 163 members with some 20 active members who contribute to our different actions.

I am hoping to develop several activities at local level. Currently, most of our events are organised in Paris. I hope to develop events in peripheral cities and to reach between 30 and 40 active members by the end of the year.

CAREER SYMPOSIUM

A success: The Career Symposium on May 20 brought together young researchers and actors from the world of policy, economy, start-up and industry.

The symposium helped the France Chapter raise awareness of the different career opportunities that exist. This is one of our missions. We also encouraged networking between scientists, politics and companies, which is another goal of the France chapter.



Partners: We organised this event in partnership with the training unit of the Institut Curie (they've been extremely helpful and I wish to warmly thank them). It is important for us to have some good connection with organisations based in an institute ideally located such as the Institut Curie as we are spread at different institutes.

Organisation: I also wish to thank our team from the France Chapter who did a terrific job in terms of organisation. We also had exceptional speakers who made the different sessions very meaningful. Based on the feedback we received from participants, our goal of raising awareness of the different career path was definitely achieved.

Speed dating: We are also very pleased with the organisation of the speed dating event, which was held during the lunch break. At first, we hesitated to do it as we had only small rooms available. But we split participants into groups. On the day, we had some tiny organisational problems to split participants, but once these were solved, it all went smoothly and the participants were very happy. I saw all these people talking together and enjoying themselves, so we can definitely say we did a good job in enhancing networking.

One participant told me: "This was so cool! I was looking for someone working on that exact experiment".

Without the speed dating, those two scientists would have been at the same event without realising they work together. I would highly encourage other chapters to organise similar speed dating events. The invited speakers also joined the game which offered a good chance to the participants to approach them.

Tip for future events: Despite all these good points, we did note a few aspects that could be improved. The main one is that we had 90 registrations but only 47 participants at the event. For next time, we will change the registration process to make sure people who register will come.

Further reading: The speakers were all very pleased with the experience and we discussed organising future events with them. One invited speakers, S4D4C, has written an article on the event which I invite you to read [here](#).

WHAT'S NEXT?

We will organise several events next year on the theme of collaboration between science and politics and start-up creation. This will be very exciting!

Interested? Learn more about the [France Chapter](#)

THOMAS BONNARD

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

MEET ANA RAQUEL SANTA MARIA,
CHAIR OF THE HUNGARIAN
CHAPTER



Ana Raquel Santa Maria has been leading the Hungarian Chapter since August 2018. We caught up with her to learn more about their activities and what's in the pipeline.



Ana Raquel, in her own words

I'm originally from Portugal. In 2015, I received my master's degree in bioengineering from the University of Algarve. After earning my degree, I worked as a science teacher at "Centro de Ciência Viva" in Portugal. In 2016, I was awarded a Marie Skłodowska Curie fellowship (ITN BtRAIN) to conduct my PhD at the Biological Research Centre in Szeged. This network's primary focus is the brain barriers. Due to the complexity of our brain barriers, treatments for neurological disorders are not always effective. It is important to study the brain barriers to increase our knowledge in this field. This network helps us further our understanding in the vertebrate brain barrier field, and their specific role in regulating brain barrier functions during the stages of development, health, ageing and disease.

'THE MISSION OF THE HUNGARIAN MCAA CHAPTER IS TO HELP, SHARE AND CONTRIBUTE FOR THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF MCAA MEMBERS FROM HUNGARY AND/OR BASED IN HUNGARY.'

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A PROACTIVE APPROACH

I am very proactive and being involved in this type of network is important to me.

On the one hand, we can develop soft skills that are important for our career development, like time management, organisational skills, etc. On the other hand, we can participate and develop outreach activities that involve our community, like science shows. This way, people get a glimpse of the work we do and appreciate the importance of it.

BUILDING ON MCAA'S MISSION

Currently, we have approximately 60 members. The mission of the Hungarian MCAA Chapter is to help,

share and contribute for the career development of MCAA members from Hungary and/or those who are based in Hungary.

We share valuable information (workshops, meetings, MCAA webinars) with the Chapter members – information that can contribute to their careers. In addition, we take part in different activities in Hungary where we share information related to the MCAA Hungarian Chapter with the wider society.

Our members are active, dynamic and enthusiastic. And they collaborate with other working groups, taking the MCAA mission further.

INCREASING VISIBILITY

To reach a bigger audience, our Chapter took to social media to cre-

ate a page on [LinkedIn](#). We aim to post our activities every month and to be accessible for members and non-members who wish to follow us. We also organise several outreach activities, such as Researchers' Night.

WHAT'S NEXT?

Our Chapter will be present at a local conference at the [Biological Research Centre](#) in Szeged on 30-31 May. On 13 June, we are organising a workshop for MC ITN proposals in life sciences and related fields. This one-day event will be held at the Budapest University of Technology and Economics (BME).

Interested? Learn more about the [Hungarian Chapter](#)

ANA RAQUEL SANTA MARIA

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

GETTING TO KNOW THE SOUTHEAST ASIA CHAPTER



The [Southeast Asia Chapter](#), an official component of the MCAA, announced their new structure on May 7. Newly appointed Chair, [Jenny Lind Elmaco](#), tells us more about herself and the Chapter.

Jenny Lind Elmaco was elected as chairperson during the regular annual assembly held in Jakarta, Indonesia, this year. She is involved in a variety of organisations.

“I am the Secretary General of the Association for Christian Universities in Asia and the Director for Strategic Partnerships of Silliman University - the oldest American-founded University in Asia,” she says.

In addition, Elmaco is also a peace and development strategist and a business and human rights adviser. Her work, however, does not end there. She is a gender justice advocate, a regular delegate to the United Nations Commission on the status of women meeting in New York every year. She also acts as a national contact point for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

INTRODUCING THE CHAPTER

Asked about the Southeast Asia Chapter, Elmaco explains how “it was created to cater to all MCAA



members residing in Southeast Asia, or nationals of any Southeast Asia country currently residing elsewhere”. These countries include those from the Association of South East Asian Nations member states: Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic,

Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

“The goal of the Chapter is to spark innovation and collaboration among scientists in Southeast Asia and other regions,” notes Elmaco.

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

The Chapter, through interesting events and innovative activities, also aims to enhance the image of the MCAA in the region. In particular, to highlight the benefits of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions and the MCAA.

WHAT'S IN STORE?

"We are planning several EU Research Days in the upcoming months. We also have several proposal writing workshops," says Elmaco. Further to this, the Chapter is planning to organise roundtable discussions about the future of research with its members from academia, the private sector and civil society.

Plans to deliver several webinars that will help researchers and scientists develop their skills are also in the pipeline. "Besides these activities, we aim to cross-pollinate and complement strengths as well as help address gaps in research," notes Elmaco. "But we also want to encourage discussions beyond our scientific community and demystify science through open chats and human libraries to encourage a more inclusive education and research."

JOINING THE CHAPTER

Those living in the Southeast Asia region are welcome to become

members of the Chapter. "Just log onto the MCAA portal and send us a message," advises Elmaco.



For more information on the Chapter,
contact: se.asia.chapter@mariecuriealumni.eu

THE MCAA
NEWSLETTER STAFF

RESEARCH

THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN DELIVERING QUALITY HEALTHCARE AND LIMITING COSTS



How can health systems make better use of available data to improve our health while making healthcare more financially efficient? [Damir Ivanković](#), PhD fellow for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie project [HealthPros](#) explains.

Healthcare systems need to achieve a balance between improving the health of populations, delivering quality care to individuals and containing costs. To achieve this so-called triple aim, HealthPros is training the next generation of healthcare performance intelligence professionals.

The 14 PhD candidates from across Europe will make effective use of available healthcare performance

data in various countries. Overall, the goal is to improve integrated service delivery, patient engagement, equality of healthcare access and health outcomes, and to reduce healthcare waste.

There's an ongoing shift globally from mere cost-control to more performance-based governance driving healthcare systems towards greater use of clinical and adminis-

trative data. However, there's a lack of research training in producing valid, reliable and actionable healthcare performance intelligence, and stakeholders using this intelligence lack critical assessment skills.

"There's a tremendous opportunity to use the available data to understand the factors that hinder optimal performance of healthcare systems, and to identify impactful and

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manageable ways of addressing them,” says Ivanković, a medical doctor from Croatia. “In short, the healthcare system performance researcher of the future needs to have a multi-disciplinary skill set, and this is what HealthPros provides.”

Having worked in clinical medicine, the government sector and the medical device industry, he’s the ideal mix of expertise, skills and experience HealthPros was seeking to support local, regional and national healthcare stakeholders, including patients. “There’s a clear need for professionals equipped with the tools to maximise the use of available data through healthcare performance research,” he notes.

Six months into his research, Ivanković is investigating how corporate results-based governance tools are and could be used in healthcare. The development and application of performance-based governance mechanisms are considered key factors in channelling the various dynamics towards high-performing healthcare systems.

By using a framework anchored in communication sciences, the fellow is assessing reporting on comparative health system - and service-level performance data through publicly available websites. “It may sound complicated, but what this basically means is I look at websites that publicly report comparisons between

health systems or, for instance, hospitals within one national health system,” explains Ivanković.

More specifically, he’s exploring how well the basic questions of every successful communication are answered: Who do we report this for and why? What do we report, and how do we do it? Despite tremendous efforts in the transparency and accountability of public reporting, “it seems that surprisingly little of these efforts really answer such crucial questions, which might be one of the reasons this data gets used much less than expected.”

Ivanković is also examining how hospital managers across Europe use performance data in their daily work. For this he is collaborating with the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation (HOPE). “Are hospitals, as increasingly complicated and even complex organisations, run on an evidence-informed basis using available data? If so, which data is used and what tools are applied to visualise and monitor progress?”

Preliminary results show that more data is collected than is actually used, and that hospital managers in Europe might still not have the necessary skills to work successfully in a data-driven way.

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VAST DATA COMPRESSED FOR BETTER MANAGEMENT

As the volume of information gathering is set to surge in the coming decade, concerns loom over management and efficient processing of generated data. A project, funded through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE), is leading the way in designing special modules that compress colossal data.

Understanding illnesses such as cancer, pose a major undertaking for scientists. It requires not only the sequencing of thousands of cells linked to a single tumour but the laborious and complex task of analysing and comparing volumes of accumulated data.

The sheer volume alone, experts say, is so vast that it presents a major obstacle in existing computer storage, management and indexing systems. What is more, the challenges are set to multiply soon.

For starters, DNA sequencing technologies are evolving faster. And in the next decade alone, experts say they predict the volume of information to increase tenfold.

"We are just beginning to be capable of managing this huge amount of information," says Susana Ladra of the University of A Coruña, in Spain. "But we are not prepared to address the bigger challenge being posed by the explosion of data coming from DNA sequencing."

Funded by the European Union, [the BIRDS project](#), set up in 2016, addressed these concerns, designing new modules that compress

vast volumes of data, providing better storage and processing of the information. Most importantly, the project captures and exploits data patterns and repetitions that contain information on an organism's DNA.

"This will have a great impact on current bioinformatic software... and on efficiently building indexes for large genomic databases," says Dr Ladra, project coordinator of BIRDS. "This can revolutionize the field of bioinformatic and help in the discovery and treatment of rare diseases."

The biggest challenges facing BIRDS researchers include not only creating vast storage methods but processing and analysing data in the most effective way possible.

"Our challenge is to rack our brain to obtain the smartest, smallest and fastest way of representing the data," explains Dr Ladra.

BIRDS is focusing on three lines of research: algorithms for sequence analysis, compression and indexing for repetitive data, and data structure for data analysis.

Meantime, results emerging from the project have also been useful in related fields such as proposing compact representation of moving objects whose representation of trajectories have long been a problem in retrieving information in geography.

"The storage of positions and trajectories of cars, ships, people etc. is a usual requirement in many systems that need to manage large amounts of data," says Dr Ladra. "Efficient compression of trajectories is an active research field, but most of the solution for efficient representation are limited to the research community."

"This will be exploited as a tool inside larger management tools for companies that manage mobility workers or container ships... Results on trajectories can be commercialised and used by airlines, for example, to know how they can optimise routes, where they can save fuel, or which flights had problems on their routes."

"In most cases, this sort of information is stored and transmitted in uncompressed form, leading to inefficacy."

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BIRDS incorporates seven research institutions in four countries. These are the University of Melbourne; University of Chile; University of Concepcion, in Chile; University of Helsinki; Kyushu University; Instituto de Engenharia de Sistemas e Computadores, Investigação e Desenvolvimento em Lisboa, Portugal; and University of A Coruña, alongside a Spanish SME Enxenio SL.

**"WE EXPECT
BETTER RESEARCH
WILL BE CARRIED
OUT IN EUROPE
THANKS TO EU
FUNDING"**

The project aims to boost the number of participating researchers, improving also the education of PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers.

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A STEP CHANGE IN AEROSPACE TECHNOLOGY TRAINING

INNOVATIVE is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Doctoral Programme that's preparing bright young researchers for careers in aerospace technology and related fields. To discuss progress, we sat down with Laura Dunn, INNOVATIVE project manager at the University of Nottingham's Institute for Aerospace Technology (IAT), a leading aerospace research centre and host institution.



What are your responsibilities as project manager for INNOVATIVE?

I make sure that the 5-year programme that ends in early 2021 provides what it should to the researchers – that it offers innovative skills training, strong links with industry through placements and industrial visits, summer schools with academic and industry leaders in the aerospace sector and career development support. I also ensure that all activities fulfil the requirements of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie research programme. I report on recruitment, research dissemination, programme spend and ethics approval requirements. Finally, I am the first port of call for

the fellows, which can mean dealing with anything from visa to pension queries.

In terms of project background/context, what problem does INNOVATIVE tackle? What need does it serve?

The European Commission's Flightpath 2050 report identified three key issues for the future of European air transport: competitiveness, performance and sustainability. Aerospace research will need to embrace novel approaches to meet these challenges.

The report suggests that a multi-disciplinary approach will be essential in developing technology that will keep Europe competitive in this strategically important global industry. INNOVATIVE directly responds to this need for increased multi-disciplinary training tailored to the needs of the aerospace industry.

What is the ultimate aim of the INNOVATIVE project? What are the key objectives?

INNOVATIVE aims to develop the next generation of aerospace re-

search professionals capable of leading the teams of the future. The project provides a comprehensive programme that empowers 24 researchers with a multi-disciplinary skillset who were recruited over 3 cohorts. Fellows gain exposure to the aerospace industry through secondments into leading companies, including technology providers, systems integrators, original equipment manufacturers and aircraft manufacturers. Training covers innovative design techniques, novel technologies and advanced manufacturing. Fellows are based in the inter-disciplinary environment of IAT, which brings together all aerospace-related research and activities at the University of Nottingham, from science and engineering, to computer science, chemistry, physics and psychology.

What will be the most significant achievement or output?

The key objective is to deliver a comprehensive training programme for early stage researchers. Each fellow has been allocated to at least two academic supervisors of differing disciplines, giving them a broad

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basis for their PhD project. Outside their personal PhD projects, fellows can also access the University's wide-ranging training courses, annual professional skills training weeks run by the Graduate School and a technical summer school provided by a specialist aerospace modelling company (PACE).

What are some notable results that have been achieved so far?

Fellows have attended and presented their research at conferences around the world, including INTERNOISE, the International Comfort Congress and the European Motor-CAD User Conference. Vincenzo Madonna's work presented at the International Electric Machines and Drives Conference won the Best Paper Award. Fellows' papers have also been published in leading industry journals such as 'Composites'. INNOVATIVE has also brought some extra-curricular achievements. Two teams of fellows made it through to the second round of the Airbus Fly Your Ideas challenge that invited proposals tackling real-world aerospace problems. Xipeng Lyu and Hery Mwene-goha won the University's Graduate School presentation competition in successive years, explaining their theses in three minutes.

What are the overall benefits of INNOVATIVE?

INNOVATIVE offers training for the designers and engineers of tomorrow, equipping them with the skills and abilities to think outside the box and collaborate across teams. Multi-disciplinary thinking is a key aspect of this training, as next-generation



aircraft will need to be designed as complete systems, as opposed to the current practice of several large systems (e.g. engines, airframes, wings and electronics) being optimised and designed independently. Future engineers will need to be aware of the system implications of specific technologies, and we anticipate that INNOVATIVE will ready its fellows to meet this challenge.

What is the expected impact of INNOVATIVE?

Fellows receive training on transferable skills such as critical problem solving, attention to detail and advanced communication, as well as exposure to leading aerospace companies and their cultures through the industrial secondments. This combination of formal training, scientific work and industrial engagement provide an unrivalled experience that will equip the researchers with the knowledge and skills required to pursue a career leading innovation in industry. Training this cohort of researchers will enable the ambitious development of the European aerospace field in the coming decades.

What is the latest news/current status?

Our first cohorts are coming to the end of the programme, and are expected to begin the writing-up period in September. The other two cohorts are nearing the halfway point and are preparing for their placements.

Is there anything else you would like to mention about INNOVATIVE?

The INNOVATIVE cohort is diverse, comprising 15 nationalities in one office! I'm proud to work on a programme that provides opportunities to develop highly talented aerospace researchers and bring increased diversity to this key global sector, both in terms of gender and ethnicity.

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EVENT

CONVERTING SCIENCE TO START-UPS

Key conference boosts drive to spin science into real world innovation.



Spinning science out of academia is no easy feat. Nor is it new. But translating a scientific discovery into the real world remains a challenge, especially when the science is new, its use is not clear – its potential buyer, also.

Still, the drive to convert research into start-ups looks set to a boost from the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) in Berlin in July 2019. A two-day meeting titled “Researchers meet Innovators,” will help participants learn how to contribute innovation covering a large variety of roles in the value chain.

“What researchers can learn from good innovators is approaching the complex problems they are trying to solve from a more user-centred perspective,” says Nierika Hamaekers, workshop facilitator of the event. “That’s what I’m going to be doing with my workshop, trying to step into the shoes off your users; to come up with meaningful and impactful innovations for them.”

The event is designed for people from research, start-up, not-for-profit, and corporate environments, who want to learn more about innovation and how researchers and innovators can synergistically and successfully work together.

Among the key innovators to address the conference is Carlo Antonini, a leading Italian aerospace engineer. He says hubs like the July event can help ease a divisive discontent between science and innovation.

“In the end,” he says, “we have to have equal opportunities as scientists and researchers to see what the next career opportunity will be.”

Since 2017, Mr. Antonini has led innovation at Apitech, an Italian start-up support innovation in SMEs.

Carla Ferreri will also address the event for her success and award in 2010 as Italy’s best innovator, after creating a spin-off company that has guided researchers across Europe in the field of molecular medicine.

Organisers say the highlight of the event will feature Prof. Piero Formica, who will focus on the differences between Entrepreneurialism and Business.

“Entrepreneurialism is not a machine built according to defined precepts and standards. It is an art form that, having grasped one or more ideas, i.e. one or more keys that open the doors of the future, imagines its transformation into the work that takes the name of “Company,” Prof. Formica argues.

Jenny Lind Lemaco, a leading role model for women researchers, will emphasise the leading image of female entrepreneurs, founders in start-ups and spin-offs. She also plans to address “how entrepreneurship is not only a male field but also a female environment in which women have demonstrated their leadership roles,” according to event organisers.

The Gender Equality for Mobile Researchers in Sciences along with the Italian women Innovators and Inventors Network, also contributed significantly to the conference.

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RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Researchers from near and far gathered at the CNR Bologna Research Area, Italy, to take part in this highly-praised [MCAA event](#). The chair of the event, [Giovanna Avellis](#), Italian Women Innovators and Inventors Network President and member of the MCAA [Gender Equality and Diversity for Mobile Researchers' in Science working group](#), tells us more about it.

The heart of the workshop was to encourage fellow researchers explore the interlinks among research, innovation and entrepreneurship. Ad-

ditionally, "it looked at the particular area of entrepreneurship for MCAA alumni and their future choices of career," explains Giovanna Avellis.

This highlighted the fact that researchers do not have to restrict themselves to the academic environment. Instead they should broaden their horizons and investigate the possibility of establishing a start-up, spin-off or a small medium enterprise.

THE WORKSHOP

The event commenced with a welcome address given by the president of the CNR Bologna Research Area, Roberto Zamboni. "He was extremely proud of the fact that the MCAA organised and was represented at the event," reports Avellis, who adds "Carla Ferreri, senior researcher of CNR, pointed out that this can be seen as the first of a series of initiatives called 'Appointment with Innovation' to be held annually at the CNR Bologna Research Area."

Following this, participants heard first-hand experiences from researchers who have founded their own start-ups.

Natalia Balcazar from the MCAA Gender Equality and Diversity for Mobile Researchers in Science working group, and CEO of the



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European Environmental Project Management and Skills Route start-ups talked about the progression of her career. She presented 'Experiences from a female Spanish entrepreneur in Germany', where she emphasised that "if you decide to develop a business, evolution and innovation go hand-in-hand," notes Avellis. She further stressed the need for research and entrepreneurship, highlighting the differences between the two. She also provided participants with an insightful dos and don'ts list for start-ups.

Carlo Antonini, from the MCAA Italy Chapter, the Bridging Science and Business working group and manager and scientific advisor of APITECH – an Italian innovative start-up – suggested that participants 'use complexity to solve complex problems'.

"Participants enjoyed listening to his experiences, the objectives and mission of his start-up," adds Avellis.

Carla Ferreri, who is co-founder and scientific advisor of the spin-off LIPINUTRAGEN, talked about innovation and entrepreneurship in health and biotechnology sectors. After which she presented her holistic view of membrane for health in a personalised approach for prevention and diseases. "It was here she illustrated the development of her spin-off company, starting from market preparation and scientific background to pre-launch product development, launch and post-launch product development," says Avellis.

Giliana Gavoli, entrepreneur from Studio Gavoli, Modena Italy, high-

lighted her experiences of shifting between tradition and innovation. "She suggested that entrepreneurs should have great passion, a belief in their ideas, work hard and work as a team," outlines Avellis. She also talked about the difficulties entrepreneurs face when managing human relationships and raised the issue of work-life balance.

Jessica Morelli, photographer, from Intraprese Fotografiche – a commercial and industrial photography studio – emphasised the concept of open innovation and the importance of networking. Avellis adds that, "she further highlighted that schools and universities must teach curiosity and creative approaches."

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

The keynote speaker Professor Piero Formica talked about 'Research, Innovation, Entrepreneurialism and Business'. "His talk aimed to highlight the difference between Entrepreneurship and Entrepreneurialism," explains Avellis.

His presentation was well-received, in particular his five lessons on entrepreneurship. Avellis adds, "one of the key lessons participants learnt from his speech was that research is the act of exploration that starts escaping the knowledge map drawn from past discoveries and received by researchers who are preparing to change it. Also, entrepreneurialism is the act of Innovation after Research. But not only that, since innovation is not confined within the fence of science and technology. Equally important is the social innovation descending from the cultural roots and from

the institutional framework which, to varying degrees, favours or discourages entrepreneurialism.

"Overall the event was highly-successful and went very smoothly. Participants enjoyed and played a very active role in the workshop learning more about research, innovation and entrepreneurship," concludes Avellis.

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CULTIVATING THE SKILLS OF ACADEMICS DISPLACED BY CONFLICT

A documentary film that portrays the journeys of academic refugees forced to leave their native countries to continue their lives and academic careers abroad was screened at the 6th MCAA General Assembly & Annual Conference. One of the scientists featured in the film, [Science in Exile](#), shared his experience.



Due to political instability and war conflicts, many bright young minds have had to flee their native countries and settle in Europe. Access to higher education is one of the many challenges these refugees face.

To address this phenomenon, the 'Refugees and Higher Education – What can you do to support academic refugees to enter academia and the labour market?' session at the MCAA General Assembly & Annual Conference in February 2019 presented ideas on how to support initiatives for refugee researchers.

The focus was mainly on integration through education and mentoring programmes aimed at guiding them in the job market and civil society.

The session was organised and moderated by Andreina Laera, an MCCA member who leads the Policy Working Group's Refugees and Higher Education task force. She coordinates activities to increase awareness of existing best practices in integrating refugee scholars into higher education institutions in Europe.

The documentary explored how conflict in Syria, Yemen and Iraq threatened the lives of two male and two female researchers and forced them to interrupt their work and escape their homelands.

Zaid Alhajjaj, one of the four scientists featured in the film, attended the session. He completed his undergraduate degree in Mosul before fleeing Iraq. He is a PhD student in pharmaceutical biotechnology at Martin Luther University of Halle-Wittenberg with a DAAD scholarship provided by the Ger-

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man Academic Exchange Service. Alhajjaj is working on finding an easier way to produce therapeutic proteins that will provide medicines for very complicated diseases. Ultimately, the aim is to produce cheaper medicines for these diseases. Alhajjaj explained that the community of academic refugees faces the biggest challenge of integration.

Nuria Diez Guardia, a Policy Officer working at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Migration and Home Affairs, and Eleni Andrianopulu, coordinator of the EU-funded BRIDGE and BRiDG11 projects and head of the Welcome Centre at Bielefeld University, presented their perspectives. Diez Guardia said it's not only an issue of giving possibilities or access to education, but also supporting people so they can succeed and progress. Commenting on the docu-

mentary, Andrianopulu noted: "The movie is an opener, hope, but also a warning for me."

A Q&A followed the screening. Diez Guardia discussed proposals to restructure available funds for integration and inclusion at EU level, and the need to build synergies between various projects. Alhajjaj explained that integration policy needs to be systematic in order to be strengthened, and not based on individual efforts. He stressed the need for a united policy in Europe for integrating refugees.

Andrianopulu discussed the academic community's role in dealing with the rise of xenophobia. "For xenophobia and right wing populism all over the world, you need to find the answers and the answer is the higher education system itself, it's research, so the more inclusive

and diverse you have managed to build and protect your institution, the better you can provide solutions for your societies."

At the end of the session, Andrianopulu presented the aims of the two BRIDGE projects and proposed MCAA members to get involved in the projects by mentoring academic refugees during their research career paths. BRIDGE supports the long-term careers of highly skilled refugee researchers and their integration into the labour markets of the EU member states and associated countries.

The next MCAA General Assembly will host a new session about the integration of academic refugees in higher education. It will involve different stakeholders and invite academic refugees to attend.



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The MCAA Newsletter is the main communication channel for and about the MCAA community. It provides information about the activities of our national chapters and working groups, as well as events, projects and partners.

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Any request concerning the newsletter, including suggestions about new topics and articles, should be sent to news@mariecuriealumni.eu.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SUBMISSION

We welcome articles on any activity related to MCAA, local chapters, initiatives, events and so forth.

We especially welcome articles on MSCA projects, where one can either provide a general overview of a project or present initial/mid/final results.

Articles should be max 750 words, written in a clear, lay language, and possibly provide one or two images (copyright-free and high definition).

Articles should be sent to news@mariecuriealumni.eu.

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