



April 2017

NEWSLETTER



Matt Jaskulski (Fot. Matt, Foto-modelos.es.)

If you missed the MCAA General Assembly and conference, don't worry! [Calum MacKichan](#), Chair of the Communication Working Group, sums up the main points as well as his impressions of this annual event.

Ms Sophie Beernaerts, Head of Unit; DG Education and Culture, made a landmark keynote speech at the MCAA General Assembly. You can read a summary of the speech in this issue!

[page 06](#)

Fundraising Pilot Project: crowdfunding and self-publishing "My Super Science Heroes". This exciting new picture book series that depicts science as it really is: an epic adventure complete with heroes, villains, and amazing super powers. We need volunteers to help during the crowdfunding to promote the campaign.

[page 13](#)

CONTENTS

Event 01
General Assembly
[page 02](#)

News from
Working Groups 02
[page 13](#)

Top tips for
researchers 01
[page 20](#)

Event 02
General Assembly
[page 04](#)

News from the
Chapters 01
[page 14](#)

Top tips for
researchers 02
[page 24](#)

Keynote Speech
[page 06](#)

News from the
Chapters 02
[page 15](#)

Research
[page 26](#)

Interview
[page 10](#)

News from the
Chapters 03
[page 17](#)

News from
Working Groups 01
[page 12](#)

News from the
Chapters 04
[page 18](#)

EVENT

SPECIAL COVERAGE MCAA GENERAL ASSEMBLY MCAA GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND CONFERENCE: WHAT HAPPENED?

If you missed the MCAA General Assembly and conference, don't worry! [Calum MacKichan](#), Chair of the Communication Working Group, sums up the main points as well as his impressions of this annual event.

Matt Jaskulski (Fot. Matt, Foto-modelos.es.)



On 24 and 25 March the MCAA General Assembly and Conference in collaboration with the MCAA Spain/Portugal Chapter met in the beautiful Spanish university town of Salamanca, bringing together Members from across the world.

In a keynote speech entitled "Protecting Freedom in Science", Sophie Beernaerts, Head of the European Commission Unit responsible for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions encouraged members to become involved in policy making, "during a time in which the future of Europe is really at stake". She

called for scientists to be fully engaged in the political process as active citizens rather than just being consulted as experts. "In the 20th century we worked with our brains, in the 21st maybe we have to use our hearts and empathy". In a call to social scientists, she called for a new kind of innovation, within democracy itself, to help shape the #FutureofEurope.

During the General Assembly discussions focused on all aspects of life in the association. Parallel sessions took place for each of the working groups, as well sessions

on how to become more engaged in the association's activities. The lunch and coffee breaks provided time for new ideas and the forging of new friendships, while many potential projects for the future were debated.

The conference discussed a wide variety of topics relevant to MCAA Members, tackling issues such as pensions for mobile researchers, taking science to business, communication skills, mentoring and networking.

During a panel discussion, Margaux Kersschot of Adoc Talent Management (and former president of Eurodoc), asked a rhetorical question that almost all MCAA Members can relate to: "Is researcher mobility a good thing?" Her answer? It's up to you! Mobility means working hard to make the most of opportunities and maintaining your network in your home country, while establishing new connections during your international experience.

If networking is a key requirement then the evening dinner in a beautiful room at the Alameda Palace Hotel provided the perfect

EVENT



Did you know that the MCAA Web Portal now includes a [jobs board](#)? We encourage our members to post job opportunities (please log in to the web portal first). The jobs postings can also be viewed by non-members and we will promote the board widely throughout MCAA social media in the next months.

MCAA is particularly interested in hosting Expressions of Interest for the forthcoming [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Individual Fellowship Call](#). We have very many members, who are interested in applying for an Individual Fellowship. We have many members who are making career in academia, who would love to supervise an individual fellow. Through this jobs board, we can contribute to building very effective and practical networks within MCAA.

opportunity. Diners were entertained by a superb Science Slam expertly hosted by Yoran Belden-grün. MCAA Members Constantina Theofanopoulou, Dominika Bijos, Valerie Bentivegna and Elizabeth Evenden-Kenyon told stories, anecdotes and in one case sang songs, about their research and lives as scientists.

The conference closed with an [award ceremony](#) during which Gozde Unal, Associate Professor in medical imaging at the Istanbul Technical University received the Career Award. Giovanna Avellis was presented with the Outstanding Contributor award

for her work leading the Gender Equality for Mobile Researchers in Science (GEMS) Working Group. Read more about their achievements on the [MCAA website](#).

You can find recordings of the assembly sessions [here](#) and the conference sessions [here](#). The conference hashtag was well-used and a summary of the social media activity by Dagmar Riedel can be found [here](#). Many photos by MCAA member Matt Jaskulski have also been uploaded onto the [MCAA Facebook](#) page.

Huge credit goes to local organis-

er Luis Sanz Andreu and the team from the University of Salamanca, and we all look forward to the 2018 edition which will be held in Leuven, Belgium.

SPONSORS

- [Jobs.ac.uk](#)
Gold Sponsor
- [Epigeum](#)
Silver Sponsor
- [DAAD](#)
Basic Sponsor

EVENT

SPECIAL COVERAGE MCAA GENERAL ASSEMBLY MCAA AWARDS 2016 - AND THE WINNERS ARE...

Each year the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) highlights and rewards significant actions and activities undertaken by its members. Here we unveil the lucky 2016 winners.

Matt Jaskulski (Fot. Matt, Foto-modelos.es.)



CAREER AWARD: GOZDE UNAL

Gozde is an engineer and Associate Professor in medical imaging at the Istanbul Technical University in Turkey. Her research combines computer vision and medical imaging techniques. She uses mathematical and physical methods to address clinical problems.

She has led a variety of research projects and actively collaborates with hospitals and medical practitioners.

In 2010, she was awarded the L'Oréal Turkey Young Women Scientist Award.

She is a keen promoter of women in science and also serves as an inspirational role model for the next generation of scientists by taking Technologically Enhanced Active Learning techniques into classrooms.

What are the selection criteria?

- Excellence of results / research work
- Awards / prizes gained in recognition of research activities

- Outreach and impact of research activities

OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTOR: GIOVANNA AVELLIS

Giovanna is researching mobile learning at INNOVAPUGLIA SPA in Italy and also leads the MCAA Gender Equality for Mobile Researchers in Science (GEMS) Working Group.

She is very active in promoting gender equality in science and has worked for the benefit of the Marie Curie community. Her work has great visibility at an international level, lending high impact to her community outreach work.

The Award Committee particularly appreciated her commitment to gender issues and the effectiveness of her work.

What are the selection criteria?

- Value and impact of contribution to the Marie Curie community
- Effectiveness of outreach activities for the Marie Curie community
- Engagement and commitment to the MCAA

EVENT

SPECIAL HIGHLIGHT FOR OUTSTANDING SOCIETAL IMPACT: NEIL HOWARD

Neil is a post-doctoral researcher in international development at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. He is a young researcher but his work has already had an impact.

He established the 'Beyond Trafficking and Slavery' (BTS) platform to bring together academics, policy makers and civil society organisations in order to advance understanding of the structural, political, economic and social root causes of exploitation, vulnerability and forced labour. The platform attracts very high levels of attention and has enabled public debate with large institutional actors, including Human Rights Watch, the International Labour Organisation, and the UK's Anti-Slavery Commissioner. BTS has attracted significant funding from the Ford Foundation and Neil himself has also been a recipient of numerous awards and grants in recognition of his work.

The Award Committee wishes to highlight and acknowledge the values represented by Neil's work and would like to commend him for the outstandingly high societal impact of his work at such an early stage in his career.

HONORARY RECOGNITION: DARIO PELLIZZON

Dario is head of the Research Office at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Italy. He was awarded for

his "outstanding contribution for the development and growth of the Association".

His award proves that research support services play a crucial role in successful career development as well as the creation of a positive and fruitful research environment.

Thanks to his commitment and the work of his team Ca' Foscari University has been leading Italian universities in terms of MC Individual Fellowships awarded over the last three years. Furthermore, Ca' Foscari is now the university with the highest number of active IF projects in Italy and its outstanding young researchers' community is continuously growing.

The Award Committee wishes to highlight and acknowledge the support that Dario Pellizzon, the Head of the Research Office at Ca' Foscari University, gave to the 2016MCAA General Assembly and Annual Conference. In addition, he contributed a well-received talk on researcher career development to the MCAA's Career Seminar at EMBL Heidelberg.

Dario was always open to collaborating with the MCAA and advised many of his colleagues in the in-

ternational research community to work with the MCAA as well. His work supporting the career development and mentoring programme for MSCA Fellows at Ca' Foscari University should serve as a model for many other host institutions. For these reasons the MCAA awarded Honorary Membership of the Association to Dario Pellizzon.

We wish them a lot of success in their respective careers!

SELECTION PROCEDURE

The selection of the 2016 winners was carried out by an Award Committee comprising seven independent personalities:

- Anett Kiss, Chair of the MCAA Award Working Group;
- Apiyo Okwiri, President of the Erasmus Mundus Association;
- Alexandra Cuffel, Ruhr-Universität Bochum;
- Salome Cissal de Ugarte, Fullbright Alumni Network – Belgium;
- Juan Javier Rivera, Anthropologist, MC Alumni & Alexandre Von Humboldt Fellow;
- Simone Linz, Lecturer in the Department of Computer Science at the University of Auckland;
- Dr Natalia Beloff, Senior Lecturer in Software Engineering, University of Sussex.



Matt Jaskulski (Fot. Matt, Foto-modelos.es.)

KEYNOTE SPEECH

SPECIAL COVERAGE MCAA GENERAL ASSEMBLY THE ROLE OF SCIENTISTS AND RESEARCHERS IN SOCIETY



A summary of the Keynote address given by Sophie Beernaerts; Head of Unit; DG Education and Culture; European Commission, Salamanca; Spain in March 2017 at the 3rd AGM of the Marie Curie Alumni Association¹.

You as scientists are the gatekeepers to Science; and must strive to engender the same level of trust with society at large as say a physician or a judge. Science is at the origin of all technological progress, insofar as that is a key enabling cause of what we understand as social 'progress'.

Additionally (and increasingly these days) the perception of science and the expectation from many of our fellow citizens is that it should be the producer of truths. That is a huge responsibility. So science today has been given a great portion of the political and moral responsibility of exposing falsehoods, and offering truths and certainties in place of fakes.

WHY IS KNOWLEDGE, OR TRUTH, SO IMPORTANT?

Historically, knowledge was venerated through dissemination during the enlightenment period, after centuries of religious, royal, feudal or imperial authority and dogmatism. This gave rise of ideas of political freedom, emancipation, revolution; in other words, the rise of rationality coincided with the changing the fabric of society and gaining social and political rights, increasing equality and an expanding list of freedoms, developing into a political system of parliamentary democracy based on universal franchise; regular elections, transparency and a clear separation of powers.

The connection between the rise of respect for science and socio-po-

litical emancipation is undeniable. They were concomitant, and they both consciously challenge tradition; they both question the long-established truths and institutions, and they change them.

So scientists are perceived as the truth holders and the truth creators for society. This makes them the centre of attention, of scrutiny and of criticism. Science has become venerated, because nowadays:

- Policy has to be supported by (scientific) evidence and "experts".
- Global and insurmountable problems appear to be solvable thanks to scientific understanding and technological developments: climate change, disease, sustainability for example.
- Future peace and prosperity is an expectation and linked to improvements in economic efficiency, health, communications, new materials, management of natural resources and ecosystems, and so on.

Science fiction has promised for a long time², and since the 1960's computer revolution it seems possible, that peoples' hope for unlimited social and economic prosperity through technological innovation produced by scientific research maybe just around the corner.

¹ Edited by Dr M W Rogers; Hon Member, MCAA who takes all editorial responsibility for errors and omissions

² Sebastian Buckup Head of Programming, World Economic Forum Geneva 1§ June 2016

KEYNOTE SPEECH

THESE ARE HUGE BUT PIVOTAL EXPECTATIONS.

The capacity of various sciences to influence society is not equally distributed among them. Those sciences which express views about how we should live, organise our societies, legislate, and take the big political decisions, appear to be much more influential. The highest public profile today is economics. It plays a prominent role in in our shared lives.

The ideas of economist and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood. Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist. Madmen in authority, who hear voices in the air are distilling their frenzy from some academic scribbler of a few years back.

I. M. KEYNES,
The General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money

All economies have been increasingly using mathematical tools. In such mathematical clothing, it treats the certainty of its truths as natural sciences. But it is not. As J.K. Galbraith observed "*the only function of economic forecasting is to make astrology look respectable*". Yet, when ministers of economy or central bankers speak, their words have an impact: immediate and large, and often self-fulfilling.

But why is economics' record less impressive than that of natural sciences? I think that the reason is that, as a subject of scientific study, society is very complex and very dynamic, even chaotic, reinventing itself all the time and economics is, after all, just a series of indicators of human behaviour. Yet social science as a research area is often allocated magnitudes of funding less than the "hard" sciences. Many do not class Economics as a science even. We do.

Nevertheless, we live by trusting each other; and our elected representatives. This is how it is to live in a society, to be human. We learn to trust because we benefit from scientific expertise all the time. Our trust is frequently unquestioning. But is it good for a society to fully trust all experts? How good is their record? In truth, it is mixed. We need to interpret expertise critically. All the more that we are going through another period of rising "populism", in which 'fake news' and 'alternative truths', are becoming more commonplace and very influential.

WHAT DO, AND WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT FROM SCIENCE TODAY?

- Part of the answer is that **we expect scientific progress**, to lead to a better, longer life, assisted by technical innovation.
- We also **want to better understand our world**, our environment, especially at a time during which taking nature for granted seems very unwise, if not suicidal.
- We **look for greater wisdom** about how to live in a sustainable way.
- We **expect humility**, especially from the social sciences and economics, when they express opinions.
- We want **science to help us distinguish facts from fiction** and lies from truth in the age of "information overflow".
- And most crucially perhaps, we expect scientists to **voice their concerns**.

As Salamanca's Miguel de Unamuno once said "*At times, to be silent is to lie. For silence can be interpreted as acquiescence*".

Science should oppose the simplified messages of the emerging populist extremism by encouraging society to embrace and debate complexity, accept doubt.

WHAT CAN SCIENTISTS DO THEN?

Scientists must be involved as

³ Quote from JK Galbraiths *The Ashes of Capitalism and the Ashes of Communism* (1986) but also attributed to Ezra Solomon, in Psychology Today, March 1984

KEYNOTE SPEECH



active democratic citizens, as they are respected social actors and role models. They cannot do this barricaded inside their areas of specialisation. Scientists today are not consulted as citizens; they are consulted as experts, not about important things but about minutiae in order to give, often unwillingly and unknowingly, sometimes unethically (as in the case of the climate change denials), their support to pre-established political dogma. They must not sell their expertise to any one purpose or to any one employer – public or private.

Technology or pure scientific knowledge has no moral compass. But the Social Sciences can develop a compass from and for society by being engaged with it, by confronting ideas with people who might think differently, and by providing a framework for Society to articulate.

WHERE DOES THE EC, THE MSCA FIT IN?

The MSCA programme is a very special programme, which we are proud of, for the following reasons:

1. Unlike many others, ours is a

bottom-up programme, and this means that we support researchers on the criterion of excellence. Unlike for targeted research, we understand that can't presume research to do; so we take an open approach.

2. We impose a simple rule which is one of the foundational freedoms of the EU, namely, movement of people, researchers in our case. It helps people move and live, breath and raise families in countries other than their original place of residence. Thus they expose themselves and learn from different societies. If there is a possibility in the future of creating a European people, a European identity, those Europeans who live or have lived abroad are naturally expected to lead the way. MSCA researchers have the opportunity to live anywhere in the world and bring their experience back.

3. Our 100,000 fellows engage in research in all areas. Insofar as research produces knowledge and wisdom and truths, especially in the areas of social sciences, we have an interest to know what the science is and how society could benefit from it.

WHAT CAN MCAA MEMBERS DO?

Become engaged in local, regional and national and European policy making and help us, in the European Commission, to shape and implement better policies. Become involved citizens at all levels.

The great problems facing our world today are enormously complex: no one person, discipline, government or even continent, has the resources to solve them alone. Researchers need to connect with other people – and other researchers - to tackle problems with interdisciplinary solutions.

Engage in 'open science'. Make public the knowledge born out of publicly funded research. This may conflict with the interest of the private sector to benefit financially. We believe there is a balance to be found. Open science requires sharing research results and data.

We value and strongly encourage the participation of MSCA fellows in public engagement activities, such as the European Researchers' Night, press articles, presenting themselves

KEYNOTE SPEECH

as models and explaining their research to students from primary and secondary schools or universities in order to develop understanding. Be a role model. Stand up to be heard.

Science is universal – free of gender and race. The MSCA have a strong track record in equal opportunities for all researchers, including those whose careers have been interrupted for any reason. The MSCA have a specific presentation in Arabic and English explaining that the programme is open to all nationalities.

The communicating science prize funded by the Commission is particularly judged on coverage in mainstream media. Professor Shane Bergin, who won the prize in 2014 went on to become one of the authors of the Bratislava Declaration of Young Researchers. In its conclusions on the Declaration, the Council *"Invites early stage researchers to be the ambassadors of the transformations that scientific development brings to society and to actively contribute to the buy in of European citizens to those changes"*.

This is an extract of what happens in the area of our MSCA programme, with its obvious limitations and in recognition that we ALL need to do a lot more.

BACK TO THE EXPERTS

The Athenians revered specialisation, and practical as well as the-

oretical wisdom very much. But inventors of democracy did not like decisions of political character to be made by experts. They assigned specific responsibilities to experts, such as building a temple, leading armies or building ships. But when it came to making political decisions, they did not delegate that crucial role.

What we effectively do today is that we assign this role to people we elect as members of parliament. The views about their wisdom are wide ranging. But as we have witnessed lately with the rise of extremism and populism, this democracy which is now under attack.

In order for it to survive it has to improve and here is the most difficult part of what we call innovation. We need institutional innovation in order to protect democracy and succeed with the project of European Unification. We need *educational innovation* to help create responsible involved citizens. We expect and hope scientists, especially social scientists, will illuminate the path by telling us their views about how society can change and become freer, autonomous, more democratic and unified. They should help to discredit the simplified messages of extremism; they should help their fellow citizens to accept, embrace and live with the complexity of human existence in its various societies.

TODAY, WE ARE AT CROSSROADS, FOR SURE

The president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, has launched a few days ago a consultation about the Future of Europe. I urge you to be active, involved, engaged as scientists, as citizens - and set an example for others to do the same. The MCAA will provide you a platform to do this on their web site.

Europe wants your feedback, your ideas, and your involvement and engagement. Even if the ideas exist, they need to be repeated, explained, challenged and assembled into policy proposals. We need to create a new European Demos, which after after 60 years of effort needs to be reinvented to be future proof. This need is very urgent if not overdue.

I will finish my speech on a last Marie Curie quote *"... each of us must work for his own improvement, and at the same time share a general responsibility for all humanity, our particular duty being to aid those to whom we think we can be most useful."*⁴

BE A HERO FOR A BETTER WORLD

Thank you for your invitation and opportunity to address you.

⁴ Autobiographical notes by Marie Curie (1923), Editions Musée Curie/Institut Curie 2017

INTERVIEW

SPECIAL COVERAGE MCAA GENERAL ASSEMBLY MCAA AWARDS: AN INTERVIEW WITH DARIO PELLIZZON

Dario Pellizzon was awarded "MCAA Honorary Recognition" at the MCAA General Assembly in Salamanca. We met him to find out more about his involvement in promoting the MCAA.

1. Dario, you were awarded "MCAA Honorary Recognition", what does this recognition mean to you?

First of all, let me thank you all and tell that I'm really proud to be part of this family. This award means a lot to me: it is the recognition of our professional and personal commitment to making talents emerge and to supporting promising researchers in their career development. And, beyond words, it was a priceless thrill!

I said "our commitment" because the Award is shared with our Marie Skłodowska-Curie support team:

Claudia Bertocchi, Silvia Zabeo and Fiorella Giacometti (mariecurie@unive.it). This recognition proves that research support services play an increasingly crucial role for researchers' career development and the creation of a fruitful research environment.

2. Could you present the Ca' Foscari University of Venice and your role?

I am the Head of the Research Office at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, located in Italy. Ca' Foscari has an outstanding reputation, nationally and internationally. It is ranked among the top 200 uni-

versities in the QS World University Ranking by subject, and third among state universities in Italy for quality of research.

These achievements are the result of a consistent commitment involving not only our governance, but also all the components of the university.

My work to improve the quality of institutional, national and international research starting, with researchers' careers, is intertwined with the commitment of my team. Let me say once again that this award also goes to the all wonderful

Matt Jaskulski (Fot. Matt, Foto-modelos.es.)



INTERVIEW

people I work with and to our daily and constant engagement at the research support offices.

3. *What is the relationship between Ca' Foscari University and MSCA Fellows?*

It's a mutually beneficial relationship, and I'll explain why.

When I started my job as junior research officer, together with my friend and colleague Davide Buldrini, we quickly realised the potential of Marie Curie Actions to make both researchers and institutions competitive internationally.

Since I became Head of office, in Ca' Foscari University of Venice we have focused on providing high-quality support to potential applicants, which has established a win-win relationship and created a very active community of international researchers.

For three years now we are the leading university in Italy for Individual Fellowships awarded, and that means a lot. For researchers, Ca' Foscari has become an international reference point and now we receive applications from all over the world.

For us, the experience acquired and the energy brought by MC Fellows brings continuous improvements, making our university a more welcoming and positive research environment. Within the human resources strategy for researchers HRS4R action plan we have implemented a number of benefits for MC Fellows and post-doc researchers. In general, we are

improving a lot as professionals.

And it's a never-ending story, as I told you during the award ceremony!

4. *You were involved in the preparation of the MCAA General Assembly in Venice and you attended the 2017 GA in Salamanca. What were your impressions of both events?*

Being part of these events is always a great pleasure. I had the honour of participating in a dual capacity: in Venice, in 2016, I provided support in organising the event and I was able to appreciate the mechanisms and synergies of this fantastic group of people from the inside. In 2017, in Salamanca, I attended as an Honorary Member and awardee, with a different perspective. In both cases, anyway, I felt part of a great family connected by strong and shared values, and I was impressed by the energy of the people who are part of this group, which is growing in importance, numbers and ideas year by year.

5. *What kind of collaboration do you plan to establish with the MCAA?*

My goal is to strengthen an already active relationship: on 29 March, we launched the Marie Curie Alumni Association – Venice Local Organisation. This group includes Marie Curie Fellows at Ca' Foscari, and Ca' Foscari researchers who are carrying out a MC project at other host institutions in Europe.

Consolidating a positive research environment includes creating opportunities to meet and exchange

between promising young researchers. The Venice Local Organisation aims to enable MC Fellows to meet, discuss and cooperate, actively exchange information and propose initiatives for the benefit not only of MC Fellows themselves, but also of all post-doc researchers working at our University.

The Venice Local Organisation has obtained official approval from the Marie Curie Alumni Association: it is an endorsement in line with our will to strengthen our synergies.

6. *What would you like to tell the next Honorary Recognition recipient?*

I am sure that the next recipient will be awarded for his or her outstanding commitment to the development of researchers' careers and support to the MCAA.

My wish is to be able to collaborate with her or him to create a welcoming research environment, it is essential that support services are high-standard and exchange good practices too.

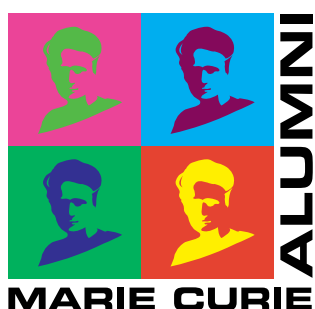
My only advice is to keep on working: ours is a mission that never ends, and that enriches you more and more every day.

And last but not least be prepared: being invited to take the MCAA stage, in front of 200+ researchers from all over the world and in front of the European Commission representatives really rocks!

DARIO PELLIZZON

NEWS FROM WORKING GROUPS

POLICY WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES



Policy Working Group

The Policy Working Group is dynamic and actively looking for enthusiastic and productive volunteers to join its ongoing projects:

- Fundraising Pilot Project: crowdfunding and self-publishing “My Super Science Heroes”. This exciting new picture book series depicts science as it really is: an epic adventure complete with heroes, villains, and amazing super powers. We need volunteers to help during the crowdfunding to promote the campaign. In order for the project to be successful, we need to spread the word as much as possible, so please share it with all your colleagues! [Register to get updates now!](#)
- Webinar series with Euroscientist: we are organising a series of four science policy webinars with Dr Michele Catanzaro as moderator. Our first webinar on “what can scholars do about the refugee crisis?” has already been watched 475 times on YouTube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-vzG-KqXNjM>). Our next webinar will take place in May. Stay tuned!
- Preparation of ESOF session proposals: we are preparing proposals to submit to ESOF 2018 on open science, research integrity and science communication. If you have experience in these subjects or are part of a network we could partner with, please get in touch.

will have statistics and feedback soon. If it is deemed successful, we may need a volunteer to run the next series of licences.



- Position papers: we are preparing MCAA position papers to publish in relevant media addressing the position of researchers in Europe.

NEWS FROM WORKING GROUPS

POLICY WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES

FUNDRAISING PILOT

We are working hard to create a series of storybooks bringing science superheroes to curious young minds!

My Super Science Heroes is an exciting new picture book series that depicts science as it really is: an epic adventure complete with heroes, villains and amazing super powers.

The heroine of our first book is two-time Noble Laureate Marie Curie. Our villain is the nefarious Mr. O, an anti-hero whose primary objective is Opposition. Fortunately, Marie Curie has a super power that allows her to confront her nemesis and ultimately defeat him. That super power is persistence, a fun-



damental trait of sound scientific inquiry.

Written and illustrated as a dynamic superhero story, this book introduces children to important scientists and their key accomplishments in a fun and engaging way. In addition, by focusing on key traits innate to us all (persistence, curiosity, creativity, etc) and their role in the heroes' success, we hope to show that great scientific achievement is not limited to a select group of masterminds, but rather is within the reach of anyone.

One need not be a swashbuckling, Kung Fu fighting, cape-wearing champion (although some heroes do have a penchant for lab coats)

to be extraordinary. One need only nurture the super powers inherent in all of us.

We will be announcing the fundraising campaign soon. If you can't wait (and you shouldn't), [join our VIP list](#) and be the first to know when we launch!

MICAELA CRESPO
QUESADA

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

MCAA AFRICAN CHAPTER (AMCA): CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

Raelize du Plooy has been the Chair of the African Chapter since 2014. She filled us in on the activities she has in mind for the Chapter.

The African Chapter was established towards the end of 2014 and currently has around 60 Members from all across Africa. Our goal is to provide a platform to MCAA members who are based in Africa, hail from Africa, or are interested in networking, sharing research and collaborating.

We know that research in Africa faces lots of challenges, and yet Africa has so much to offer in terms of research opportunities that cannot be found anywhere else – the EU is therefore on a major drive towards collaborative research in Africa. This is particularly the case for research on sustainability, climate change, food security, transport networks and many other areas.

As African Marie Curie Alumni we have all had fantastic exposure through our Fellowships to collaboration with European institutions and have become part of a distin-

guished community. We are therefore in a unique position to nurture these relationships so that they are of benefit in the African context. AMCA is meant as a place where we can share our experiences and ideas, discuss our challenges and support one another.

As Chair I have identified a couple of goals on which I would like to focus for the coming year:

Firstly, I think it is very important that we increase awareness of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions among researchers in Africa (especially Early Stage Researchers). There are many African researchers who are not aware of the MSCA's existence, or do not realise that researchers from outside of Europe can apply.

Secondly, I would also like to create more awareness of the MCAA and AMCA as there are many African MCA Fellows out there that have not yet joined. The more Members we have, the more connections we have to explore opportunities and identify possibilities for collaboration!

Although we are spread over a very large geographical area, making meeting in person very difficult,

I am keen to explore organising our first event or possibly two (one in Northern Africa and one in Southern Africa) since the inception of the Chapter. I would also like to increase engagement on our social media platforms, Facebook and LinkedIn.

AMCA has come a long way since its start and as we grow, we are feeling our way as to where we would like to go. I am sure we will continue to go from strength to strength!



AMCA Page



AMCA group



RAELIZE DU PLOOY
AMCA CHAIR

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

AUSTRIAN CHAPTER (MCA³C) – WHAT'S NEXT?



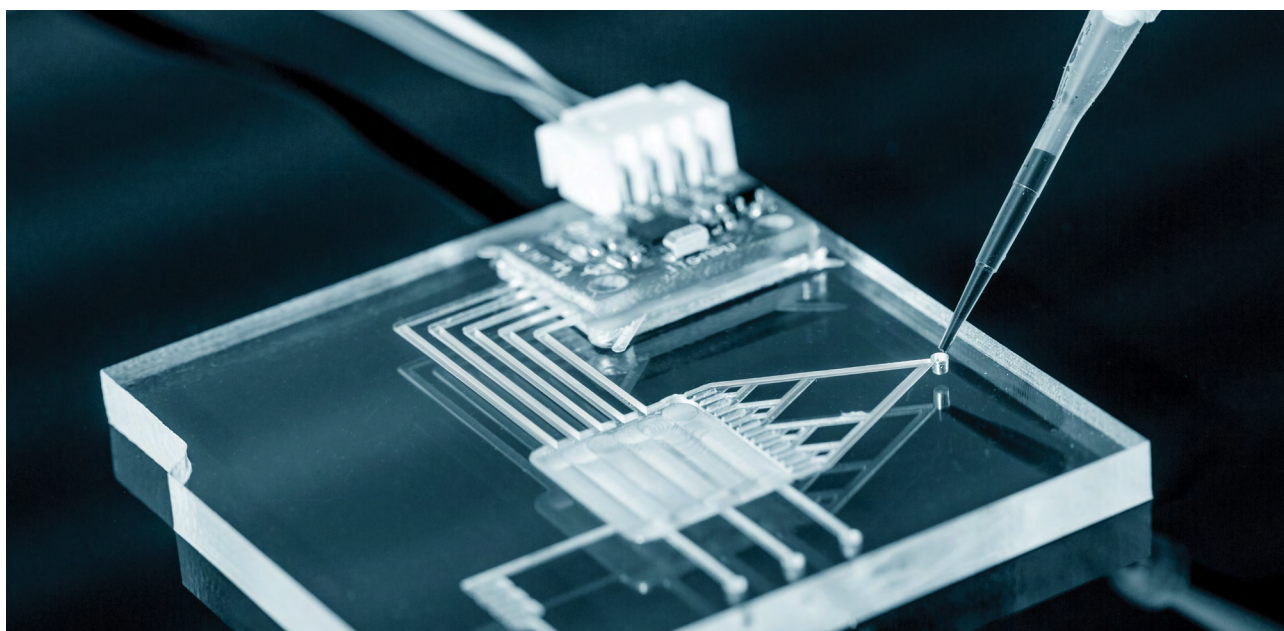
Just for you, [Moostafa Moonir Shawray](#) (Chair of the Austrian Chapter) unveils here the Chapter's strategy for the coming months.

The MCAA Austrian Chapter (MCA³C) has the ambition to set the standard that other Chapters will then follow. The four-Member MCA³C Board, comprised of a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Ex-Chair serving as advisor, is working hard to offer a range of training and career development opportunities to its Members, as well as to foster networking among Members for both research and professional collaboration.

We already have a workshop on presentation skills planned for late spring, as well as a career development event for autumn. In addition to our biannual Chapter meetings in spring and autumn, we will be organising more informal social events in various cities throughout the year.

To improve communication amongst MCA³C Members and to reach a wider audience, we will produce a

biannual newsletter, regularly update our Facebook and LinkedIn accounts with Member-relevant information, and announce Chapter events through social media, and through our contacts at individual universities as well as the MSCA National Contact Point. Our communications strategy aims to improve Member engagement, reaching MSCA scholars who are not yet Members, and to raise the profile of MCA³C and MCAA within the re-



NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

search community at large.

MCA3C already has plans to organise career fair events for MCAA Members in 2018. MCA³C is also researching a bid to host the MCAA GA 2019 in Austria. Finally, MCA³C is looking for ways to attract local sponsors for events. In doing so, we hope to address the concerns of sponsors that MCA³C be a recognised entity in Austria, and not just

a sub-group of the Belgium-based MCAA. This issue may arise for other MCAA Chapters, and we hope to share our expertise with the community on this matter.

The MCA³C Board would like to thank the current MCAA executive committee, Board and contractor for their continued support and encouragement. Finally, we invite all MCAA Members to become more active in

their local Chapters. The success and growth of MCAA Chapters depends on Member involvement at every level!

CURRENT MCA³C BOARD



CHAIR
MOSTAFA MOONIR
SHAWRAV



VICE-CHAIR
MOHAMMAD
REZEAI



SECRETARY
CLARA
GOMES

ADVISOR
MATTHEW
DIFRANCO

MCA³C - Marie Curie Alumni Association Austrian Chapter
austria.Chapter@mariecuriealumni.eu

MCAA Homepage
<https://www.mariecuriealumni.eu/groups/mca3c>

MCA³C Linkedin
<https://www.linkedin.com/groups/8191641>

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

MCAA POLISH CHAPTER - PLANS AND STRATEGY



MCAA Poland



The Polish Chapter is up and running! Its Chair, [Maria Górna](#), has taken the reins and designed a strategy for the upcoming months.



The MCAA's newly formed Polish Chapter was created to enhance networking, to provide training and support to the Fellows in Poland, and to serve as a platform for Fellows' outreach activities.

The vision for the Chapter was developed at the first informal meeting in April 2016 ("MCAA arrives in Poland"), and the Chapter gained an official status at the end of 2016.

We held our kick-off meeting in Warsaw on 6 March 2017, gathering over 20 participants. The event was a half-day symposium that included excellent scientific talks from our Chapter Members, some explanations of EU funding from National Contact Point (NCP) representatives, a discussion of planned chapter actions, and a social gathering. At the meeting, we appointed Members responsible for communications, writing and finances. Since then, we have established an e-mail system, a Facebook page for our community, a LinkedIn group and a draft of a Chapter website.

We intend to generate awareness of the MCAA and the Polish Chapter through participation in conferences and events that promote science. One such event was The European Forum of Young Innovators 2016, where one of the founder Members represented the Chapter in discussions on the role of young innovators over the next decade. We support the National Contact Point, which in October 2017 will hold an ERA Career Day in five different Polish cities; Chapter Members will act as MSCA and science ambassadors. We are also collaborating with the Polish Chemical Society in the Poland-wide celebrations to mark Maria Skłodowska-Curie's 150th birthday. This includes active participation in the "Medicine, Science, Culture" conference in Warsaw on 6-9 November 2017 and joint representation at open events like the Baltic Science Festival.

In order to increase visibility of the MCAA and our Fellows we aim to subsidise keynote appearances of Members invited to speak at topical conferences, provided the event programme mentions a "MCAA Keynote Speaker".

In addition to public outreach, some of the budget has been earmarked for organising soft-skills training for our Fellows. In particular we'd like to enable Chapter Members to participate in workshops held in English at the host institutions of other MCAA Members and MSCA-funded networks. We also plan to provide support to incoming Fellows through a buddy programme, whereby a volunteer MCAA Member will help an incoming Fellow with mobility and orientation, especially offering practical guidance on Poland-specific administrative obligations. Finally, on our future website we hope to have a database of (consenting) Chapter Members' skills and competences, which could encourage industry or other organisations to invite Members to act as scientific advisors.

All interested MCAA Members are cordially invited to engage in and propose further Chapter activities. We will also hold regular local networking events, the first of which is in Warsaw on 21 April. We hope to see you there!

NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

UK CHAPTER LAUNCH



The first general meeting of the UK Chapter took place on 4 March and was organised by its Chair, [Stefan Bauer](#). We met him to find out more about the outcomes and his impressions.

1. Stefan, you're the Chair of the MCAA UK Chapter and you organised its first general meeting on 4 March at University College London. Could you tell us about the Chapter in the current "Brexit context"?

Members were glad to be able to have a forum where they could share their thoughts and concerns about Brexit; but this was not the only reason for our meeting. It was the first ever UK-wide meeting of MC Fellows. About 80 researchers participated. Some even travelled from abroad to join us (e.g. from Germany and Greece).

2. What was said during the "Strengthening academic connections in Europe" discussion?

This was a presentation by Professor Richard Catlow, Professor of Chemistry at University College London and Foreign Secretary of the Royal Society. Professor Catlow presented statistics regarding international scientific collaborations and underlined that there is strong will by both UK and Europe-

an scientists to keep collaborating after Brexit.

3. What about the "Beyond Brexit: international collaboration and communication in science and humanities" discussion?

Brian Cahill (MCAA General Chair), Matina Tsalavouta (Head of the Communication Office at Rothamsted Research) and Jane Winters (Professor of Digital Humanities at the School of Advanced Study, University of London) gave examples of their experiences in international collaboration. The general feeling was that the impending Brexit has created much uncertainty for international researchers. A shared awareness of the risks and hopes connected to this question that became manifest during our discussion.

4. What were the conclusions of the working group meetings?

Elodie Chabrol, a Research Associate at University College London, ran a workshop entitled "Training: Impact and Engagement". It start-

ed with an individual introduction of the members in the room. She showed various types of public engagement being implemented: written (such as Twitter and blogs) and oral (such as podcasts, festivals and science cabaret). She also explained why it's good to do it and that if one starts small, it need not be a daunting experience. The



NEWS FROM THE CHAPTERS

last part of the workshop was a list of tips for giving a good presentation, which she demonstrated with examples.

Fran Cardells (Salesforce, London) ran a workshop for PhD students. He pointed out that, as we are living in a PhD first world, researchers here develop most of the skills that will be in high demand by 2020. With an abundance of career opportunities and research projects, it is important that young researchers find their true passion and how it connects with big global challenges. He underlined how marketing your profile and research requires formulating a problem, action and impact.

Michael Browne (Head of the European Research Office, University College London) ran a workshop for Experienced Researchers. He explained the differences between the various ERC grants, and he presented a platform, Crowdhelix, he has helped to develop through

which connections with industry can be made.

Brian Cahill and I led a session entitled "Problems & Fixes", where researchers could share the problems they encountered during their fellowships. One such issue was pension contributions.

5. Who won the Marie Curie Slam? How was the overall atmosphere?

The evening social event took place at the Marlborough Arms in Bloomsbury, a beautiful traditional pub. We enjoyed pub food and a range of ales – yes, a quintessential British experience. A key highlight was the Marie Curie Slam hosted by Liam Shaw, a PhD student at UCL, who tickled the audience's funny bone with his witty and satirical comedy. The slam gave former and current Marie Curie Fellows the opportunity to present their research ideas to a friendly audience in the very casual

setting of the pub. Dominika Bijos was the winner from among six participants. She talked effortlessly about her biomedical research and won a trip to the Science Slam at the MCAA General Assembly in Salamanca. Valerie Benti was the runner-up, she talked – and sang – about cancer cells pushing healthy cells away. Overall, the evening social was a great opportunity for exchange of ideas and for researchers of diverse fields to get to know each other.

6. What did participants learn at the Chapter meeting?

Participants have responded well, indicating that they were glad to have more information on the possible effects of Brexit, as well as imaginative ideas on how to go about communicating research and aiming for good impact. Many have also mentioned that they made connections with other researchers and have exchanged helpful advice.

7. What's next for the UK Chapter?

The UK Chapter hopes to engage in career training and networking events. One idea we are looking into is to invite alumni to talk about their careers and how they benefited from their fellowship. There are a number of high-fliers we would be keen to hear from! Members are welcome to suggest events that might be interesting to them.



TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

I MARRIED A MARIE CURIE FELLOW.. AN INTERVIEW WITH DOMINIK KUZMA

Mobility is very often an inherent part of an active researcher's life. Whereas it is always interesting to move and work in another country, it is not always easy to combine this with family life.

We met Dominik Kuzma, who left his job to follow and support his wife Paula Kuzma, a scientist from the Faculty of Biology of Ljubljana (Slovenia). She was first a Humboldt Fellow in Germany and then a Marie Curie Fellow in Scotland.

Dominik is behind the [blog](#) "Hertourage", where he depicts with humour his family's adventures in both countries. We met him to find out more about how to combine family life and mobility.



1. Dominik, please tell us a little about yourself

For the past three years my greatest focus has been our two kids, Mojca and Ambrož, as we moved from Slovenia to Germany and then from Germany to Scotland, following my wife Paula and her scientific projects. I went from full-time lawyer to full-time dad in a matter of

days and now I am preparing myself to be a full-time lawyer again when we move back home.

2. What about your blog '[hertourage.com](#)' – why did you decide to create it?

When I worked as a lawyer in Slovenia I felt I was at the top of my game. Every day was full of new and demanding things to cope with. Therefore, when we decided to move to advance Paula's career, I felt that I had to find something that would be completely mine – something that would drive me to stay creative and to challenge myself, creatively and intellectually.

The first idea was a blog, which would be a kind of online diary of our life abroad. My family and friends

could read it and it would keep me busy. Paula and I came up with a name that combines the words 'her' and 'entourage' and Hertourage was born. While initially only friends and family read it, now it seems that most of the readers come from countries other than Slovenia. Mostly these are people we met on the way or people who found the information on the blog either interesting or useful. In fact, the most-read blog post is the one about financials and taxes in the UK in connection with the Marie Curie Fellowship.

3. Could you tell us about your wife Paula and her work as a scientist?

I am probably not the best person to explain what she does as a scientist. Maybe it is best if she

TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

explains herself through the blog where she writes about the more mundane things connected to her work at <https://plantventurist.wordpress.com/>.

However, I can tell you about the kind of person Paula is. As you might imagine, the decision to leave our home in Slovenia, the city in which we had lived for more than 30 years, was a hard one. I would never have quit my job, the career that I had been building for more than 10 years, on a whim; but it came down to the question of my career as a lawyer in a public sector against Paula's career as a scientist. I considered the efforts that she had made until then, I noticed her enthusiasm for what she was and is doing in the field of biological science, and soon decided that there was no contest. We needed to do this. First to promote her career as an already established young scientist, which she has proven through her successful projects and several rewards for her work. Second, to allow her to follow her passion, which could lead her to great things. Much greater than I could have achieved in an office at the Ministry of Finance.

There are other things that influenced my decision to support her in whatever she envisioned for us. These other things are maybe harder to explain on paper if you have never met Paula. She is very kind and selfless, hardworking and dedicated to her family and to her career. She is honest to a fault and loyal to all her obligations, which has enabled her to form a large network of international scientists who trust her and love to work with her.



4. *How would you describe the life of a "Marie Curie Fellow's husband"?*

Here in Dundee I am referred to as a kettle boiler. Dundee, where we live currently, has interestingly a long history of men who stayed at home while the women went to work in the jute factories. They stayed at home and kept the kettle warm and the fire burning.

If it wasn't for the generous scholarship of Marie Curie Fellowship, we could never have imagined the life we live now. Raising a family takes a lot of effort and financial input, which would not have been possible without a generous grant. In terms of staying at home with the kids, it sounds dreamier than it really is. It takes a lot of effort to raise kids and look after a household, especially when you are doing it in another country. The one thing that I really struggled with was the ever present desire to have a career. This intensified after the kids went to school here in

Scotland and I found myself home alone, with no real plan. I completely realise that soon I will miss the Dominik with no plan, and with every opportunity to be whatever he wants to be.

Outside of those negative aspects the past three years have been absolutely amazing. As it is with most things, I will not have a completely clear picture of what the past three years have meant to me, until it is over. If I had to emphasise one thing that is best about staying at home, it would be the adventures. In Germany and in Scotland I tried to plan an adventure for almost every day. This has since developed into a sense of a necessity. There is a constant unease in me, in us, an unease that pushes us to go somewhere unless we feel like we are wasting our time. Before Hertou- rage I was completely content with staying at home for the weekends, watching television. Now we don't even own a television. Also, it helps that we are in Scotland. Scotland is the best country to have that unwa-

TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

vering urge to go outside. There is vast countryside where there are scarcely any people, allowing you to really feel the wild nature.

5. *What would you advise to families moving to Germany for career reasons?*

This is an interesting question and I have been doing a lot of thinking about this. I have even finished writing the first draft of a book that gives a lawyer's perspective on living abroad. Therefore, this answer will be in line with what I do – a kind of legal view of relocating a family. What we have learned is that when moving with kids, every family needs to be sure that they have financial and social security. This is my advice to all the brave souls out there who will make the right decision and go for it.

First, organise your formal status in the home country. Especially be careful how you determine your tax residence status to make sure you are not double-taxed. Then take care that you have enough finances to get you from month to month.

Financial planning can represent a big problem for most people. When you see an amount of a scholar-

ship or your pay, it will probably be in gross amount, which means that taxes and social security contributions will be deducted from it. This could mean a 30-40% deduction from the gross amount or even more, depending on the country. If you realise that the net amount will not be sufficient to allow you a normal life, then you need to work around that or rethink your move. The second thing is the social security. We are very lucky to live in an integrated EU, where we are all considered EU citizens and enjoy the same rights as nationals. However, social rights differ from country to country and are also dependent on the status of the employed member of the family. For us that meant that in Germany we had no public social security (pension and health insurance) because Paula's scholarship was not considered employment. Therefore, we had to get private insurance to provide at least the basic health insurance for the kids. Kids get sick, they fall, they bump their heads, they catch germs and so on. In connection with social security there is also the educational aspect of moving to another country. It is important to check where the kids will go to kindergarten or school and if that system is private or public.

Germany offers a lot of safety and security for families in these respects. However, things can be hard if you do not know the language, especially when dealing with formal procedures. Therefore, the third thing I would mention is the need to know the language. Our experience in the provincial Bavarian town of Bayreuth showed us that not everyone knows English or is willing to use it, especially when you are asking for benefits.

6. *...and the same question for families moving to Scotland?*

The above goes for any country you move to. Do not close your eyes and jump while hoping to land somewhere safe. Know your rights and use them.

However, the UK has found itself in a very interesting political position due to the Brexit. I have to therefore emphasise the need to be informed of your rights and how to approach relocation. I expect that in the future things will change for EU citizens living in the UK and not all the changes will mean good developments for the rights that we enjoy right now.

On a more personal note, Scotland



TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

has proven to be a most hospitable place with wonderful people that look at our accents with interest and not suspicion. We have been made to feel very welcome here and it will be very hard to leave this great country and all the people behind.

7. *What are the two most memorable moments from your time abroad?*

There were so many that I could write a novel on this topic. In fact, my blog is the novel. But if I have to single out two things it would be:

- My kids talking fluently in a foreign language at the age of six. When we go somewhere and they speak to Scottish natives, they consider us to be Scottish. That is until their parents get involved in the conversation.

- Walking barefoot from our flat in Bayreuth to get some ice cream in the town centre and then playing in the waterworks. That is one instance when I felt completely care-free and relaxed, no worries interfering, no calculations in the head, just us and the kids with gravel between our toes and ice cream melting with the hot sun over our heads.

8. *What did you learn from living in two different countries?*

We learned how to be a family. Moving away from home can be a very stressful experience, with so many things that could go wrong. However, as soon as you do move, you start finding that in the collective that is the family there is incredible

strength and independence. Family, when removed from the wider family and friends' influence that is present in the home country, quickly becomes a well-functioning unit, where every member has a function. When you start working in that way there are few things that you cannot overcome. We have definitely become stronger and more confident, all of us, since leaving Slovenia.

The second thing would be the realisation that the world is a big and interesting place. The discoveries that we have made in the last three years sometimes give me goose bumps.

Next to these pleasant and empowering things we have also learned that no country is perfect. Like every person, every country has its own problems. The key is to focus on the good things in every country and learn from the bad things. In short, these experiences have definitely opened our eyes and we will never look upon our home country in the same way again.

9. *How do you envisage the future of your family?*

I wish I could. I really wish I could envisage the future of our family. Currently all I hope for is that we settle back home with relative ease and that we'll continue to live our lives with as little difficulty as possible. The experience of the last three years has opened our hearts to the wider world and there are nights, when the kids are in bed and Paula and I talk about the future, when we start playing with ideas of abandoning the plans to go back home and instead continuing the adventure in some other country. While these ideas seem romantic, there is a lot of effort involved in the relocation of a whole family and we feel some desire to settle down for a longer period. That being said, we have already agreed that after the kids finish primary school in Slovenia and if our careers allow this, we will try to have another adventure. What will really happen is anybody's guess.



TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

I BENEFITED FROM AN ERC GRANT – TOP TIPS FROM ANNIKA GUSE

Do you intend to apply for ERC grants? Then keep reading! We had a talk with Annika Guse who shared some tips.

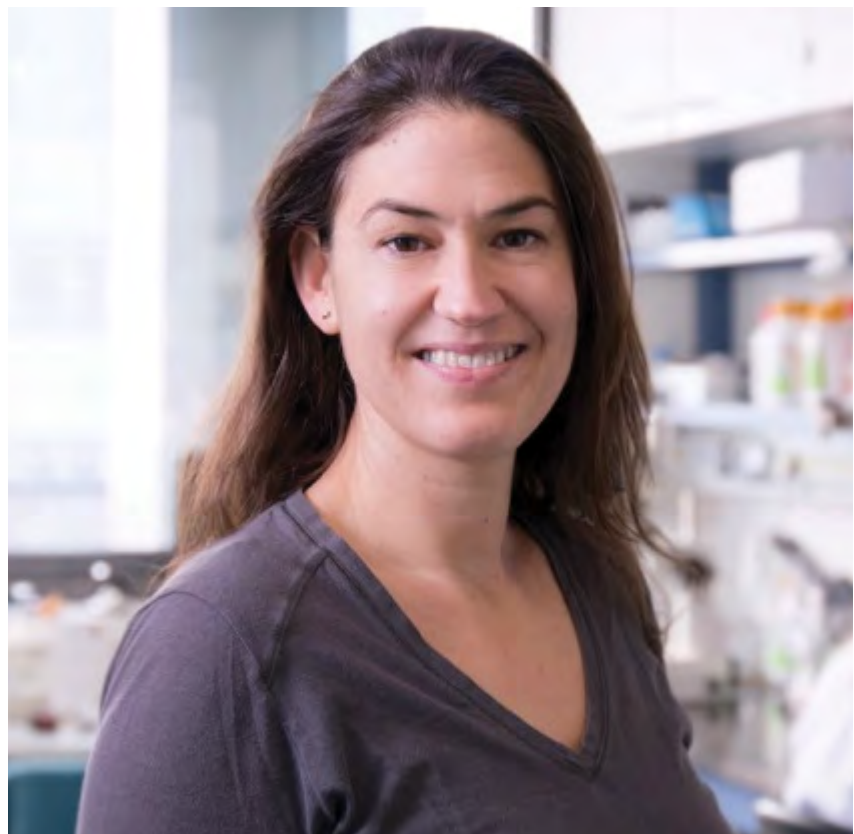
1. *Annika, can you say a few words about yourself?*

I am originally from Germany and studied Biology at the Technical University of Braunschweig.

After that, I switched fields a couple of times before settling on studying host-symbiont interaction in corals using *Aiptasia*, a tropical marine sea anemone, as an emerging model for coral symbiosis in my own lab.

I did my PhD at the IMP in Vienna working on cytokinesis in nematodes (*C. elegans*) and mammalian cell culture systems. A short Postdoc at the Technical University of Braunschweig on recombinant antibody technology followed, before I explored fundamental aspects of chromatin biology using frog extracts (*X. laevis*) as an experimental system at Stanford University in my second, longer postdoc.

In between, I also spent some time in Mexico and Egypt participating for example in coral reef monitoring programmes reflecting my ad-



ditional interest in marine-biology related topics.

2. *Could you say more about your current research activities?*

My lab focuses on establishing and

using the larvae of *Aiptasia* as a model for symbiosis establishment: the acquisition and intracellular integration of photosynthetic dinoflagellates into the larval cells.

This type of symbiosis is ecologically

TOP TIPS FOR RESEARCHERS

very important because the productivity of whole coral reef ecosystems depends on the transfer of photosynthetically fixed nutrients from the symbiont to the coral host. However, corals and their larvae are not very well-suited as laboratory systems and therefore we have developed many important experimental tools for *Aiptasia* and their progeny which, in contrast to corals, can be reared in the lab, allowing us to dissect the molecular mechanisms underlying symbiosis establishment.

Building up on the resources, we are now starting to specifically address open questions such as: how are symbionts recognised by the host? How are key nutrients transferred between partners? And how do symbionts avoid digestion by the host? (which is what typically happens when a foreign cell invades an animal cell).

3. *You obtained a Marie Curie grant, could you tell us more about it?*

I received a Marie Curie Career Integration Grant (CIG) from 2014-2018, this is a programme which I believe has unfortunately been discontinued. My CIG project also focused on aspects of the intracellular coral-algal-symbiosis and was carried out at the Centre of Organismal Studies (COS) at Heidelberg University in Germany, where I and my lab are currently based.

The CIG grant had – and still has – a big impact on me getting my lab up and running because it gave me the flexibility to hire a Postdoc early on and to buy some smaller pieces of equipment – both were critical

for a smooth start.

4. *You also won an ERC grant! Which type of grant did you win and for which project?*

I won an ERC Consolidator grant that also includes money for buying a top-notch laser-scanning-confocal microscope.

My lab will start using the grant in June. Over the next five years we are planning to uncover fundamental aspects of the uptake-mechanisms of symbionts via phagocytosis into host cells, and how symbiont-derived nutrients, using cholesterol and other sterol derivatives as an example, are received and processed for cellular use in the host.

5. *Do you have any tips on submitting a successful ERC application?*

I think there are different ways to succeed and everybody has to find their own.

However, in my case it was crucial to start early enough to allow enough time for thinking about what exactly I would like to propose, and to write, since the ERC applications are very involved.

Another critical point was to get feedback from 2-3 more senior scientists who knew how to write good grant applications. This should be done long before the deadline so that there is enough time to implement any feedback.

Finally, I think it is important to prepare well for the interview. I went through multiple rounds of practice

talks and mock interviews with colleagues and previous ERC grant holders, which helped me to prepare for the stressful interview in Brussels.

6. *How do you envisage your future career?*

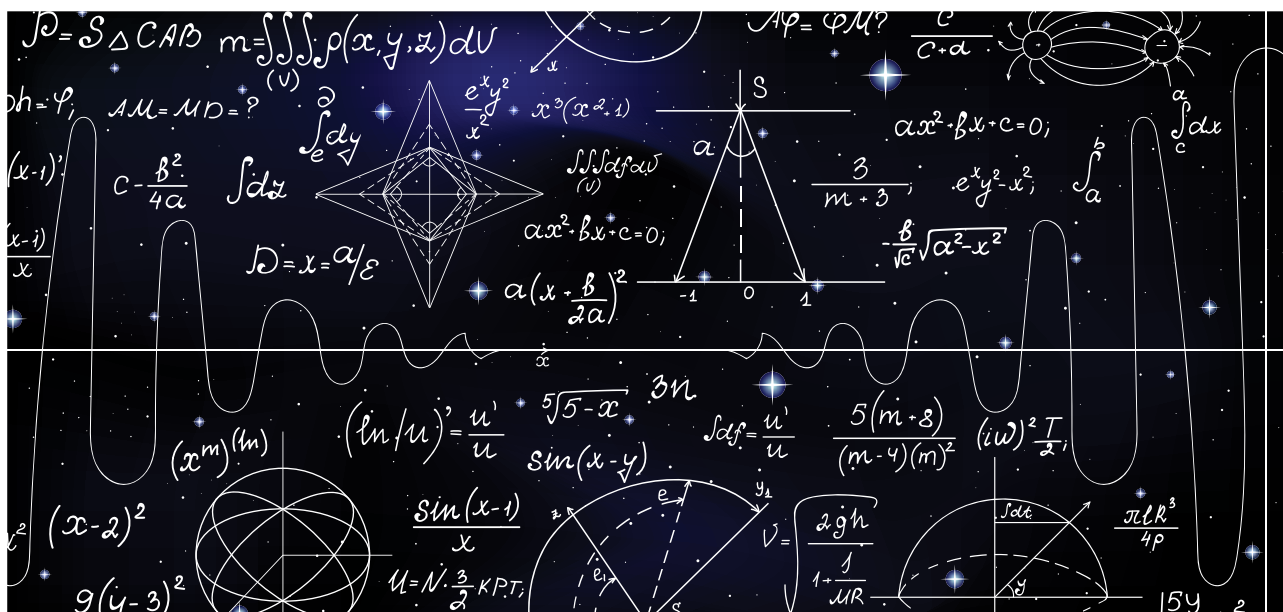
Like many of my peers, I hope to gain a more permanent job at a great institute and to focus on the science and long-term goals.

Apart from this practical aspect, I envision advancing our current limited mechanistic understanding of how these two distinct cells, the algal symbiont and the animal host cell, build this intimate partnership and coordinate their cellular functions. I hope to make more young researchers excited about this upcoming field of cell biology so as to fuel the growing community and speed up scientific progress.



RESEARCH

QUANTUM MECHANICS: A NEW RESEARCH GROUP



Mark Bason is behind a new group on Quantum mechanics at the University of Brighton in the United Kingdom. If you are interested in joining the adventure, don't hesitate to apply for a Marie Curie Fellowship!

The formation of a new research group is both exciting and daunting. On the one hand, it is an opportunity to start afresh, to perhaps foster a team dynamic that can sustain itself for decades to come,. But on the other hand the sheer number of tasks to complete can make one long for the familiar surroundings of previous organisations. Whom should I turn to for help with all this strange, foreign bureaucracy? Do I really have to wait four weeks just to order new equipment? There will certainly be moments of frustration, but somehow it is important to not lose sight of the desired end result,

almost like a doctoral project, but on a larger scale!

Just as a good supervisor can guide students during their projects, part of my role is to lead change. We are often told that the prospect of change is scarier than the process itself, so part of the leadership role is to offer reassurance. There is, I believe, a certain advantage in making a new transition with a fresh team: everyone really is in it together.

Our particular team of researchers is fortunate enough to be part of a

global effort to exploit quantum mechanics to develop smaller, cheaper and more accurate and energy efficient sensor components and systems. Currently, there is a general aim to translate quantum science from research labs into technology which will have impacts on a range of fields, from aerospace to healthcare. Amongst other national programmes, we benefit from the UK National Quantum Technologies Programme, a £270 million, five year investment. In 2018 there will also be additional funding opportunities from the European Commission in the form of

RESEARCH

a Quantum Technologies Flagship, a similar initiative to the Graphene Flagship and Human Brain Project.

Riding on this wave of interest, we will be conducting a number of experiments within our new group at the University of Sussex in Brighton, UK. In practice this means that we need new space. A significant part of our current work is the commissioning of five laboratories and a magnetically shielded room. I have a particular personal interest in the shielded room as it is where I shall be leading the development of arrays of quantum sensors to measure brain activity, a technique known as magnetoencephalography. We are already busy ordering lab supplies and equipment so that we have apparatus to use when the new spaces are ready, as well as writing new grant applications to safeguard funding for our future

research.

Of course, our efforts are not in isolation. We are being supported both at the departmental and university level, the latter of which has made strategic investments of over £10 million in quantum technology. While such investments are clearly welcome so too are the new local relationships and collaborations that are currently being built. Assistance at such a key stage of development can help to shape the evolution of a new group and avoid possible pitfalls. The same is true on both a national and international level. Renewing contact with old colleagues and collaborators all over the globe can help one announce oneself as ready for new challenges and 'open for business'.

Perhaps most important to the formation of a new group are the

personnel one hopes to attract. For us, these could be anywhere on the spectrum from undergraduate-level summer studentships to established researchers. In particular, we would welcome contact with anyone interested in applying for a Marie Curie Fellowship. There are various ways in which we aim to support potential applicants: supplying examples of previous successful applications, offering costing support and providing access to critical mentoring by faculty members. Fellows can expect to gain experience in co-supervising early-stage researchers; participate in significant researcher development support; and have access to high performance computing facilities and new laboratory space. Please feel free to get in touch if you are interested!



MARK BASON