



Issue 40 - September 2024

# Marie Curie Alumni Association

## Newsletter

Farewell message  
from the former  
Editor-in-Chief

Welcome message  
from the new  
Editor-in-Chief

Artificial Intelligence's  
Expanding Role in  
Science and Research

Welcoming  
the new Chapter and  
Working Group Chairs

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## Message from the Board

Dear MCAA Members,

We hope you had a nice and relaxing summer.

This issue of the MCAA Newsletter focuses on some of the activities that took place in the last few months.

We welcome new colleagues in the Operational Team: Administrative Assistants Ketevan Jangulashvili and Laura Sirabella, Communications Assistant Viktoriya Zoriy, and Survey Officer Maruf Sanni.

The policy paper entitled "[Empowering Innovation: MCAA's Recommendations for the MSCA in FP10](#)" was recently published in response to the EU's call for consultation on the future direction of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). The paper aims to enhance the effectiveness, inclusiveness, and impact of the MSCA, ensuring its continuity as a programme of excellence and innovation in the EU research landscape while defining the strategic direction of the upcoming new Framework Programme, FP10.

Another important news is that the MCAA Annual Conference 2025 will be held in Krakow (Poland) on 21-22 March 2025, with satellite events taking place on 20 March. The conference theme is "Research and innovation in a rapidly evolving world" and the [call for session proposals](#) is now open. We look forward to exciting topics. If you wish to volunteer to the event organisation, please email [contact@mariecuriealumni.eu](mailto:contact@mariecuriealumni.eu).

The first official meeting of the new Board took place last July. It was held online and was also attended by the C&WGs Chairs and the representative of the EC as ex-officio participants. During the meeting,

Board Chair Gian Maria and the other Board members presented the Board contact points for the different areas, updated on the design progress of the new website, and the MCAA Training programme. Gian Maria also announced the recent establishment of a new General Interest Group (GIG) on Artificial Intelligence (AI). During the meeting, the Board approved the transformation of the GIG on Sustainability into a full-fledged WG. The WG Chair, Alexandra Dubini, introduced the GIG, which was born thanks to the shared interest between the MCAA and the MSCA Unit and has counted 59 members since its creation during the last Annual Conference in Milan.

We are happy to announce that the [election process](#) for the renewal of C&WGs Chairs is now completed. The MCAA Board gives a warm welcome to 22 new Chairs of 18 Chapters and 4 WGs who started their 2-year mandate on 1 September 2024. Speaking of C&WGs Chairs, a brand new activity launched by this Board is an in-person training for Chairs. Designed to run annually, the first training event took place on 21-22 September 2024 in Athens (Greece). It was a unique opportunity to gather together, get to know each other, and brainstorm on C&WGs management, for budget and activity planning, and event organisations/collaborations. The MCAA lives and thrives thanks to the effort that volunteers generously offer, therefore we express our gratitude to everyone for their active participation. We encourage C&WGs to organise events and activities, essential to member engagement and to support the bottom up shaping of the MCAA, to stimulate cooperation and collaboration with the scientific and non-scientific communities to promote common growth.

Over the past months, the MCAA was represented by members of the Board and the Operational Team in several events. On 30 August, Virginia spoke at the info-session on MSCA/MCAA held during the Argentina Chapter Networking and Annual



Image by MidJourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina



Meeting in Buenos Aires (Argentina). Joaquin joined the MEDNIGHT Exhibition opening on 6 September in Alicante (Spain). On 17 September, Ornela, Pavlo, and Joaquin joined the 2024 Campus Iberus Postdoctoral Days Conference in Jaca (Spain). In Brussels (Belgium), Hakim joined the Research Management WG meeting (16-17 September), as well as the meeting organised by the MSCA Unit announcing the outcome of the consultation on MSCA future orientations (17 September) with Maria Magdalena. She also joined day 1 of the European Research Area conference (18 September), while the following day, on 19 September, Farah represented the MCAA at the Science Summit in Hamburg (Germany). Pooja participated in the online "TRAINING-for Researchers participating in MEDNIGHT" on 10 September, contributed with her story to a panel discussion during "Postdoc appreciation week 2024" in Manchester (UK) on 16 September, and she attended the Vitae conference on 23-24 September in Birmingham (UK). Finally, on 25 September, Ornela joined the "AI Mission Moment: Interactive Panel Discussion" within the "Exploring Generative AI in Education and Research Practice" event co-organised by the UK and Ireland Chapters.

Last but not least, we are pleased to share that the MCAA has been selected as a finalist for Coursera's 2024 Outstanding Achievement Award in the EMEA region. We are looking forward to the final outcome of this contest, nevertheless we consider it a great achievement already.

These past six months of activity of the newly elected MCAA Board have been exciting and intense for all of us. We wish you a pleasant reading with the great articles prepared for you by the Newsletter Editorial Board.


On behalf of the MCAA Board,

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Vice Chair of the MCAA

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## Editorial

# All the good things. Farewell message from the former Editor-in-Chief

Dear MCAA,

Writing a goodbye letter is always a bit bittersweet, especially when it's about moving on from something that has been such a meaningful part of my life. However, as I look back, I can't help but smile.

About five years ago, I joined the MCAA Newsletter with a simple intention—to write a few articles here and there. As a medical physics resident back then, I was looking for ways to give back to the MCAA, an organisation that had supported my career through Micro Travel Grants, allowing me to continue my research even during my demanding clinical residency. So, I reached out to the communications group, offering to help however I could. With zero experience in organising webinars or events, the Newsletter team felt like a perfect fit—after all, writing was something I thought I could handle. Surely, the articles and reviews I'd done over the years would be enough preparation, right?

Little did I know, I would become much more deeply involved than I ever expected. What began as a casual contribution quickly evolved into something much more meaningful. The MCAA Newsletter editorial team turned out



to be an incredibly creative and inspiring group. Working alongside them, I not only learned how to operate effectively within a volunteer organisation—an invaluable skill transferable to any professional association—but I also discovered how much perspective and communication matter. Issue by issue, I learned more about clear, effective communication, both through writing and in giving feedback on articles, than I ever had in any formal writing courses during my postdoctoral training. About a year into my work with the Newsletter, I noticed a shift in myself: my academic writing became more natural, flowing with an ease I hadn't experienced before. I began to see the impact of "soft skills" like writing and communication, which I had previously regarded as secondary to my technical expertise. As a clinical physicist, I had once viewed non-scientific communication as a mere obligation. Now, I had come to understand it as a skill that could shape and enhance my abilities as a professional and a communicator. Around that time, I also felt the creative possibilities open up within the team, especially as we began working on our first special focus issues in 2019 and 2020. At the back of my mind, I had started to dream of leading an editorial team, inspired by how Gian Maria led the MCAA Newsletter team with such skill and dedication. As a long-serving editor-in-chief, he eventually joined the MCAA board in 2022, leaving a strong legacy for those of us who had the privilege of working with him. When the opportunity to step up as editor-in-chief arose in March 2022, it was both thrilling and overwhelming—the timing was anything but ideal. Only a few weeks had passed since the start of the war in Ukraine, my home country, and I was already stretched thin, balancing the end of my medical residency with plans to relocate across the Netherlands for a demanding new role I'd been dreaming of.

Alongside these challenges, I had just begun coordinating the volunteer organisation

Science for Ukraine, now an NGO, to support academic refugees, handing over a hundred support requests weekly.

I had also just embarked on an MBA program, initially a source of excitement, but one that had taken a back seat given the stress and unpredictability of the times. However, the MCAA's strong support for Ukraine and its welcoming, understanding community felt like a safe haven during a vulnerable period. I took a deep breath, let my worries about logistics go for a moment, and in true "Gone with the Wind" spirit, told myself I'd "think about it tomorrow." And so, I applied. To my surprise and joy, my application was accepted, and two years ago, I stepped into the role Gian Maria had left behind.

Reflecting on these past two years, the first and perhaps most important lesson I've learned is the strength of community. The MCAA Newsletter is a collective achievement that relies on a dedicated editorial team whose passion and commitment keep everything moving forward. People may come and go, but my goal has always been that, regardless of their length of time with us, every team member leaves feeling that their contributions mattered. I am deeply grateful to Andrey, Pooja, Namrata, Ana, Sugosh, Pradeep, and Christina. No matter the hurdles, knowing you were part of the team always reassured me that we would make each issue a success, and you consistently exceeded my expectations.

A heartfelt thanks also goes to the authors who contributed to the Newsletter. Writing for an audience of more than 20,000 can feel intimidating, yet we've seen our pool of active contributors grow alongside a rising awareness of the importance of science communication. Special issues especially highlighted the creativity of scientists across fields, from STEM to the humanities, and it was rewarding to see such diverse voices



resonate within our community. To every past, present, and future author—thank you.

Additionally, I've come to appreciate the impact of a strong support system. From my first day as editor-in-chief, I have been fortunate to work alongside Eliska, whose reliability, organisation, and commitment have been truly invaluable. Despite joining as associate editor with a young family and minimal prior experience, she has become an anchor for the team, asking thought-provoking questions that have only strengthened our work. Now, knowing she will step into the role of editor-in-chief, I am confident the Newsletter is in the best possible hands.

Lastly, I'd like to thank Ruben and Gian Maria. You both embody the spirit of MCAA with your professionalism, dedication to the community, and exceptional communication skills. I know I haven't always been the easiest to work with, and I'm grateful for your patience and support as we worked together on the vision and direction of the MCAA Newsletter.

So, why leave if I've loved it so much? By chance, luck, and a growing confidence in my

skills as a communicator and leader—thanks largely to the MCAA—I've also progressed more rapidly in my professional career than I would have thought possible. I now lead a team of ten, support a busy clinical department, advance my research, and serve as the youngest board member of the European Federation of Organizations for Medical Physics while coordinating a well-established NGO. Above all, I am a proud mother to a joyful 1.5-year-old boy. As much as I've cherished my time as editor of the MCAA Newsletter, my plate is full, and it's time to step back and let the team continue to evolve and thrive without me.

Thank you to the entire MCAA Newsletter team and everyone at the MCAA for the inspiration, the opportunities, and the support. This chapter may be ending, but the lessons and friendships will stay with me.

Kind regards,

Sasha

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief  
of the MCAA Newsletter

Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina





## Editorial

# Welcome message from the new Editor-in-Chief

For more than 2 years now, I have been interested in science policy and science communication. Along with my everyday job as a researcher in a molecular biology lab, I wanted a platform to give back to the community.

At one moment, I saw an open call for the Managing Editor of the MCAA Newsletter and – as a former MSCA Fellow – I applied. Even though I applied a bit late, my application was considered by Sasha. Already during the first call, it was obvious we shared the same enthusiasm, and I found the aim of the Newsletter meaningful and an initiative I wanted to be part of. Since then, I became a core member of the team, I helped move things forward, improve the system and hold the team together. At the same time, I met excellent people who joined the team for a shorter or a longer time, and I had the chance to read articles of outstanding experts from various fields.

Skipping forward to this March, I got the opportunity to join the MCAA Annual Conference in Milan. One of my friends says that a very small portion of people are deeply active, volunteering in any possible way and typically truly altruistic. In Milan, I could meet a room full of such people. For a short moment, I was just watching the gathering and enjoying the fact that the world can be a nice place with nice people - this is what such communities are good for; you fit in and you can find your peers.



My experience managing the MCAA newsletter led to a role in which I coordinate the PR and science communication activities at one of the institutes of the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague. Basically, I am now helping others share their scientific work to a wider audience.

Recently, I decided to fill in the position that Sasha left free. The positive functioning environment of the Newsletter editorial team and the support from the MCAA Board convinced me. I am excited to lead the newsletter into a new chapter and ensure its continued success.

Happy to be your new Editor-in-Chief!

Eliška Koňářková [in](#)

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AC&GA 2025

# Join us in Poland for the upcoming Annual Conference and General Assembly



**MCAA**  
ANNUAL  
CONFERENCE  
& GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY

**KRAKOW**  
**POLAND**  
**MARCH 21-22**  
**2025**

#MCAAConf2025



We are pleased to announce that the **MCAA Poland Chapter will host the annual MCAA & General Assembly Conference in March 2025**, set against the stunning backdrop of **Kraków**—a city famous for its rich history, vibrant academic scene, and cultural heritage. As home to some of Poland's most prestigious universities and a hub for students and tourists, Kraków offers an inspiring environment for intellectual exchange and discovery.

The theme of the conference is **"Research and innovation in a rapidly evolving world,"** which reflects our dedication to nurturing a culture that recognises the dynamic nature of research and highlights questions about the visions for the future. The mission of the Poland Chapter is to advocate for sustainable practices within academic and research communities. At our recent annual chapter meeting in Krakow, themed **"Harmony in research – navigating the path to work-life balance,"** we emphasised the critical importance of creating balance in the research environment and our dedication to advancing equal opportunities.

In addition to these efforts, the Poland Chapter continues to actively promote the prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) grants and EU co-funded PhD opportunities, working in close collaboration

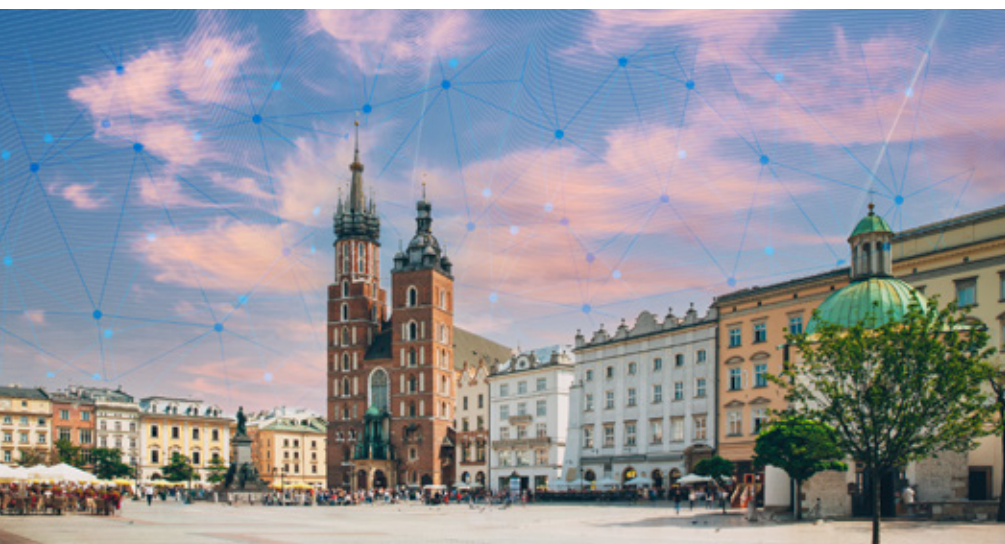
with the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (NAWA). This partnership aims to raise awareness of EU funding opportunities while supporting researchers in navigating their academic and career development.

**The 2025 MCAA Conference** in Kraków will serve as **a key platform** not only to highlight the funding opportunities but also to draw attention to the wealth of academic and research potential offered by Polish institutions. We are excited to welcome international researchers and encourage them to consider Poland as a successful hub for collaboration, innovation, and growth.

The conference will also feature various **social and satellite events**, providing opportunities **for networking, exchanging ideas, and forging new collaborations** with colleagues from around the world. We are confident that Kraków's unique charm, combined with the stimulating conference programme, will make this a truly memorable experience.

We look forward to welcoming you to Kraków in March 2025 for what promises to be an inspiring conference experience.

MCAA Poland Chapter Board  
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Join us *in*  
**Krakow**

## Meet the New Chair

# Discover insights from an enthusiastic immunologist Fabiola Osorio, the newly appointed chair of the MCAA Chile Chapter

**Bionote**

**Fabiola Osorio** is a molecular biotechnology engineer with a PhD in immunology and molecular pathology. She is currently an Immunology Professor at Universidad de Chile and joined the MCAA network after having an MSCA-IEF postdoctoral fellowship which transformed her scientific career. As the new chair of the MCAA Chile chapter, Fabiola is highly motivated to create opportunities for local alumni to connect, collaborate, and contribute to the global research landscape.

I believe in the transformative power of science and innovation, and as chair, I hope to generate opportunities for local alumni to connect, collaborate, and contribute to the global research and innovation landscape.

**Why did you decide to run as Chair of the Chile Chapter?**

My motivation stems from my experience as a former MSCA-IEF postdoctoral fellow, which provided me the opportunity to conduct innovative research in immunology in an inspiring scientific environment. After completing my postdoctoral fellowship, I returned to Chile, where I am now committed



as an academic, to advancing scientific collaborations and fostering a supportive network for researchers. As Chair, I am eager to leverage my experience and passion to enhance the visibility and impact of our chapter.

### **What will be the objectives of the MCAA Chile Chapter under your tenure?**

A major aim will be to engage and mobilize members effectively, especially in a country like Chile, which is both diverse and geographically complex. Another objective is to ensure that the chapter remains relevant and valuable to members amidst a rapidly evolving research landscape. Addressing these challenges will therefore require a collaborative approach and active engagement with both local and international MCAA networks.

### **What are your plans for the development of the MCAA Chile Chapter?**

My primary plans for the Chile Chapter include strengthening and expanding member engagement through workshops, seminars, and networking opportunities. I aim to enhance collaboration with other chapters to create a robust regional and international network. By doing so, I hope to elevate the visibility of Chilean research within the global MCAA community and contribute to the professional growth of our alumni.

### **Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?**

The Chile Chapter remains a small group, but we are aware of new MCAA members who are either arriving in Chile or working here under different research schemes related to MSCA. Our first aim is to engage these new members and demonstrate how this initiative can provide a valuable platform for


professional networking, collaboration, and career development. We also aim to facilitate connections in a fun and engaging way!

### **How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?**

We are already a connected group that closely interacts with the other MCAA LATAM Chapters. We aim to maintain these valuable connections and foster additional interactions with international Chapters across the globe.

### **What would you say to members who are considering joining the MCAA Chile Chapter?**

Having been a part of the MCAA community and a former vice chair of the Chapter, I have experienced firsthand the benefits of this vibrant group. This is a highly valuable network offering numerous opportunities for local alumni to connect, collaborate, and contribute to the global research and innovation landscape. Being part of this community can also help alumni navigate their professional journeys, share experiences and achieve their goals.

Fabiola Osorio 

Chair of the MCAA Chile Chapter  
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 @fbosorio

## Meet the New Chair

# Strengthening Connections and Opportunities: Welcoming the New Chair of the MCAA Swiss Chapter



**Leading the Swiss Chapter to new heights, Maria Jose Mendieta Jara plans to foster collaboration, growth, and innovation within the global MCAA network.**

## Bionote

**Maria Jose Mendieta Jara**, Ecuador. With a background in Medicine from Ecuador, Vitality and Ageing from the Netherlands, and Public Health from Spain, I hold a Joint Doctoral Degree in Nursing Science from the University of Basel and Biomedical Sciences from KU Leuven. My research focuses on person-centered care and care coordination for home-dwelling older adults, successfully advancing from pilot studies to effectiveness evaluations. Previously, I worked as a medical doctor and held leadership roles in Ecuador's Ministry of Public Health, where I developed policies in health promotion, nutrition, reproductive health, and interculturality. These experiences have endowed me with a comprehensive understanding of healthcare systems, underscoring the critical role that research plays in driving meaningful improvements to effectively meet population needs.

## Why did you decide to run (again) as Chair of the Working Group/Chapter?

I am committed to revitalizing our chapter and enhancing member engagement to ensure that our community is vibrant and supportive.

**What will be the objectives of the Working Group/Chapter under your tenure?**

My main goal is to keep our members well-informed about the opportunities available through the MCAA, ensuring they fully benefit from the network. I aim to foster stronger connections between our chapter and others, potentially leading to new collaborations and partnerships.

**What are your plans for the development of the Working Group/Chapter?**

I plan to revitalize the MCAA Swiss Chapter by boosting member engagement and providing regular updates on opportunities available through the MCAA. My focus is on strengthening our internal and external networking and creating new avenues for professional growth. Additionally, I aim to provide our members with resources and guidance to navigate their career beyond their PhD and to better prepare them for future endeavors.

**Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?**

One key event I plan to launch centers on career development, addressing the common challenges many fellows face in planning their career post-PhD or postdoc. Addressing this gap is crucial for a smooth transition into the next professional phase. This event will focus on equipping our members with the tools and strategies needed to effectively navigate their career paths.

**What is the role of the Working Group/Chapter within the MCAA community?**



As I familiarize myself with the chapter's past and present functions, I will define a clear role for our group within the larger MCAA community.

**How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?**

My first step will be attending the training session in Greece. I think this will be the best starting point as I will meet other Chairs which will give me the opportunity to exchange ideas, goals and begin planning activities together.

**What would you say to members who are considering joining the Working Group/Chapter?**

Always take advantage of the opportunities that come your way. You never know how a single chance might profoundly influence your professional and personal development. Joining our Chapter could open doors for you to valuable connections, career insights, and new possibilities that could shape your future.

Maria Jose Mendieta Jara  

Chair of the MCAA Switzerland Chapter

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Image by Firefly, prompt by Fabrizio Martina



## Meet the New Chair

# New Vision for the MCAA North America Chapter: 100 Years After Marie Curie's Visit to Chicago

My mission is to foster a strong relationship between the US, Canadian, and European excellent researchers. And just as the support from women in the Chicago area was instrumental in Marie Curie's career, I would need the help of all the MCAA members in the Americas chapters, the MCAA board, and the ExComm Team to envisage this dream.

## Why did you decide to run as Chair of the North America Chapter?

As soon as I started my MSCA Global Fellowship at the Fields Museum in Chicago, I got involved with the MCAA as a Midwest coordinator and member of the North America Chapter Board of Directors (BoD). The turning point for me was attending the [2024 MCAA Annual Conference](#) in Milan. There, I learned about the MCAA's important role in building



## Bionote

**Sabina Cveček** is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the Field Museum in Chicago and the Austrian Academy of Sciences (10/2023–09/2026) and a new Chair of the MCAA North America Chapter. As an interdisciplinary trained socio-cultural anthropologist, she researches ways of being related in ancient societies. Sabina holds a PhD from the University of Vienna (2021) and is the author of [Çukuriçi Höyük 4. Household Economics in the Early Bronze Age Aegean](#) (2022, Austrian Academy of Sciences Press). She is an elected Fellow of the Royal Anthropological Institute and co-chair of the Archaeology and Gender in Europe Network of the European Association of Archaeologists.



a community of excellent researchers across disciplines and advocating for mental health and sustainable careers in academia and beyond. As these objectives resonate with me, I wish to be more closely involved with the MCAA in my new role as a North America Chapter chair. I have to thank the members who supported me on this journey. In particular, Iryna Mykhailova, the outgoing chapter chair, for inviting me to the North America Chapter Board and enabling a smooth transition into my new role, as well as Cristina Florea, a former and current vice-chair, whose knowledge of the MCAA, and long-term involvement in North America Chapter is invaluable.

### What will be the objectives of the Chapter under your tenure?

I am a socio-cultural anthropologist with interdisciplinary training, working on the topic of prehistoric kinship. As making kin is an important way to create households and communities, I wish to build on my professional experience and knowledge to serve, make an impact, and become a voice for researchers across all disciplines. I am committed to forwarding MCAA activities in the US, Canada, and beyond and serve as a liaison between the MCAA and Euraxess. My mission is to strengthen ties between the community members and stakeholders while fostering community, creativity, and change toward sustainable careers for MCAA members across all disciplines and career stages.

### What are your plans for the development of the Chapter?

I would be delighted to bring together the MCAA community members in the US by organizing a one-day workshop in Chicago in the summer of 2025. Why? First, to strengthen ties between the MCAA "Americas" chapters and second, to promote the Midwest

as an excellent research environment alongside the US East and West Coast. After all, Marie Curie herself visited Chicago to accept an [honorary degree](#) from Northwestern University in 1921. On this occasion, women from the Chicago area, including Mrs. Marshall Field, raised [\\$100,000](#) to purchase one gram of radium Marie Curie needed to continue her experiments. Without overstatement, the Field Museum, a world-class museum at which I am currently based, has indirectly supported an excellent European scholar more than a hundred years ago. Today, most of us face challenges with navigating through the red tape between European and US/Canadian institutions during our fellowships. However, there are many wonderful achievements that MCAA North America Chapter members have reached in North America, and I would like to create an opportunity to celebrate and promote their accomplishments.

Apart from bringing members together in person, I wish to hold chapter-wide, monthly virtual meetings. In those, our members will be encouraged to share their experiences as MSCA fellows, of working in different sectors in North America, and raise their wishes for future engagement. With these virtual meetings, I wish to narrow the gap between members spread across the MCAA's largest chapter in terms of geographic area.

### Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?

We have already hosted a webinar in association with the Communication Working Group on the "Power of Networking for Scientists." In due time, alongside organizing the first Chapter-wide in-person meeting in Chicago, the North America Chapter is planning to host a few more webinars for instance "Design Thinking: From Ideas to Medical Product and Services." Apart from this, our Chapter's board members and regional coordinators will participate in virtual

monthly meetings, continue organizing local networking events for the MCAA members in different cities across North America, as well as planning in Chicago in 2025.


### How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?

Having already begun my cooperation by hosting a webinar with the Communication Working Group, I would be delighted to strengthen ties with other "Americas" chapters, including Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and the Andean/Caribbean Chapter. I look forward to working closely with the Management to carry out our Chapter's activities and with the Communication Working Group to promote our activities among the MCAA members. Regarding other topics close to my heart, I look forward to collaborating with Policy, Sustainability,

Career Development, as well as Gender, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion – GEDI Working Groups.

### What would you say to members who are considering joining the Working Group/Chapter?

Welcome to the North America Chapter that strives for **C<sup>3</sup>: Community, Creativity, and Change**. I would be delighted to learn about your ideas for building a strong and mutually supportive MCAA community in North America and working toward it together with you.

Sabina Cveček 

Chair of the MCAA North America Chapter

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 SabinaCvecek



## Meet the New Chair



# Leading with Vision: Sergio Manrique Continues as Chair of the MCAA Andean-Caribbean Chapter

### Bionote

I am the Chair of the MCAA Andean-Caribbean Chapter and former MSCA PhD Fellow in [RUNIN](#) Project at Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain) and University of Stavanger (Norway). Currently, I am based in Colombia, where I serve as a Delivery Lead in the IT Consulting sector. With the background as an Industrial Engineer, I am also specialized in Managerial and Organizational Control Systems, and I hold a Magister in Management, Organization and Business Economics. As a Spanish-Colombian Project & Delivery Manager, Consultant and Researcher, I bring over 10 years of work experience at both private and academic sectors in Europe and Latin America (Latam). My professional and research interests lie in IT, Innovation and Business Economics.

**Sergio Manrique, re-elected Chair of the MCAA Andean-Caribbean Chapter and recent recipient of the MCAA Outstanding Contributor Award, discusses fostering strong connections and promoting MCAA in the region.**

### Why did you decide to run (again) as Chair of the Chapter?

As the first chair and one of the founders of the MCAA Andean-Caribbean chapter, I am deeply interested in keeping our chapter/ community alive and active. Having received the latest MCAA Outstanding Contributor award, I feel compelled to remain engaged and actively involved with the MCAA and its Andean-Caribbean community. I look forward



to fostering collaboration and joint initiatives between our chapter and other working groups and regional chapters, especially in LATAM, to continue promoting MCAA's growth and impact.

### **What will be the objectives of the Chapter under your tenure?**

Our main goal is to continue building and strengthening the community of former and current MSCA fellows linked to our Region. There are still many fellows we can reach and attract. We also need to ensure that there is active participation and support from its members, which is crucial for the chapter's continuity in the mid to long term.

Another important dimension of our work as a chapter is the promotion and dissemination of research funding and cooperation opportunities in Europe for Andean-Caribbean citizens and residents, especially in the framework of Horizon Europe and MSCA. For this, we have actively collaborated with Euraxess LAC and the MSCA NCP and will continue doing so.

Finally, I am keen to continue working towards cooperation among the different MCAA chapters in Latin America to collectively work for and represent the MCAA's interests and goals.

### **What are your plans for the development of the Chapter?**

We need to reassemble the core work group of the chapter to ensure everyone involved is active and committed. As a transnational chapter, we also want to ensure there is fair representation across the different geographies we cover.

Given our close collaboration with Euraxess LAC and the MSCA NCP, we are frequently involved in activities aimed at promoting

scientific opportunities in Europe, by providing testimonials and helping to disseminate information about Horizon Europe and MSCA. We also want to promote and encourage scientific cooperation between LATAM and Europe more broadly.

### **Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?**

There are always various ideas for organising events and activities, and we must try to prioritise wisely to ensure relevance and impact to our community. We want to start having more frequent meetings with all members and tidy up our communication strategy. Being a transnational chapter, holding onsite meetings with the chapter core team is challenging, but it would be nice to try to do so.

In terms of activities already in the pipeline, there is an upcoming webinar on how to define research topics to stimulate the LATAM-Europe knowledge exchange in the framework of MSCA and Horizon Europe opportunities in which a speaker from Euraxess LAC will offer us an overview of past success cases. We hope this will be the first of various webinars aimed at cultivating, motivating and guiding academics in our region to take part in Horizon Europe and MSCA opportunities.

Finally, having hosted last year's MCAA LATAM Conference, we are excited to participate in and contribute to the 2025 edition, which will be held in Mexico.

### **What is the role of the Chapter within the MCAA community?**

The Andean-Caribbean Chapter encourages local networking. It recruits and attracts new members to the Association and enhances the image of the MCAA within the Andean-Caribbean region.



In general, we represent the MCAA's interests by attracting and gathering former and current MSCA fellows associated with our region to promote networking and collaboration among ourselves, and by showcasing and disseminating MSCA opportunities among academics in our region.

### How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?

There are many activity ideas and topics which are of interest across the Latam region and beyond, especially related to promoting research funding and cooperation opportunities with Europe. We need to continue finding synergies and organising joint events and activities for collectively representing and building the MCAA community.

It is also crucial to seek synergies and collaboration with Working Groups like Communication and Research Funding, as they can play a key role in shaping and organising joint activities.



### What would you say to members who are considering joining the Chapter?

The MCAA Latam chapters make up a great community to be part of, full of great people


and amazing opportunities. At the MCAA Andean-Caribbean Chapter, we are always keen to hear new ideas and proposals for enhancing our community and organising activities/events. You all can be sure there will always be willingness from the chapter's core group to welcome and integrate anyone interested in contributing.

Our aim is to connect as many former and current MSCA fellows associated with our Region as possible, to build a stronger and more sustainable community.

If you want to be a part of a community which will help you improve your scientific and professional network, and in which you will have the chance of shaping and materialising ideas for enhancing the scientific cooperation between Europe and LATAM, then our Chapter is the right place to be.

Sergio Manrique  

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## Meet the New Chair



# Envisioning better career perspective for researchers: Welcoming the new Chair of the MCAA Italy Chapter

Ana Paula, the new chair of the Italy Chapter, tells us the plans for her mandate in the Chapter.

## Bionote

I am Ana Paula Mendonça, a Brazilian researcher in the life science field, based in Padova (Italy) since 2020. I was a Marie Curie Fellow from 2021 to 2023, and I was part of the Newsletter MCAA editorial team from 2022 to 2024. Recognized as an eLife Science Ambassador 2021 and Female Science Talent 2024 by the Falling Walls Foundation.

## Why did you decide to run as Chair of the Working Group/Chapter?

I have been involved in the MCAA's activities since 2022, when I was part of the Newsletter editorial team. I had a great time meeting and networking with some members at the MCAA events. I felt a need to do something different and more challenging, where I could make more impact on my current research community.

**What will be the objectives of the Working Group/Chapter under your tenure?**

My main objective as a Chair of the Italy Chapter is to engage more people in the MCAA initiatives and to develop a better career perspective for researchers.

**What are your plans for the development of the Working Group/Chapter?**

I consider partnership essential to making a long-term impact. I plan to strengthen the community members and make more partnerships with regional scientific foundations and organisations. Lastly, I also plan to establish good contact with the members and show that I am open to receiving their opinions, suggestions, and ideas.

**How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?**

In the MCAA, we have different Chapters and Working Groups aiming to reach the same

goal: engage researchers, provide career development opportunities, and support the research community. I believe the best way to cooperate in this context is to work on joint initiatives and advocacy campaigns.

**What would you say to members who are considering joining the Working Group/Chapter?**

I encourage all Marie Skłodowska-Curie researchers in Italy to join the MCAA and be a member of the Italy Chapter. Joining our chapter would be a great opportunity to expand their network, gain access to valuable resources, and make a real impact with our initiatives. I am always happy to listen to new ideas and collaborate with new people, so feel free to contact me.


Ana Paula Mendonça   
Chair of the MCAA Italy Chapter  
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Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina





## Meet the New Chair



# Establishing Brazil Chapter as a reference stakeholder on the Brazilian scientific community

### Why did you decide to run (again) as Chair of the Chapter?

I was one of the founders and the first chair of the Brazil Chapter in 2017 and after the pandemic we noticed a decrease in engagement and that with my previous experience I would be of help to get the new members more involved and build a new generation of chairs and board members for the chapter.

### What will be the objectives of the Chapter under your tenure?

We are committed to reestablish some iconic events like the Brazil-Europe Workshop (BREUW) and to make MCAA an important stakeholder in Brazil's scientific environment when it comes to science policy, science diplomacy and international collaboration.

### Bionote

I am a microbial molecular biologist and professor at the Federal University of Maranhão (UFMA) in Brazil. I am one of the leaders of the Research Group in Biodiversity, Bioprospection and Biotechnology (GB3). Our group develops outreach and science literacy and citizen science projects on the topics of genetics, evolution and microbiology.

I am also a professor at the Postgraduate Program in Health and Environment (PPGSA), in addition to the Environmental Science and Technology program (PPGCTAmb). I developed my PhD as a Marie Curie fellow during Biocor Project ITN in Portugal (2010-2013).



Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina



### What are your plans for the development of the Chapter?

We plan to have virtual activities like career development science diplomacy/policy webinars, therefore giving our members tools to be MCAA local representatives and to establish MCAA as a reference like Brazilian Academy of Science (ABC) or Brazilian Society for the Progress of Science (SBPC). We want to get more members of MSCA Staff Exchange projects to join the Association and the Brazil Chapter.



### Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?

We have a webinar planned in November related to migrating from Academia to industry with the founder of Startup Genomic company. We are also planning to bring other professionals like diplomats or international

relations specialists. For 2025 we are involved with the organization of the 4th MCAA LATAM Conference that will be held in Mexico City and for 2026 we will have the 3rd Brazil-Europe Workshop in Brazil.

### How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?

As mentioned, we are frequently working with the other Latin American chapters to organize joint activities and conferences and with working groups related to career and other topics for webinars and joint training.

Leonardo Dall'Agnol  

Chair of the MCAA Brazil Chapter  
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## Meet the New Chair

### Bionote

**Daniel** was born in Mexico City and lived there until the age of 18. He pursued a B.A. in Physics at Cornell University, followed by a PhD in Chemistry at Northwestern University, where he became fascinated by how materials respond to light. After a postdoc in Paris, he moved to Sweden with an MSCA fellowship to work on ultrafast spectroscopy. For the past four years, he has led a research group in light-matter interaction in Mexico City. After 18 years abroad, he now lives very close to where he grew up.



# Building a network of committed individuals: Daniel Finkelstein-Shapiro as Chair of the MCAA Mexico Chapter

**Daniel Finkelstein-Shapiro, Chair of the MCAA Mexico Chapter, discusses his motivation for running, plans for the Chapter's future, and fostering connections across diverse sectors to achieve sustainable development goals.**

### Why did you decide to run as Chair of the Working Group/Chapter?

I decided to run for Chair to be in a position to encourage and support relevant projects from the talented MCAA community. Joining the Association just over a year ago was eye-opening—it showed me a possibility for immediate, tangible impact through initiatives in sustainability and society, in contrast to the longer-term impact typical of academic research (that I also enjoy very much). One of my side projects using augmented reality for science outreach earned me an invitation to the Annual Conference in Milan, which made me realise

how much I wanted to contribute towards the Association's activities in a more active role.

### What will be the objectives of the Working Group/Chapter under your tenure?

As a young two-year old Chapter, our primary objective is to consolidate a supportive environment where member-driven initiatives can expand and grow with support from the Chapter. This means getting to know each other better –work, jobs, interests - and strengthening connections within the Chapter through frequent interactions. Another very

important component is to join forces with like-minded organisations, since we need to build a large network to carry out volunteer projects successfully in Mexico.

### What are your plans for the development of the Working Group/Chapter?

We aim to build on the initiatives started by the previous board, particularly by strengthening our connections with Mexican scientists associations and continuing to organise events that foster collaboration between academia and industry. These efforts will also address critical healthcare challenges, such as antimicrobial resistance. Moving forward, my focus will be on creating a habit of having regular meetings where people from very different backgrounds meet – scientists, politicians, other European associations, artists, architects – and we discuss possible common projects that go in the direction of the sustainable development goals, at a scale where we can have an impact. Personally, I confess this approach is exciting, since I have a broad spectrum of interests, this gives me an excuse to contact experts in those fields.

### Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?

Yes! We have recently started our first monthly meeting in collaboration with alumni from Sweden, Germany, policymakers in education, and members of the art/architecture community. It was very well received. The next meeting is just around the corner! We also have some more formal events planned that build on what the previous board did, and are excited to host the LATAM MCAA meeting in Mexico City in 2025.

### What is the role of the Working Group/Chapter within the MCAA community?

I think that this is a complex question to answer. We are globally aligned with the MCAA values, yet are also in a country with much less resources for action when compared to Europe.

So, what can we bring to the table beyond being just another Chapter? What is the Mexican way of thinking or doing or tackling problems that is unique to us and that can really enrich the MCAA community when shared? I hope to answer this in my exit interview.


### How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?

Thanks to the fantastic LATAM conference organised in Cartagena by the Andean-Caribbean Chapter in 2023, we have made very strong connections within the MCAA Latin America. A shared WhatsApp group has really made communication and collaboration much easier. We share a common language (except Brazil but we manage) and values. Next year, we will host the conference in Mexico City, strengthening our ties further. We have not yet taken advantage of the forum of the Working Groups, but I think that the next step is to have an active participation in them, and be very open about what we are trying to do, what has worked and what has not. I think that this will naturally lead to cooperation with other Chapters.

### What would you say to members who are considering joining the Working Group/Chapter?

I would say that the Chapter is what we make of it. If you don't see exactly the type of project that aligns with your interests, your participation is even more valuable. Everyone I have met through the MCAA has a surprising set of skills and a long list of achievements. Joining the Chapter means being in contact with those people and expanding your horizons by connecting with these individuals.

Daniel Finkelstein-Shapiro 

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 @D\_Fink\_Shap



## News from the Working Groups

# Grasping opportunities with the Career Development Working Group



### Bionote

**Unlock your potential with the Career Development Working Group! Join us to explore strategies and opportunities for advancing your career today!**

### Why did you decide to run as Chair of the Working Group ?

I have always been passionate about fostering collaboration and providing mentorship, especially for young researchers. Having led national and international projects and served in various leadership roles, I believe I can bring a wealth of experience and a clear vision for the future. Running as Chair allows me to continue contributing to the Working Group's growth by facilitating meaningful connections and opportunities for our members. My previous experience as head of the Mathematics Department and my involvement in the Ethical Commission for Research give me the skills to lead effectively and ethically.

Süreyya Akyüz is a Professor of Mathematics at Bahcesehir University in Türkiye. She received the MSCA individual fellowship for her postdoctoral studies at the University of Surrey (2011-2013). After returning to Istanbul, she led three national projects and participated in an EU project. Since 2018, she led the Computer Vision Laboratory and served on the Ethical Commission Committee for Research and Publication. Akyüz served as head of the Mathematics Department from 2018 to 2023, focusing on mentoring young researchers and guiding undergraduate students in international projects throughout her career.

### What will be the objectives of the Working Group under your tenure?

The main objectives under my tenure will be to promote interdisciplinary collaboration, professional development, and the creation of meaningful career opportunities for all members. I aim to strengthen ties between

academia, industry, and policy, ensuring that members from various fields—whether it be the sciences, social sciences, engineering can benefit from the resources and networks we provide. Additionally, supporting career transitions and skill-building workshops will be key areas of focus.

### What are your plans for the development of the Working Group ?

I would like to focus on building strong webinars that help members grow professionally—things like mentorship opportunities, career development workshops, and leadership training. I also want to create more ways for members to connect with each other, across different fields and regions. By strengthening the network of young researchers between universities and industry, and other organisations through such webinars, we can offer internships, joint projects, and networking opportunities that will benefit everyone.


### Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?

Absolutely. I have plans to organise joint seminars with MSCA National Contact Point at the information days of MSCA projects which will point to all levels of career such as doctoral and postdoctoral level. Secondly, I am

planning to organise webinars which will host well known entrepreneurs from industry and academia to share their experiences with us.

### What would you say to members who are considering joining the Working Group?

I would strongly encourage all members to join, whether they are looking to expand their professional network, develop new skills, or find mentorship opportunities. The Working Group is a dynamic community where professionals from all disciplines can exchange ideas, collaborate on innovative projects, and receive the support they need to achieve their career goals. We offer a wide range of resources tailored to help members navigate their professional journeys—whether in academia, industry, or beyond. Joining the working group is an opportunity to be part of a global community committed to mutual growth and success.

Süreyya Akyüz 

Chair of the MCAA Career Development Working Group



## News from the Working Groups

# Leading Policy Initiatives within the MCAA: Vision and Commitment as Policy Working Group Chair



**As Chair of the Policy Working Group, I focus on enhancing collaborations to promote sustainable research careers, advancing inclusive science-policy and science-diplomacy frameworks, and amplifying the voice of MCAA researchers within Europe and globally.**

### **Why did you decide to run as Chair of the Working Group/Chapter?**

My decision to run for Chair of the Policy Working Group (WG) is driven by my extensive experience and active involvement in MCAA. As leader of the Science and Diplomacy Task Force since January 2024 and Chair of the MCAA Switzerland Chapter for the past four years, I have played a key role in advancing the MCAA's policy initiatives. I have focused on promoting the EU Science Diplomacy global mission and strengthening ties between the

### **Bionote**

Theodota Lagouri, a CERN personnel member and Associated Research Scientist at Yale University, is an experimental physicist. As part of the ATLAS Collaboration at the Large Hadron Collider, Theodota has contributed to over 1,000 publications, showcasing a strong commitment to global scientific collaboration. As a former MSCA Postdoctoral Fellow and current international Researcher, Theodota has conducted collaborative research across continents. As an active member of MCFA and MCAA since its inception, Theodota served on the MCAA GEDI (GEMS) WG board, chaired the Switzerland Chapter for four years, and led the Science and Diplomacy Task Force in Policy WG, advancing science-policy for researchers' careers and well-being.



MCAA and the EU SciDip Alliance. My work in Science, Technology, Innovation Diplomacy, Gender Equality, and the Capacity Building Task Force fuels my commitment to further contribute to these critical areas as Chair.

### **What will be the objectives of the Working Group/Chapter under your tenure?**

As Chair of the Policy WG, my primary goal will be to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange among researchers within European and international scientific organisations. By leading the MCAA Policy WG, I aim to shape EU science policies that promote a collaborative and innovative research environment, ensuring the sustainability of researchers' careers. My focus will be on strengthening gender equality and advancing key EU science policy and diplomacy priorities. With extensive experience in international research collaborations and communication, I am committed to helping the MCAA Policy WG achieve its objectives more effectively.

### **What are your plans for the development of the Working Group/Chapter?**

Over the next two years, my goal is to expand the influence of the Policy WG by strengthening collaboration with other MCAA WGs and Chapters, including GEDI, Career Development, Sustainability, and AI. I also aim to deepen external partnerships with key science policy organisations such as the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE), the EU Science Diplomacy Alliance, and UNESCO's Women in Science for UN Sustainable Goals. Additionally, I plan to build connections with science policy groups from major research institutions across Europe, the U.S., and Africa. My active involvement in international scientific groups will drive the growth of the Policy WG and enhance collaboration within the global research community.

### **Do you already have plans for events and activities? Can you tell us some?**

I plan to organise a series of webinars, workshops, and training events on topics such as Research Science Policy, Science Diplomacy, and Gender Equality and Diversity for Researchers. These initiatives will aim to strengthen connectivity and engagement within the MCAA community. The outcomes will be shared through the MCAA newsletters, blogs, and magazines. Additionally, I aim to expand outreach and visibility by leveraging communication channels like X, LinkedIn, Slack, and Instagram to ensure broader engagement and increase the Policy WG impact.

### **What is the role of the Working Group/Chapter within the MCAA community?**

The Policy WG plays a pivotal role within the MCAA community, with the ability to shape policies that impact researchers' career development and sustainability at the European level. It also serves as a platform to amplify researchers' voices on key EU policy issues, particularly in the realm of science diplomacy. As a key avenue for MSCA alumni to influence science policy in Europe, the Policy WG is crucial in advancing MCAA's mission and ensuring researchers actively contribute to shaping the future of European science policy.

### **How will you cooperate with other Chapters and Working Groups?**



I am dedicated to strengthening the interconnectivity between the MCAA Policy WG and other Working Groups, including Gender Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (GEDI), Career Development, Communication, as well as the newly formed Sustainability and AI groups, along with various MCAA Chapters. As Chair of the Policy WG, my focus will be on fostering a spirit of collaboration

and facilitating knowledge exchange among researchers from European and international scientific organisations. Through active engagement in the MCAA research policy community, I aim to cultivate a collaborative, innovative research environment that amplifies researchers' voices and advances the MCAA's mission goals.

### What would you say to members who are considering joining the Working Group/Chapter?

I strongly encourage all MCAA members to join the Policy Working Group. Under my leadership, the Policy WG will be driven by principles of connection, collaboration, and inclusivity, in line with MCAA's vision

of fostering international, transdisciplinary partnerships among researchers. I am committed to supporting our members in research policy training, enhancing their career development while contributing to the broader science-policy and science-diplomacy community.

Theodota Lagouri  

Chair of the MCAA Policy Working Group

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## News from the MCAA

# United Kingdom Chapter Reflecting on a Year of Progress and Looking Ahead

**Looking back on a year of progress, the MCAA UK Chapter has achieved key engagement and community-building milestones. Discover our successes and plans for the future in this reflection piece from the Chair.**

It is hard to believe that an entire year has passed since I became Chair of the United Kingdom Chapter of the MCAA. Time has flown by, but what stands out the most is the progress we have made together. I would like to reflect on our collective achievements and share our goals for the coming year.

## Bionote

Quentin Loisel is an MSCA PhD fellow at Glasgow Caledonian University and serves as the MCAA UK Chapter Chair. He is part of the [Health CASCADE project](#), which aims to build trust in co-creation. Quentin is developing technologies to support this complex process grounded in collective intelligence, democracy, and evidence-based practices. His work bridges technology and the fundamental human dimension within the values of the co-creation. With the recent rise of generative artificial intelligence, he actively explores its potential for enhancing cognition, collaboration, and science. With technology's growing influence in our society, Quentin seeks to foster cooperation among societal actors to make the most of future technology.



Map of United Kingdom cities where members volunteer for the City Ambassador Program.



## Building Engagement and Community

This past year, we had two main priorities: raising awareness among eligible members and enhancing engagement within our chapter. Our strategy was clear—improve communication, foster social connections, and establish local contacts to support new members. We also committed to launching a monthly newsletter to better inform members about the MCAA's mission, resources, and upcoming events. The focus was on high-impact, low-cost initiatives to build a stronger, more connected community. I'm thrilled to say that these efforts have borne fruit.

## Key Accomplishments of the Past Year

One of our standout successes has been the launch of our monthly newsletter, which

now boasts eleven issues and over 120 subscribers! This has proven invaluable for boosting engagement and keeping our members informed.

To better support those frequently on the move, we launched the City Ambassador Program, now active in six cities with seven ambassadors. This initiative has helped connect our members across the UK, easing transitions and fostering a more robust network. We also hosted social events in Glasgow and London, further strengthening community ties.

On a broader scale, we established partnerships with organisations like UKRO and EURAXESS UK to raise awareness and welcome new members. Significant collaboration with the UKRI team overseeing the Guarantee funding scheme has also



MCAA and UK Chapter presentation at the Horizon Europe Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions event, organised by the UKRO, UUKi and EU Commission, on 26 June 2024.

allowed us to bring Guarantee-funded fellows into our fold as Friends of our Chapter, enriching our diversity and network.

One of the most exciting highlights was the inaugural Early Career Researcher (ECR) Summer Day at Brunel University London. This event attracted over 65 participants and featured interactive sessions on artificial intelligence, public speaking, career development, and a panel discussion on post-PhD career paths. The positive feedback we received has been overwhelming, and I am proud of what we've accomplished.

### The Challenges We Face

Despite these achievements, challenges remain. With over 780 members, the number of active participants in chapter activities is still limited. Technical issues with our website have also made it harder to reach our full potential in terms of member engagement. I encourage everyone to check their notification settings on the MCAA website to stay updated and sign up for our newsletter via our [Linktree](#).

### Setting New Goals for the Coming Year

Looking ahead, we have consulted with our members to understand what has worked and where we need to improve. The feedback has been clear—those who attend our events love them and want more, but accessibility remains an issue due to time and location constraints.

We see great potential in organising more workshops and networking opportunities, particularly those focusing on career development. However, mobilising a community as diverse as ours—spanning various research fields and career stages—remains a challenge.

Regarding communication, those in the loop are satisfied with our efforts, but we

recognise the need for more innovative approaches that respect GDPR while improving our outreach.


As the Chair, I am thrilled with our members' positive feedback. Our efforts last year brought us closer to our objectives, while the experience we gained improved our understanding of our community's needs. Our members' consultation shows that we need to pursue our aim of reaching and engaging our community while developing innovative adapted activities.

As always, the strength of our chapter lies in its members, and I am calling on those of you who want to take a more active role to step up. Joining the leadership team is an excellent opportunity to expand your network, develop your leadership skills, and prepare for future roles, including that of Chair! If you're interested in taking on a more active role or have ideas for new initiatives, don't hesitate to get in touch!

### Looking Forward Together

Finally, I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who has actively participated in our chapter's activities this past year—whether by organising or attending events. Together, we have built something special, and I look forward to continuing this journey with all of you in the year ahead.

Let's make this another year of growth and success for the UK Chapter!

Quentin Loisel   
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✉ @q5loisel

## News from the MCAA

# Empowering Our Community: A Collaborative Vision for The MCAA Turkey Chapter



Explore how Sara Banu Akkaş is harnessing her extensive experience to foster collaboration and innovation within the MCAA Turkey Chapter.

## Building a Collaborative Foundation

As the board of the MCAA Turkey Chapter, we are committed to creating opportunities that bring our community together, fostering collaboration and addressing the diverse needs of our members. Together, we aim

## Bionote

As a Research Manager at Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Türkiye, my role involves supporting researchers in securing primarily international research funding. Holding a PhD in Biology from METU and with postdoctoral experience at Monash University, I'm coordinating a MSCA-COFUND project and have led two MSCA-European Researchers' Night projects. In my capacity as Head of the METU HRS4R Working Group, I contributed to our university achieving the HR Excellence in Research Award. Passionate about fostering a collaborative research ecosystem, I also serve on the METU Gender Equality Plan Working Group and have represented Türkiye in various international projects.



to translate MCAA's global impact into actionable local initiatives that extends its positive impact across the wider research community.

### From Inspiration to Action

Since 2016, I've had the privilege of coordinating two MSCA-European Researchers' Night projects, as well as an on-going MSCA-COFUND project. Through these projects, I became acquainted with the MCAA and its values. At the 2024 MCACA Annual Conference, I gained a deeper appreciation for two standout aspects: first, the cross-cutting nature of the topics discussed, which are relevant to all participants working in a vast array of disciplines; and second, the inclusive definition of MSCA alumni – ranging from researchers to research managers from all stages of their career.

This conference really motivated me, and we immediately began organizing a training that was exceptionally innovative and successful for our chapter. In this training, as the MCAA Turkey Chapter, we not only collaborated with the MCAA Board and MCAA Bridging Science and Business Working Group (WG), but also received significant support – including financial – from TÜBİTAK (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Türkiye, Ankara), METU (Middle East Technical University, Ankara) and İTÜ (İstanbul Technical University, İstanbul). This 2-day hybrid event, entitled "MCAA MSCA PF Training and Evaluation Session & How to use AI in Research?", which took place on May 30, 2024, in Ankara at METU and May 31, 2024, in İstanbul at İTÜ, gathering nearly 100 researchers, research managers, and representatives from esteemed institutions around Türkiye. Moreover, the speakers were not only from the supporting institutions



REPUBLIC OF TÜRKİYE  
MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY  
AND TECHNOLOGY



## MCAA MSCA PF TRAINING AND EVALUATION

### & HOW TO USE AI IN RESEARCH?

30 MAY 2024  
METU - ANKARA



Scan to Register

31 MAY 2024  
İTÜ - İSTANBUL



but also from Bilkent University (Ankara), DEÜ (Dokuz Eylül University, İzmir), İYTE (İzmir Institute of Technology, İzmir), YTÜ (Yıldız Technical University, Istanbul), and University of Göttingen, Germany. We listened to presentations on the MSCA Post-doctoral Fellowships (PF) program from our National Contact Points, as well as the EURAXESS Initiative from our EURAXESS Service Center Representatives. We held panel discussions not only with MSCA PF fellows but also MSCA PF evaluators. We also organised mini-reviews by MSCA PF evaluators to researchers sending their 2-page summaries of their MSCA-PF-2024 proposals. Merging an MSCA-PF Info Day with a speech on a cross-cutting theme at the end – in this case, “How to use AI in Research?” – proved effective in attracting researchers who were not MCAA members. This was quite valuable as it enabled interaction between MCAA members and potential members. Furthermore, we had two Boardboard and one WG representative joining us, which would not have been possible without the MCAA support. I must say, the cascade effects of this training are still ongoing!

### Enhancing Engagement Through Innovation

Attending the conference and organising this training with the enthusiastic support of all parties involved made me realise how deeply the MCAA is committed to spreading a positive impact across the wider research community. These experiences inspired me to run for the Turkey Chapter Chair position, to give back to such a generous, inclusive, and collaborative community.

As the Turkey Chapter Chair for the 2024-2026 period, my vision is to create more opportunities for our members to come together, as I believe that to be stronger together, we first need to get together. My initial goal is to establish a board structure

like the MCAA Board, and I’m excited about the prospect of collaborating with the other candidates who had applied for the position of the Chair of MCAA’s Turkey Chapter. The primary function of our chapter board will be to create diverse platforms that foster connections among our members. To achieve this, I plan to continue organising innovative events, like the one mentioned, but further enhanced by the input and ideas from both the board and chapter members.

### Future Goals and Engagement

For the 2024-2025 academic year, I propose we aim for two in-person and two online events. One key strategy I intend to maintain is joining a Horizon Europe Programme/Call Info Day with a session on a highly relevant topic (like the role of AI in research, as explained above). This format has not only proven to be effective and attractive but also a strong foundation for collaboration between chapters and working groups.

Additionally, I hope to gather feedback from our members to co-develop events that address their diverse needs. Given that many members of the MCAA Turkey Chapter are senior researchers, whose needs may differ from those of early-career researchers, this collaborative approach is essential to understanding and meeting their varied requirements. Finally, I am confident that the spirit of collaboration – which was so evident in the event we organised – will continue to thrive, as it is deeply embedded in the MCAA culture.

Sara Banu Akkaş  
Chair of the MCAA Turkey Chapter  
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## News from the MCAA

# MCAA France Chapter for Movember

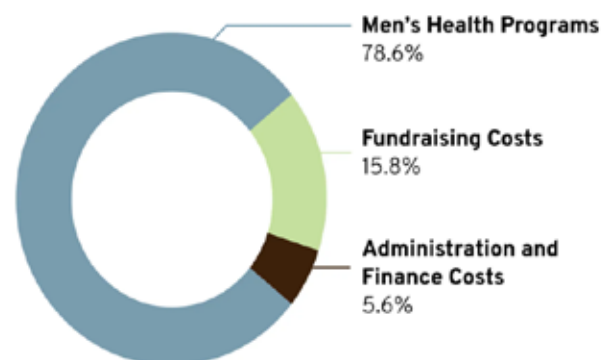
The MCAA France Chapter joined the last edition of Movember movement. Raising funding and increasing awareness about mental health and treatments for cancer patients is important for the MCAA France Chapter. Growing as a community and acting together for a common cause is one way to have a positive impact on our society.

Movember is an annual event involving the growing of moustaches during November-month. The particular name derives from the contraction of "Mo" for Moustache and "Vember" for November.

The goal of Movember is to "change the face of men's health", increasing early cancer detection, diagnosis and effective treatment, ultimately reducing the number of evitable deaths. Besides annual check-ups, the Movember Foundation encourages men to be aware of their family history of cancer and to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

The Movember was born in Australia in 2003, using the moustache as the driving symbol of the movement. It focuses on the three key areas of prostate cancer, testicular cancer, and mental health and suicide prevention. In 2022 the Movember community fought for men's health in 20 countries around the world. Thanks to the 322,346 participants who grew moustaches, they raised €82.3 million in donations. These donations enable to raise awareness, fund vital men's health programs and organize Movember every year.

Increasing awareness and supporting organisations working on health issues and



SEQ Figure \\* ARABIC 1 – On the left the symbol of the MCAA France Chapter contest, designed by Alberto Gregori. On the right the distribution of donations from the Movember 2022 international campaign, from <https://fr.movember.com/about-us/our-financials>

## Bionote

**Giulia Rizzo** is specialized in energy solutions for medical implantable devices. Nowadays she is a postdoctoral researcher at INSERM, where she works on biomedical ultrasounds to wirelessly charge medical implants. Giulia was an MSCA PhD fellow in an ITN project. She developed her thesis in Paris, between the French company Valotec and at the laboratory C2N in Paris.

**Alberto Gregori** graduated in materials science and holds his PhD in Polymer Chemistry (ITN FP7 Establis). He worked as a postdoctoral researcher (ITN FP7 Osniro) further developing his skills in materials engineering, nanotechnologies, and R&D project management. Having contributed to the development and management of several industrial and EU projects on functional materials and coating, he works as R&D&I Manager leading and supporting researchers and companies in their R&D&I activities



research is important for the MCAA France Chapter, which wanted to be part of this. So it created a team on the Movember fundraising platform and collected 115€ from all the participants.

Furthermore, the MCAA France Chapter launched an internal contest to grow as an active community and increase awareness of this topic among and beyond the group members. The contest had two main actions, the first one was to push people to run and collect as much as possible in run km. The second action was focused on asking participants to not shave their moustaches during November. At the end of the month, they could send their photo and explain their motivation for attending the contest. The prize was a voucher of 50€ for theatre performances.

Aristide, the moustache winner, said "Growing a moustache initially started as a joke with two other colleagues at work last year. Discussing the importance of breast cancer awareness month in October (October Rose) which is rightly publicized and generally well known, we felt there is generally less alertness around Movember – a movement to support men's health, including mental health, suicide, prostate, and testicular cancer. Besides, growing this fine line of facial hair was also a way to tease our colleagues in the company who couldn't stand the look of us with a moustache. Starting with laughter, with time this led to people engaging in meaningful conversations, from early detection of prostate cancer to the importance of mental health

support. This extended not only to colleagues and clients visiting the company but also to family and friends outside work. Having lost a dear study colleague back in my student days from one day to another, due to suicide has marked me in a personal way. By taking the time to prioritize self-care and our health, we can be better friends, partners, and fathers".

Alberto, the runner winner, said "As a scientist and human, I think awareness is the first step toward prevention. Supporting research and concrete actions is important to me. I came to know the Movember initiative through some friends and the idea of using moustache to deliver a powerful message was funny and appealing. Having friends who got touched by cancer, seeing how difficult it was to open up made me aware of the mental struggles faced by them and their relatives."

The response to the activity was positive, but not so popular. The next year the MCAA France Chapter will support once again the Movember movement trying to involve more people, and, maybe, other Chapters.

Giulia Rizzo

Chair of the MCAA France Chapter

Alberto Gregori

Vice-chair of the MCAA France Chapter

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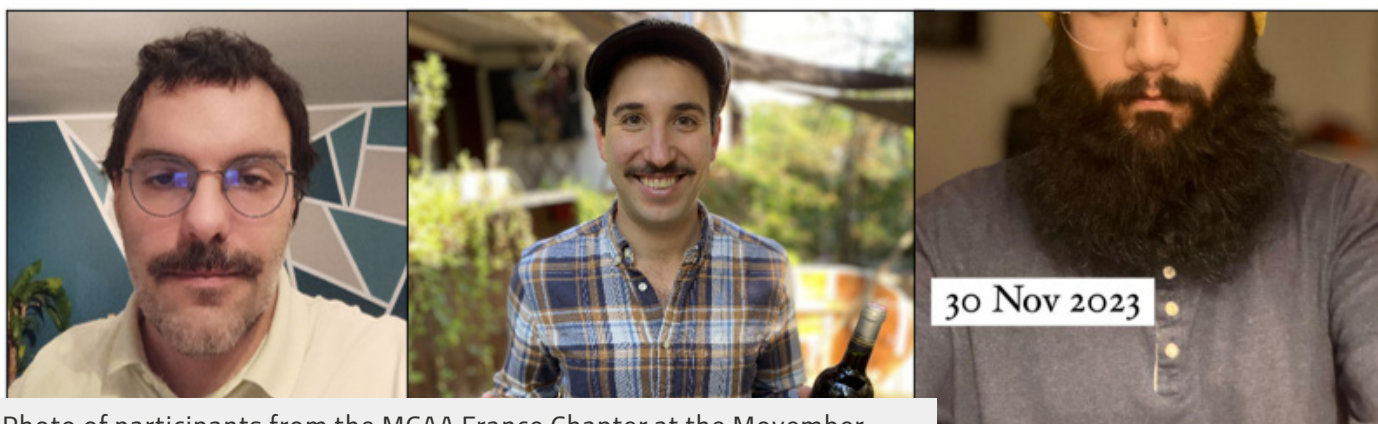


Photo of participants from the MCAA France Chapter at the Movember movement contest. From left, Alberto, Aristide and Shubham.

## News from the MCAA

# Careers after a PhD thesis in Social and Human Sciences

**Are you uncertain about your career path after completing your thesis? Are you wondering how you can apply the knowledge and transferable skills you've gained to your next job? Or are you considering a career in a different field to your doctoral studies? Don't worry, many members of the France chapter have faced the same questions before attending this panel discussion.**

On June 13, the MCAA France Chapter, in collaboration with the Maison de l'Île-de-France in Paris, organised the conference "Careers after a PhD thesis in Social and Human Sciences (SHS)". Following the success of the previous event, which focused on the career development of people with STEM doctoral degrees, the France Chapter wanted to provide a similar opportunity for PhDs in the social sciences and humanities.

The conference was held at the Maison de l'Île-de-France, within the Cité Internationale Universitaire de Paris, a campus renowned for its vibrant community of doctoral students, researchers, and postdoctoral fellows. This



Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

setting allowed the Chapter to bring five speakers directly to their target audience. Out of thirty registered participants, a significant number attended the event, which was chaired and moderated by Maria Clotilde CAMBONI, the Events Manager of the France Chapter.

Hazal AtayATAY, currently a consultant at the World Health Organization in the Prevention of Unsafe Abortion Unit, completed her PhD at Science Po Paris as an INSPIRE Marie Skłodowska-Curie (MSCA) Fellow. After her thesis, she sought employment that offered flexibility between academic and the industrial environments. Social engagement

and teamwork were her top priorities in this new job.

Olivier Burtin, is now an Associate Professor (maître de conférences) of American History and Civilisation at the Université de Picardie Jules Verne in Amiens, France. After earning his PhD at Princeton and gaining further experiences in the US, he leveraged an MSCA postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Munich to return to Europe, eventually settling in his native France. The postdoctoral experience can be isolating and detrimental to mental health, which is why he sought a long-term academia position. Working in academia can sometimes be challenging, but he values the dynamic and intellectually stimulating environment it offers.

Jürgen Finger is the Director of the Department of Contemporary History and the Publications Department of the German Historical Institute in Paris. After working in Augsburg and Munich, he first arrived in France as a DAAD Prime Fellow at the Centre d'Histoire de Sciences Po, funded by a MSCA Cofund, and then he decided to stay in Paris. Studying European history in both Germany and France has made him open-minded and adaptable to different cultures and approaches. The biggest challenge in his academic journey was the uncertainty of short-term contracts.

Acil Abdul Hadi is an Assistant Professor of

International Human Resource Management at ICN Business School. After earning a master in management from ESCP Business School, she worked for 6 years at L'Oréal, one of the biggest beauty companies worldwide. Building on this solid management experience, she transitioned to academia, pursuing her PhD at the University of Toulouse Capitole, as part of an MSCA research project on the global mobility of employees (GLOMO). The MSCA program enhanced her teaching and writing skills and allowed her to collaborate with other fellows across Europe on similar topics. After this positive experience, she is eager to continue her career in Academia.

Jane Elisabeth Wilhelm is a certified professional translator and literary translator. She was an MSCA Postdoctoral Fellow at the Institute du Monde Anglophone, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle. She has worked at several universities in Canada and Switzerland, and as a certified professional translator and communication consultant for international and non-governmental organizations. Her advice to future generations, based on her experience, is to navigate between worlds, create connections, attend conference, and engage with colleagues.

In general, to enhance employment opportunities, researchers should focus on developing distinct transferable skills tailored to both industry and academia. For industry, skills such as project management,





data analysis, and effective communication are crucial. Researchers should also cultivate adaptability, teamwork, and problem-solving abilities to navigate diverse, fast-paced environments. Conversely, for academia, researchers should emphasize academic writing, grant proposal preparation, and teaching skills. Critical thinking and the ability to conduct independent research are essential, along with networking and collaboration skills to build partnerships and secure funding. Researchers who excel in mentoring and public speaking can also stand out, contributing to academic discourse and influencing future scholars. Developing these specialized skill sets for each sector can significantly improve a researcher's employability and career trajectory.

These examples of former MSCA fellows highlight the variety of career paths available to those with a PhD in the social and human sciences. The speakers demonstrated how one can navigate between different sectors – such as transitioning from academia to international organizations or from the corporate world to academia – and

take advantage of international mobility opportunities, including using the MSCA programs to move to another country or to return to one's home country.

The speakers' presentations were followed by a question-and-answer session, where audience raised practical questions about funding, and other relevant topics. The discussion continued during the drinks reception that followed. The MCAA France Chapter hopes that this event will be valuable in helping SHS PhDs and PhD fellows discover and pursue their unique paths to success.

Giulia Rizzo

Chair of the MCAA France Chapter

Maria Clotilde Camboni

Events manager of the MCAA France Chapter

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Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina



## News from the MCAA

# Artificial Intelligence's Expanding Role in Science and Research: A New Frontier for MCAA

**Are you uncertain about your career path after completing your thesis? Are you wondering how you can apply the knowledge and transferable skills you've gained to your next job? Or are you considering a career in a different field to your doctoral studies? Don't worry, many members of the France chapter have faced the same questions before attending this panel discussion.**

## How AI is Revolutionizing Scientific Research

Over the past decade, Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in science. From the algorithms that personalise our social media feeds to self-driving cars that safely navigate busy streets, AI is quietly powering much of the technology around us—and the research community is no exception. AI is reshaping how research is conducted, pushing the boundaries of what we once thought would be possible.

AI isn't just another tool in a researcher's kit—it's transforming the entire research process. Take, for example, a cutting-edge AI developed by DeepMind at Google. This AI, known as [AlphaFold](#), has revolutionised molecular biology by predicting protein

structures with remarkable accuracy. What once took scientists years of lab work can now be accomplished in a matter of days, enabling faster drug discovery and a deeper understanding of biological processes.

AI's impact extends beyond biology. In astrophysics, [AI algorithms are helping scientists analyse vast amounts of data from telescopes](#) to identify new celestial bodies, such as exoplanets, that would otherwise go unnoticed. In climate science, AI models are improving the accuracy of weather predictions and helping researchers understand the complex dynamics of climate change. These examples highlight how AI is becoming indispensable across diverse research fields.

The recent explosion of generative AI technologies has taken this transformation even further. AI is now more accessible and versatile than ever, making it relevant across all research disciplines and levels of expertise. Whether you're a PhD student or a principal investigator working in physics, literature, or social sciences, AI has something to offer. This broad applicability is set to revolutionise how we produce knowledge but also brings new challenges. How do we ensure scientists remain experts and don't become mere AI technicians? What ethical considerations



An abstract, minimalist graphic depicting a man, a woman, and an AI-human robot, all dressed as scientists, engaged in a debate – Generated with DALL-E 2024-07

should guide AI's integration into research? How can we collaborate with AI to achieve better scientific outcomes?

### Leading the Conversation on AI in Science

At the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA), we are deeply engaged with these pressing questions. With a community of over 22,000 members, including a growing number of researchers and professionals specialising in AI, we have been actively exploring AI's implications. Our thoughts and findings have been shared through newsletters and seminars, including a notable [newsletter series in June 2023](#). But the conversation is just getting started!

As AI becomes more ingrained in our daily tasks—like writing, brainstorming, or even automating data analysis—it's crucial to explore how we can integrate these technologies to benefit all disciplines. The MCAA is uniquely positioned to lead this effort, thanks to our multidisciplinary

community that spans all research fields and includes professionals such as engineers, project managers, and policymakers.

To harness these strengths, we have launched the General Interest Group (GIG) for Artificial Intelligence. Our mission is to explore how AI can enhance scientific research and ensure this powerful tool is accessible to all, regardless of expertise. Core goals include sharing and making accessible information, co-creating and providing training, and offering policy advice on AI's impact on research. We are committed to a bottom-up approach, ensuring our members can focus on the AI-related questions most relevant to their interests. Whether it's using AI to analyse literature, navigating ethical dilemmas, or developing new skills, our GIG is here to support the community.

### Get Involved with MCAA's AI Initiatives

If you're an MCAA member and want to be part of this exciting initiative, [join the GIG on our website](#) and ensure your notifications are



turned on. Not a member, but still interested? [Sign up for our mailing list](#) to stay updated on our accessible seminars and material for the public. You can find all the relevant links on our [Linktree](#). If you want to collaborate, we would love to hear from you. Connect with us on [LinkedIn](#) & [Twitter](#) or reach out directly by email at [ai@mariecuriealumni.eu](mailto:ai@mariecuriealumni.eu).

Whether you're looking to deepen your understanding of AI, develop new skills, or contribute to the conversation on AI's role in science and society, we invite you to join this

exciting initiative—let's explore the future of AI in research together!

Quentin Loisel 

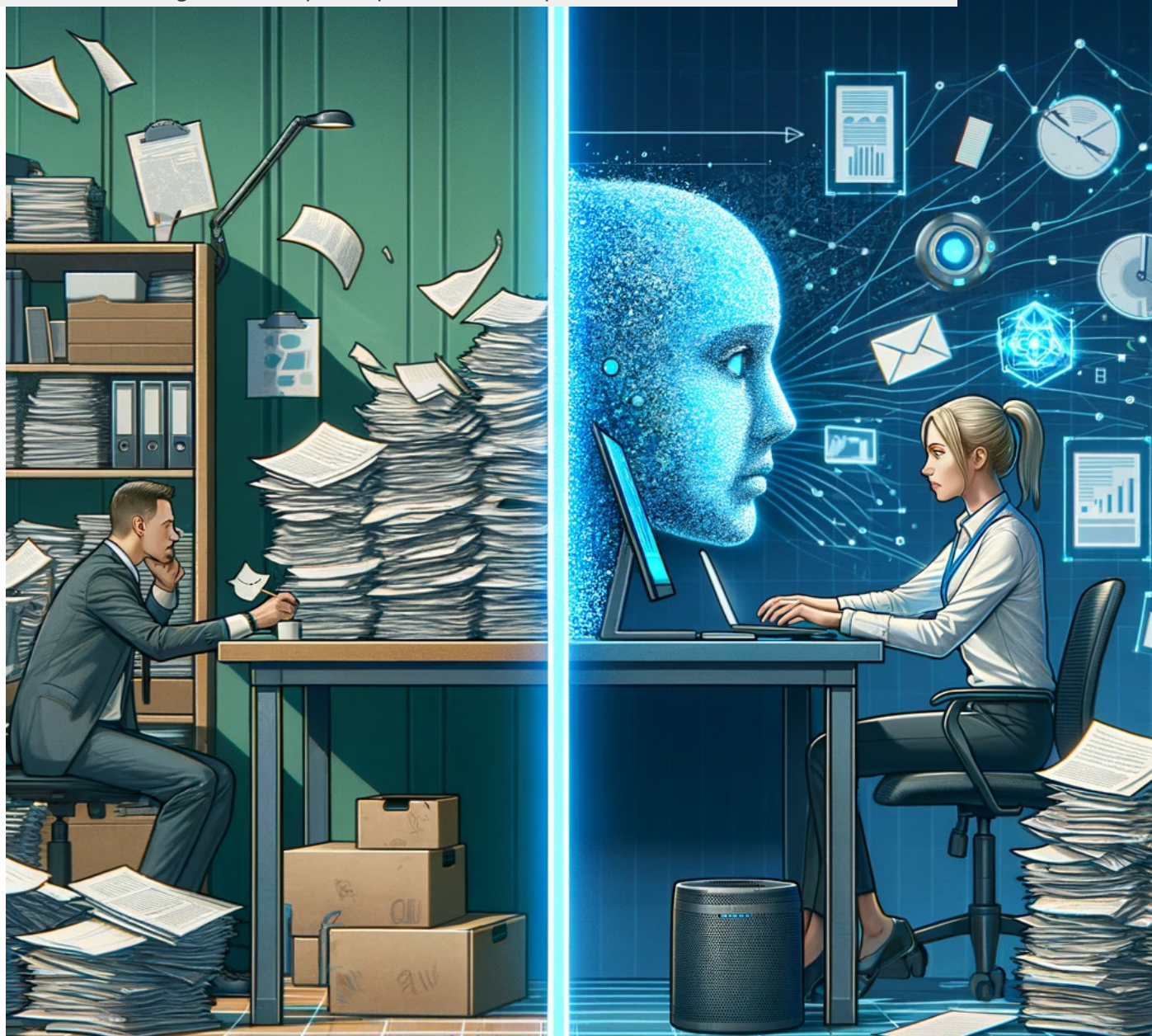
Coordinator of the MCAA Artificial Intelligence

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[X @q5loisel](#)

A professional and engaging presentation slide image illustrating the impact of AI on our way to work. The image should depict a split-scene concept – Generated with DALL·E 2023-11



## Partner



Ground-breaking research ideas need a fertile environment to grow, and the University of Padua (Unipd) has long been committed to cultivating one. Since 2014, Unipd has been a Host Institution to more than 130 MSCA Fellows and has participated in more than 450 actions within the Horizon 2020 and the Horizon Europe Programme.

Unipd combines history and innovation, attracting students and scholars from all over the world since its founding in 1222. Today, its International Research Office supports researchers in applying for European and International funding, notably through the University Talent in Research Programme: it comprises 4 complementary initiatives designed to attract outstanding postdoc researchers choosing Padua as their Host Institution.

### **MAster your Research and Training Needs programme – MSCA MaRaThoN@Unipd**

The MSCA MaRaThoN@Unipd is a training initiative for top candidates who wish to apply for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – Postdoctoral Fellowship (MSCA – PF) call. The International Research Office provides

# Talented researchers will always find a home at the University of Padua

comprehensive guidance and support to applicants through all stages of the application process.

A three-day course is usually organised in May, with application procedures opening in February.

Participating researchers receive specific advice and valuable tips on how to best draft their project proposals, working with experts, experienced MSCA evaluators, and awarded MSCA fellows. Additionally, they have the opportunity to meet potential supervisors at the University of Padua, and visit Unipd laboratories and facilities. The training course is open to 40 MSCA candidates. Selected participants have their travel and accommodation costs covered by the University of Padua.

If one commits to apply for a MSCA PF call with Unipd as Host Institution, the International Research Office will be happy to support the application. This includes sharing useful documents, guiding the applicant through



the administrative part of the proposal and offering proofreading services.

### MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd

Within the Horizon Europe framework programme the European Commission awards the "Seal of Excellence – Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions" to high quality MSCA – PF proposals scoring above the threshold of 85/100 or higher, which could not be funded under the available call budget. The Seal stands for the value of a project proposal in a highly competitive evaluation process, thus recommending it for funding by other sources, at the national, regional or institutional level.

The MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd funding programme offers a 50,000 euro annual grant to MSCA – PF projects that have selected the University of Padua as their Host Institution and have obtained the "Seal of Excellence – MSCA Actions" despite not being funded.

The MSCA Seal of Excellence@Unipd funding covers a research grant contract and a budget for research, training and networking expenses. For MSCA-PF Global Fellowship projects, an additional contribution to the mobility of 500 Euros per month is available, limited to the outgoing phase to a Third Country, up to a maximum of 24 months.

### Supporting Talent in ReSearch@University of Padua - STARS Grants

The Supporting Talent in ReSearch@Unipd – STARS Grants is a funding programme, running every two years (the next is due in 2025), welcoming young pioneers of frontier research. This initiative supports ground-breaking ideas with the potential to turn into competitive proposals for international funding, such as the prestigious European Research Council (ERC) grants. STARS grants are open to all scientific areas and fund bottom-up research projects of 30 months, submitted by individual Principal Investigators (PIs), who are interested in

carrying out their research activities in one of the 32 Departments at Unipd.

### Talent@Unipd

The Talent@Unipd programme is a scouting initiative, which aims at identifying exceptional candidates for the ERC Starting Grant (StG) and Consolidator Grant (CoG) calls, choosing Unipd as their Host Institution.

Applicants must match the ERC eligibility criteria and requirements. Upon agreement with their future Host Department, selected researchers are supported at each stage of the ERC application, including proposal writing, negotiation, management and reporting. The PI may benefit from a variety of dedicated measures, in line with the University current regulations, such as tenure track position or permanent position at Unipd.

For more information about the Talent in Research Programme at the University of Padua, you can reach the International Research Office at [individual.grants@unipd.it](mailto:individual.grants@unipd.it)



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# Accessibility Statement

The MCAA believes in a society based on diversity. A society where diversity is the norm, not a deviation. A society where diversity is a strength, not a weakness. Access barriers are created by a society that does not acknowledge the value of diversity. Diversity and access are foundational elements of the flourishing of the research endeavour.

As a community of researchers, the MCAA is committed to increase the accessibility of its products, services, and events. Under the leadership of the Editorial Team of the Communication Working Group, with the support of other Working Groups and the MCAA Board, the MCAA has been promoting a series of actions aimed at increasing the inclusivity of its community and reducing access barriers.

Since the June 2021 issue, the MCAA Newsletter has a new layout. The new design should make the reading experience more accessible by reducing a number of barriers our readers may face.

The new layout complies with many requirements of major print and digital accessibility standards and guidelines. For example, background and foreground colours were selected and paired so as to fulfil the AAA level requirements for colour contrast devised by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1). Colour selection and pairing also complies with requirements for colour blindness. The text is not justified in order to keep the spacing between words consistent and regular in the entire text. Line spacing and font size were revised and increased too. Each macro-section is identified by a different colour so as to provide the reader with a map of content organisation. The layout adopts TestMe, a font inspired by the Design for All principles. Last but not least, the PDF file now complies with PDF accessibility requirements and can be used by screen readers.



# Editorial information



## About

The MCAA Newsletter is the main communication channel for and about the MCAA community. It is a publication venue for science communication and public outreach. Its main aim is the dissemination of information about past and current MSCA projects, as well as activities of MCAA Chapters and Working Groups, events, and members' achievements.

The MCAA Newsletter is a registered publication (ISSN 2663-9483) in the Royal Library of Belgium (KBR). It is published by the Marie Curie Alumni Association, Kunstlaan 24, 1000 Brussels, Belgium.

## Instructions for submission

Authors interested in submitting an article should read the Editorial Guidelines and the Editorial Rules, and then submit an article **exclusively** through the form available on the [MCAA Newsletter website](#).

## Editorial Board

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## Acknowledgment



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