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The annual magazine of the MCAA

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MAGAZINE

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Letter from the Chair

Dear MCAA Members,

As we turn the pages of another edition of **IRRADIUM**, I reflect on a year that has been both demanding and deeply rewarding for our community. The first year of this Board's mandate has been marked by challenges, growth, and transformation: milestones that reflect our commitment to strengthening the **Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)** and its impact on researchers.

It is difficult to capture the full breadth of our activities over the past year in just a few lines. However, I encourage you to explore the quarterly **MCAA Newsletter** and the monthly **MCAA Insider** for a more comprehensive look at the many initiatives led by our dedicated volunteers. That said, some key developments stand out for their significant and lasting impact on our Association.

A New Phase in Our Funding Model

A topic that has shaped discussions over the past three years is the transformation of our **core funding model**. This shift became a reality with our first **Coordination and Support Action (CSA), MCAA-New-Horizon**, which successfully concluded on 30 September 2024. This project fundamentally changed how we operate, allowing us to **manage our own resources, expand our activities, and offer greater support to our members**.

Building on this success, we are now entering a **new phase of growth and consolidation** with the **CAPTAIN** project, our second CSA, which will run for the next three years. This continuity will allow us to **strengthen our internal management** and further advance the MCAA towards a **more professional and sustainable future**. Among the many activities already underway, CAPTAIN is supporting the organisation of the **2025 Annual Conference in Krakow on 21-22 March**, our



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flagship event that will once again bring our community together for collaboration, networking, and knowledge exchange.

A Growing and Thriving Community

Over the past year, our membership has continued to grow, reinforcing the importance of bottom-up initiatives within our network. This expansion has been accompanied by a surge in grassroots activities and a more dynamic engagement from our **Chapters and Working Groups**. Among the notable developments, the establishment of the **Slovenia Chapter** has strengthened our regional presence, while the **General Interest Group (GIG) on Sustainability** has evolved into a full **Working Group**, enhancing its capacity to drive impactful initiatives. Additionally, the launch of a new **GIG on Artificial Intelligence (AI)** reflects the increasing significance of AI-related discussions for researchers and society alike.

At the same time, the **MCAA Secretariat has expanded**, bringing in new personnel to support our growing operations. This marks a significant step forward in our journey towards a more **structured, professional, and sustainable** Association.

Strengthening Our Voice in Policy and Advocacy

Policy engagement remains a **cornerstone of the MCAA's mission**, particularly in advocating for **better conditions for researchers**. Over the past year, we continued our participation in high-level

forums such as the **ERA Forum and CoARA**, where we actively contribute to shaping the research policy landscape. In addition to these strategic engagements, we have also been involved in several funded projects aligned with the Association's core policy goals, particularly those aimed at enhancing researchers' careers and improving working conditions.

Furthermore, 2024 saw the release of three **major EU policy reports** (the so-called **Letta, Draghi, and Heitor reports**), which have sparked important discussions on the **future of research funding and researchers' careers**. The MCAA has taken an **active stance**, analysing these reports and ensuring that proposals potentially harmful to researchers are scrutinised, while also **supporting positive changes**, such as those promoting the new **MSCA Choose Europe** initiative.

Looking Forward

The road ahead is filled with opportunities. We must continue to **work together to shape the future of research and research careers and foster an inclusive, connected, and strong MCAA**.

I extend my deepest gratitude to all our **members** who contribute to making this Association thrive. Your dedication fuels our success, and I am confident that together, we will continue to make a difference.

Enjoy this edition of **IRRADIUM**, and I look forward to seeing many of you in **Krakow in March 2025!**

“The road ahead is filled with opportunities. We must continue to work together to shape the future of research and researchers' careers.”



All the Best in the Future

Dear all,

Welcome to the 2025 edition of IRRADIUM magazine!

We gather in Krakow not only as researchers, innovators, and in many cases visionaries but as inheritors of the legacy of one of the most remarkable scientists in history—**Marie Curie Skłodowska**. She was more than a pioneer in science; she was a symbol of resilience, brilliance, and unyielding curiosity. She reshaped the frontiers of science and its impact on humanity. I admire her deeply. And we should all continue what she started.

The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) flagship conference provides us with an invaluable opportunity to connect, share, and inspire one another. It is a chance to celebrate our collective achievements, forge new partnerships, and envision the future we can build together.

Volunteers Rule!

Let me celebrate the incredible volunteering efforts of the MCAA members. The commitment, generosity, and passion embody the true spirit of the association. Volunteering is the cornerstone of our community, driving initiatives, mentoring fellow researchers, and creating opportunities that extend far beyond individual contributions.

Over the past year, the MCAA has demonstrated resilience and innovation, forging new pathways in career development, sustainability, and equity. Through dynamic engagement, our members continue to push the boundaries of scientific inquiry and professional growth, reinforcing our collective commitment to a future where research excellence transcends disciplines, borders, and institutional silos. To mention one of millions - the **MEDNIGHT** project unveiled the true spirit of collaboration in order to foster engagement and understanding across diverse audiences.

This edition underscores the impact of the MCAA's initiatives in policy advocacy, sustainability, and inclusivity. From the establishment of strategic collaborations with governmental institutions to thought leadership in reforming research assessment through the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (**CoARA**), the MCAA has reinforced its role as a change-maker in the scientific community.

CoARA has been a key driver in reforming outdated evaluation methods, promoting a more inclusive and transparent assessment system that values diverse research contributions beyond traditional metrics.



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Next, the MCAA has taken a leading role in promoting academic integrity and transparency by supporting the establishment of the Observatory for Academic Whistleblowing through its involvement in the **PAOLA** project. This initiative aims to provide researchers with the resources and support necessary to report misconduct while fostering a culture of accountability within academic institutions.

Through its participation in the **SECURE** project, the MCAA is actively contributing to the development of a Research Career Framework that enhances career sustainability for researchers across Europe. This initiative aims to address precarity in research careers by promoting fair employment conditions, structured career pathways, and improved mobility opportunities.

Chapters and Working Groups took on pivotal roles in fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, enhancing career opportunities, and advocating for equitable research environments. From international conferences and networking initiatives to impactful policy discussions or citizen science projects, the MCAA members have worked tirelessly to ensure that the scientific community remains inclusive and forward-thinking.

Thank you all for making a difference.

What will the Future Bring?

We currently live in a very turbulent world. The meeting of the MCAA community presents an island of stability, peace and knowledge. The

topic of the conference, “**Research and Innovation in a rapidly evolving world**”, reflects well that we will face new challenges soon.

In today’s fast-paced world, research and innovation as well as geopolitical situations are transforming rapidly. Advances in technology and data have accelerated discovery, shrinking the time from idea to application. As we navigate the evolving landscape of research and innovation, IRRADIUM 2025 not only reflects on the successes of the past year but also sets the stage for the future. And the MCAA remains steadfast in its mission to empower researchers with the tools, knowledge, and connections they need to thrive.

However, this evolution demands adaptive strategies, collaboration, and a commitment to ethical and sustainable progress. At the intersection of curiosity and societal need, research and innovation remain the keystones of our future.

Let me sum it up with: “The best way to predict the future is to invent it” foresees Alan Kay, an American computer scientist and pioneer. Kevin Kelly, the founding executive editor of Wired magazine, adds: “Technological advances could allow us to see more clearly into our own lives.” Hence, we have the future of our societies in our hands. If we work on it together!

Last year we celebrated 10 years of the MCAA. I am curious what awaits us in the future!



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Building Careers, Communities, and a Sustainable Future: 2024 MCAA Achievements and Initiatives

In 2024, the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) made significant strides in career development, sustainability, and equity, through the collective efforts of 37 Chapters and 11 Working Groups (WGs). By organizing transformative workshops, forums, and global collaborations, the MCAA has empowered researchers and tackled key challenges within the academic and professional landscape. Discover how the MCAA's collective vision continues to shape a sustainable and equitable future for science and society.

Strengthening the MCAA Community: A Year in Review

With a **diverse network** spanning **academia, research, and industry**, the **MCAA** has reinforced its mission to promote career development, foster interdisciplinary collaboration, and advocate for researchers across disciplines. In 2024, the Association strengthened its global presence by hosting events that addressed both regional and global research challenges while fostering community bonds. Guided by its commitment to a sustainable and equitable research environment, the MCAA prioritized career development, with Chapters and WGs offering skills workshops, interdisciplinary collaborations, and practical guidance. These initiatives addressed local challenges while contributing to the broader goal of enhancing the global research ecosystem. This article highlights the MCAA's efforts to





The International Youth Scholars Exchange Conference and the 2nd Annual Conference of the MCAA China Chapter in Hangzhou, China.

connect researchers, empower members, and advance its mission of building an inclusive and impactful research community.

Career Development in Action: A 2024 Retrospective

MCAA Chapters worldwide have played a pivotal role in supporting career development, fostering skill-building, and expanding professional opportunities. In **2024**, Chapters designed **career-enhancing initiatives** to help researchers navigate **an increasingly competitive global job market**.

For example, the MCAA UK Chapter emphasized professional growth through events like the Early-Career Researcher (ECR) Summer Day, which offered workshops on public speaking and career mapping. Participants gained hands-on skills in effective communication and explored diverse career trajectories

through interactive sessions with industry experts. The first edition of the ECR Summer Day, attended by 65 participants, featured professional speed dating sessions and panel discussions on post-thesis and postdoc opportunities. The Chapter also launched the City Ambassador Program, a unique initiative designed to support MCAA members who face frequent relocations by providing localized resources to ease transitions and foster stronger community ties. This program exemplifies the Chapter's commitment to equity and sustainable professional development.

Across the Atlantic, the Mexico Chapter took the lead in fostering interdisciplinary collaborations through initiatives such as the 'Primer Encuentro de Liderazgo Científico Joven de México'. This event brought together emerging leaders from various sectors, including politics, academia, and private industry, to discuss pressing global challenges. Monthly stakeholder meetings further expanded networking opportunities, creating bridges to non-traditional career pathways for ECRs and strengthening the local research ecosystem. Meanwhile, the MCAA China Chapter focused on global connectivity and grant preparation, organizing hybrid events like the International Youth Scholars Exchange Conference and the 2024 Spring Seminar. The latter, held online on May 25, 2024, was simultaneously live-streamed on the CESEES Association and the Kouxiang Academic platforms, attracting thousands of viewers. Topics included career development, interviewing, talent policies, and the preparation of grant applications, including European

Research Council (ERC) grants and Chinese returnee talent programs. This seminar was widely praised for its practical value in career growth and research funding.

The Career Development WG introduced exciting new leadership webinars, with the seminar 'Strategies for Research Career Development: The Importance of Collaborations' led by Mahesh Kumar, which provided insights into building a successful research career through strategic collaborations, benefiting from the speaker's extensive experience. Additionally, a webinar entitled 'MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship: What I Know About Getting One' by Valerio F. Annesse focused on sharing actionable advice for securing this competitive fellowship. The Spain-Portugal Chapter and the Career Development WG jointly organized a webinar addressing career transitions for researchers, showcasing diverse paths in academia and industry. Speakers discussed challenges during job transitions, early experiences in the private sector, and collaboration strategies in multidisciplinary environments. Moderated by Süreyya Akyüz, the event highlighted the critical role of MSCA Fellowships in expanding career opportunities beyond traditional research roles. Similarly, Denmark's SUND Postdoc Appreciation Week 2024, organized by the University of Copenhagen and supported by the MCAA Denmark Chapter, celebrated the contributions of postdocs and assistant professors. The Chapter hosted a panel debate featuring MCAA members who successfully transitioned from PhD or Postdoc positions into diverse roles, focusing on opportunities beyond academia.

The Ireland Chapter launched the 'Researcher Spotlight' initiative to celebrate the achievements of Chapter members by featuring their career transitions and collaborations on social media, inspiring and informing the broader community while showcasing their unique and valuable contributions. Additionally, the inaugural Artificial Intelligence (AI) Awareness – Town Hall series was organized in collaboration with the UK Chapter. Similarly, in North America, members and panelists shared insights into international postdoc opportunities and the value of pursuing a postdoc abroad. Discussions highlighted the challenges and priorities for improving the postdoc experience in Canada and globally. The Argentina, Brazil, and Greece Chapters organized a virtual round-table where researchers who transitioned from academia to startups shared their experiences and actionable insights.

Recognizing that career development extends beyond professional skills, mental health and well-being became a focal point in Italy. A workshop organized by the Italy Chapter delved into the impact of mental health literacy in academia, emphasizing the importance of fostering a healthier professional ecosystem. The event also included practical workshops on communication and career management skills. Meanwhile, in Austria, participation in the Danube Rectors Conference 2024 allowed the Chapter to discuss leadership challenges in staff career development with focus on ECRs.

Complementing these efforts, the ability to secure research funding is a crucial skill for advancing in



Image by Ilona Uryga-Bugajska, the MCAA Poland Chapter Vice-Chair



Exploring work-life balance and mobility challenges: MCAA Poland Chapter's 2024 Annual Meeting and workshop on Harmony in Research

academia and other research-oriented careers. Several MCAA Chapters and WGs have placed a strong emphasis on training and resources for preparing successful grant applications, including high-profile grants such as the ERC and MSCA Fellowships. The MCAA China Chapter's 2024 Spring Seminar addressed the preparation of Chinese and English grant applications, providing practical advice on applying for ERC grants, overseas returnee talent programs, and job searches, enabling scholars to navigate funding landscapes at domestic and international levels. In Japan, a webinar organized by the Chapter featured Angelo Cangelosi, an ERC Advanced Grant awardee, who shared insights into the grant application process and strategies for success. The Communication WG led a webinar by Rajiv Vaid Basaiawamoit that explored strategies for collaborative grant writing, emphasizing balancing perspectives, aligning team goals, and fostering an entrepreneurial yet engaging approach.

Networking, Coordination, and Growth Initiatives over 2024

Throughout the year, the MCAA Chapters worldwide organized diverse networking events that brought members together both virtually and in person. The China Chapter made significant strides with its Spring Seminar, drawing over 9,000 online viewers, and later hosted the International Youth Scholars Exchange Conference in Hangzhou. This hybrid event attracted over 300 on-site attendees and 120,000 online participants, featuring distinguished speakers, including Academician Weihong Tan, members of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, and Nobel Prize Committee Member Andrew Ewing. The event's success garnered attention from major Chinese media outlets.

In Europe, the Austria Chapter demonstrated innovative approaches to community building, organizing networking sessions following MSCA workshops at the University of Graz and a festive Christmas market meetup that brought together members from Austria, Hungary, and Slovenia. Despite unexpected challenges, such as a fire at Naschmarkt, the members quickly adapted by relocating to alternative venues, showcasing the community's resilience, commitment and flexibility. Meanwhile, in Denmark, the Chapter combined networking with mental health awareness by organizing nature walks that provided a serene setting for building connections while promoting well-being.

The France, Benelux, Greece, India, Mexico, North America,



Jenny Lind Elmaco, the Chair of the GEDI WG, attending the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Beijing+30 Review at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

and Poland Chapters established regular meetups, ranging from monthly in-person gatherings to virtual coffee sessions. Similarly, the Gender, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (GEDI), Policy, and the Research Management WGs fostered continuous dialogue through recurring events, creating sustained opportunities for members to connect, share experiences, and collaborate on shared interests.

As networking efforts strengthened globally, 2024 saw unprecedented collaboration between Chapters and WGs. The Asian Chapters (China, India, Japan, and Southeast Asia) launched the “AsiaConnect” series, focusing on environmental science and innovations in computer science and AI. This initiative demonstrates the power of regional cooperation in addressing global challenges.

The Argentina, Brazil, and Greece Chapters joined forces to explore entrepreneurial pathways through their virtual round-table event ‘Career Transition: From Academia to Startup Founder.’ This collaborative session featured successful

entrepreneurs from all three countries who shared their journeys from academic careers to launching their own startups. Each speaker delivered insights into their career transitions and the challenges they faced, followed by an interactive discussion that allowed participants to delve deeper into the realities of academic entrepreneurship.

Collaboration between the Sustainability, Research Funding, and Communication WGs culminated in an impactful webinar titled ‘How to Secure Research Funding for Environmental Sustainability: Aligning with Global Goals and the MSCA Green Charter’, led by Polat Goktas. This joint initiative equipped participants with strategies for developing EU project proposals that integrate sustainability objectives. The session provided valuable insights on identifying relevant funding calls, incorporating sustainability criteria into proposals, and aligning projects with both the MSCA Green Charter and UN Sustainable Development Goals. Through this collaborative effort, the WGs demonstrated how combining

their expertise could better support members in developing impactful research proposals that address pressing environmental challenges.

The Association's growth was marked by the establishment of new WGs and Chapters as well as strengthening existing ones. The launch of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) General Interest Group opened new avenues for exploring AI's impact on research. The Sustainability WG's upgrade to official WG status demonstrated MCAA's commitment to environmental responsibility.

The MCAA's global influence expanded significantly in 2024 as Chapters and WGs forged strategic partnerships with governmental institutions worldwide. These collaborations enhanced MCAA's visibility as well as established the association as a respected voice in shaping research policies and fostering international scientific

cooperation. For instance, the Poland Chapter fostered international scientific collaboration through events like the 'China-Poland National Natural Science Foundation Symposium' and the 'MSCA PASIFIC Project Networking Event,' focusing on interdisciplinary research.

The Poland Chapter, together with the Polish National Agency of Academy Exchange (NAWA) organized an event combining the Annual Meeting with a workshop entitled 'Harmony in Research: Navigating the Path to Work-Life Balance'. The event was opened by the chair of the Poland Chapter Michael Nones and the vice-chair Ilona Uryga-Bugajska.

The GEDI WG expanded its reach through strategic partnerships with institutions like the University of Almería and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

A hybrid workshop emphasizing the indispensable role of women scientists in conflict resolution and peacebuilding organized by GEDI WG.

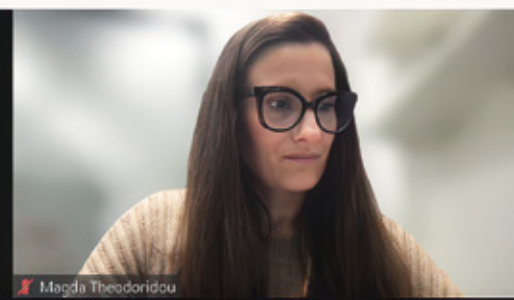
Marie
Curie



WOMEN, SCIENCE
AND DIPLOMACY

AND

PEACE



Advancing Sustainability and Equity: MCAA's Collective Efforts in 2024

Sustainability and equity remained central to the activities of the MCAA in 2024, as Chapters and WGs across the globe championed initiatives that harmonized environmental stewardship and inclusivity. These principles have become embedded in the fabric of the MCAA's mission, driving impactful projects and fostering global collaborations to build a more equitable and sustainable future.

Led by Chair Alexandra Dubini and Vice-Chairs Mariana Rosco and Polat Goktas, the Sustainability WG unites 69 members from diverse disciplines. Its mission is to reduce research's environmental impact and promote sustainable behaviors. Though in its early stages, the WG is laying the groundwork for initiatives to advance sustainability in research, education, and beyond.

Chapters worldwide demonstrated the power of collective action in advancing the sustainability goals. The Romania Chapter's flagship event in Predeal beautifully blended sustainability with social well-being. Tree planting and nature walks reinforced the importance of connecting with the environment while addressing climate challenges. Similarly, the Western Balkans Chapter made significant contributions to the discourse on equitable energy transitions through the International Conference on Renewable Energies and Smart Technologies. Discussions emphasized inclusivity, ensuring that the shift to renewable energy benefits all

segments of society, particularly marginalized communities.

Across continents, the MCAA members showcased a deep commitment to equity. The GEDI WG led efforts to foster diversity and inclusion in science through multiple events, including the groundbreaking 1st Gender Equity and Research Symposium (GEaRs). By bringing together researchers, policymakers, and industry leaders, the symposium catalyzed discussions on equitable hiring practices, recognizing family responsibilities, and fostering gender parity in academia. Complementing this, GEDI collaborated with the Italian Research Staff Association to spotlight the role of women scientists in peacebuilding and international diplomacy, highlighting their critical contributions to sustainable development and global understanding.

The Poland Chapter also advanced the conversation on balancing sustainability with personal and professional growth. Through events like the 'Harmony in Research' workshop, members

The MCAA France Chapter members participating in sustainability-themed team-building activities.

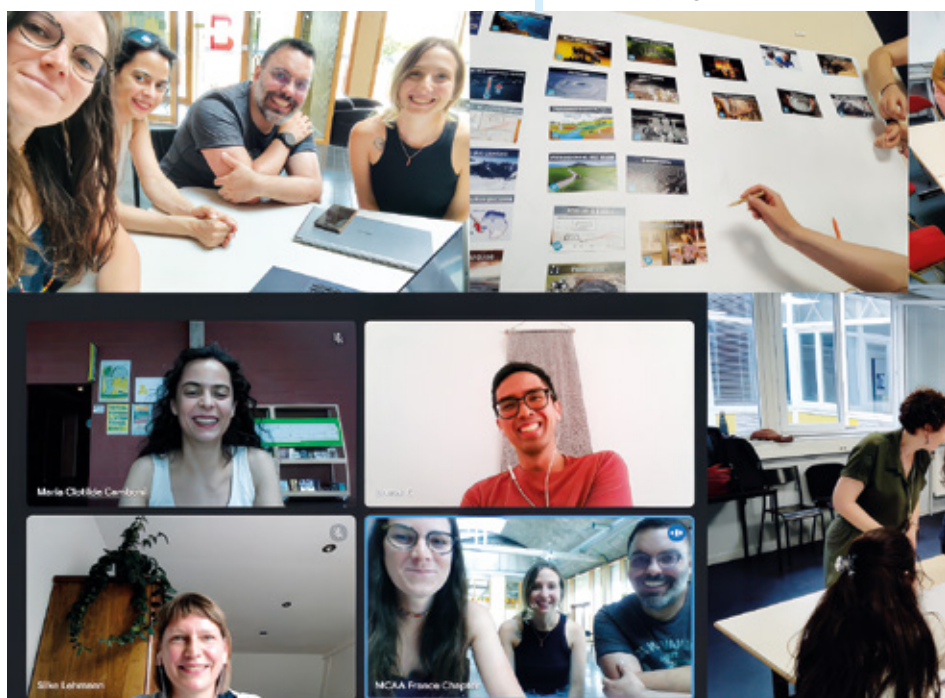


Photo by Giulia Rizzo

Through the collective efforts of 37 Chapters and 11 Working Groups, the MCAA has empowered researchers and tackled key challenges within the academic and professional landscape

explored strategies for integrating work-life balance into research practices. This initiative resonated with researchers navigating the challenges of high mobility and shifting career landscapes. Similarly, the France Chapter continued to lead by example, blending sustainability with team-building activities, including climate-focused games that encouraged participants to explore innovative solutions for environmental challenges.

Through these diverse and impactful initiatives, the MCAA Chapters and WGs have collectively advanced the principles of sustainability and equity. These efforts, spanning continents and disciplines, reflect the association's unwavering commitment to building a research community that is inclusive, environmentally conscious, and united by shared values.

Conclusions

As we reflect on this year's achievements, it is evident that the MCAA's strength lies in its ability to foster meaningful connections while addressing contemporary challenges. The integration of virtual and in-person events, coupled with cross-Chapter/WG collaborations and innovative initiatives, has created a more robust and dynamic network. By connecting the MSCA community, supporting career development, and advocating for researchers across disciplines and career stages, the MCAA has remained steadfast in advancing its mission. The association's commitment to inclusivity, sustainability, and equity has remained at the core of its activities, driving impactful outcomes across diverse regions and research fields.

With Chapters introducing regular meetups and WGs forming strategic partnerships, the foundation has been set for even greater engagement and impact in the coming year. The elevation of the Sustainability WG and the launch of the AI GIG in 2024 highlight the MCAA's adaptability in addressing emerging global challenges, such as climate change and technological advancement. These efforts exemplify the association's strategy of creating the conditions necessary for researchers to collaborate effectively and contribute to solutions that benefit society.

The success of hybrid events and creative networking formats demonstrates the potential for the MCAA to continue building bridges across geographical and disciplinary boundaries. Additionally, the Association's focus on career development has empowered members to transition into diverse roles, ensuring they remain at the forefront of research and innovation. Guided by its vision of fostering an inclusive and sustainable research environment, the MCAA continues to position itself as a leader in shaping the future of global science. As 2025 approaches, the MCAA reaffirms its commitment to fostering global scientific collaboration, empowering researchers, and advancing innovative solutions to address the most pressing challenges of our time. This unwavering dedication positions the MCAA as a beacon of opportunity and a driver of meaningful change within the global research community.



Welcome to the 2025 MCAA Annual Conference and General Assembly

The Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) Poland Chapter is honoured to host the MCAA Annual Conference and General Assembly for the first time. The importance of this event is further emphasised by its timing, aligning with the Presidency of Poland in the EU Council, which began in January 2025 and will extend through the first half of the year.

The 2025 edition of the conference is taking place on March 21-22, at the AGH University of Kraków, which is one of the leading technical universities in Poland, recognised for its extensive research and educational programs. The AGH University, with the largest campus in the country, offers a diverse range of scientific and engineering disciplines, particularly in technical and related fields, including research in space technologies and projects aboard the International Space Station.

The selection of Poland and Kraków followed a long process, with the Poland Chapter willing to host an Annual Conference for some time. Indeed, we know that the opportunity to organise such an event represents a significant step in promoting both the MCAA and the



MSCA across the country, involving not only universities and research centres but also policymakers and stakeholders, ultimately enhancing the attractiveness of Poland and its profile in the scientific community. The collaboration with the Polish National Contact Point for Horizon Europe and their involvement in our Chapter activities and the Annual Conference, support our objectives and will further enhance the quality of the event.

The vision of the Poland Chapter is not only to promote international collaboration but also to bring fresh perspectives to the Polish research and academic community by advocating for harmony and work-life balance in research. This



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theme was one of the highlights of the Chapter activity last year and the motto of our 2024 annual meeting in Kraków entitled “Harmony in Research-Navigating the Path to Work Life Balance.”



We hope to continue making a positive impact on the academic community across Poland.

The 2025 edition of the 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 the Polish institutions. This is a great occasion for universities across Poland to present their offerings to international students and academic professionals. We are delighted to welcome international researchers and encourage them to consider Poland as a successful centre for collaboration, innovation, and growth.

The conference features various social and satellite events, providing opportunities for networking, exchanging ideas, and starting new collaborations with colleagues from different places around the world. Additionally, it is a great opportunity for students and young researchers to gain insight into active involvement in scientific research and the academic community. We are confident that the conference will highlight innovative research and foster the exchange of great ideas with real-world applications, with delegates presenting from a wide range of scientific disciplines.

Kraków, a city famous for its rich history, vibrant academic scene, and cultural heritage, home to some of the most prestigious universities in Poland and a hub for students and tourists, will offer an inspirational environment for intellectual exchange and discovery, making the participation to the 2025 MCAA Annual Conference and General Assembly a truly memorable experience.

We encourage participants to allow extra time to explore the rich history of Kraków including the UNESCO World Heritage sites which are spread across the region.

We look forward to welcoming you to Kraków in March 2025 for what promises to be an inspiring conference, and a nice city break experience.

#MCAACONF2025
BLOGGING CONTEST



MCAA
COMMUNICATION
WORKING GROUP



Announcing the MCAA Blogging Contest 2025

The MCAA Annual Conference (AC) 2024 was not just a melting pot of innovation and collaboration, but also a canvas for creativity, as it hosted the exhilarating Blogging Contest organized by the Communication Working Group.

The AC featured a wide range of topics, from cutting-edge research to industry trends and personal growth. The participants could submit multiple entries, drawing from different sessions or the entire conference. The primary goal was to gauge what they had learnt and to encourage creative expression.

The response was overwhelmingly positive. The entries reflected

a strong understanding of the content and a genuine passion for sharing knowledge. Participants created engaging narratives that captured the essence of the conference. They shared their unique perspectives and voices. The event gave them a chance to express their insights and reflections. These stories also showcased their personal experiences and learnings. It also helped us to create a better AC in 2025.

As we look forward to the MCAA AC 2025, the Communication Working Group is excited to announce that the Blogging Contest will be making a return. We invite all attendees to take part in this

Image by MidJourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina





enriching experience and share their unique perspectives on the conference. **The top 3 blog posts will be rewarded with exciting prizes!**

Whether you are an established writer or new to the communication world, this is your opportunity to share your insights, inspire your peers within the MCAA community and outside.

Tips for Success:

Go beyond summarizing sessions:

Take notes and photographs during the sessions, dive into the topic, offer personal insights that will make your post engaging.

Quality over Quantity: Craft a well-thought-out blog post that adds value and sparks interest. Focus on crafting a post that adds value and sparks interest.

We are eager to read your compelling blog posts and witness your creative expression! Make your mark at the MCAA Annual Conference 2025. Let your creativity take the spotlight!

Make sure to submit your entries by April 25, 2025. Scan the QR code to read the rules and submit your entry.



BLOGGING CONTEST

The Future of EU's Research and Innovation Agenda Dictated by Competitiveness

The role of Research and Innovation in today's unpredictable world is more important than ever. Research and Innovation in the EU must be strengthened to maintain quality of life for European citizens and EU's democratic foundations.

The last European Parliament elections were held in the European Union (EU) between 6 and 9 June 2024. The elections brought changes at different EU institutions including the European Commission. These changes mean a transition in leadership in the European Commission but also a change in policy priorities.

During this transition time, a series of reports have been published, with the purpose of guiding the future direction of Europe. They all agree on the need to improve Europe's competitiveness, with Research and Innovation (R&I) as the key enabler.

[“Much More Than a Market”](#): Report by Enrico Letta (Letta, 2024)

[“The future of European competitiveness”](#): Report by Mario Draghi (Draghi, 2024)

Focusing on R&I, the policy cycle of the current framework programme that funds R&I, Horizon Europe (HE), is coming to an end. Planning for the next (10th) framework programme, currently referred to as FP10, is a priority for the new commission. In this context, the European Commission published a report on the interim evaluation of HE:

[“Act, Align, Accelerate – Research, Technology and Innovation to boost European competitiveness”](#), by the independent expert group on the interim evaluation of Horizon Europe (October 2024) chaired by Professor Manuel Heitor (Aerts et al, 2024).

The Letta report contains recommendations for the future of the Single Market. Interestingly, the first aspect this report explores is the addition of a 5th Freedom to the existing four in which the current Single Market framework is rooted into; the free movement of people, goods, services and capital. A 5th Freedom would enhance research, innovation, and education in the Single Market, adapting its needs to the 21st century.



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“The MCAA will continue advocating for the importance of the MSCA programme while giving suggestions for the improvement of its design and impact

The Draghi report exposes the need for the EU to grow and increase Europe’s productivity to ensure Europeans continue to benefit from Europe’s fundamental values; prosperity, equity, freedom, peace and democracy in a sustainable environment. In order to reignite growth in the EU, the report focuses on 3 areas for action: i) Closing the innovation gap, ii) A joint decarbonisation and competitiveness plan, and iii) Increasing security and reducing dependencies. Closing the innovation gap focuses specifically on advanced technologies. The report recognises EU’s robust scientific position however focuses on how the EU fails to translate it to innovative markets. In this context, the report analyses the weaknesses of the HE programme, recommending a simpler and more impactful design of a EU R&I Framework Programme with an increased funding allocation of EUR 200 billion.

The report from the interim evaluation of HE, on the other hand,

is fully focused on recommendations and suggestions to safeguard the EU’s strong scientific position while strengthening Research, Development and Innovation. The report gives extensive background to each of its 12 recommendations. The informally called Heitor’s report suggests delivering European added value through 4 interrelated and interdependent spheres of action, i) Competitive excellence, ii) Industrial competitiveness, iii) Societal challenges and iv) Strong R&I ecosystem. It suggests an increase in budget for the next Framework Programme to EUR 220 billion, exceeding the ambition of the Draghi report. Of special interest is the importance it gives to the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions \(MSCA\)](#) programme for both strengthening competitive excellence and attracting and retaining talent in Europe.

While the focus on R&I in all three reports is welcomed, there is no competitiveness without talent and without a highly skilled European

workforce. The MSCA funds excellent R&I and equips researchers at all stages of their career with new knowledge and skills, through mobility across borders and exposure to different sectors and disciplines. The MSCA helps build Europe's capacity for R&I through investments in the long-term careers of excellent researchers. Both the Letta and the Heitor's reports identify the MSCA programme as key for developing and retaining talent in Europe. Both advocate for its expansion and increase in ambition

while the Draghi report fails to even mention the MSCA when analysing EU skills and mobility.

The MCAA will continue advocating for the importance of the MSCA programme while giving suggestions for the improvement of its design and impact, such as the ones included in September 2024 position paper [MCAA's Recommendations for the MSCA in FP10](#) (MCAA, 2024).



Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

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Celebrating Effective Supervision in MSCA with Revised Guidelines

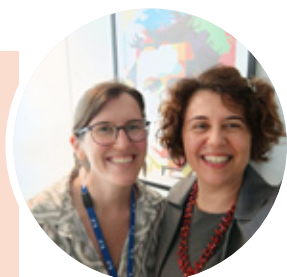
Under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), we strive to ensure that each of our fellows has the resources and support they need to help them develop their research projects, skills and careers. Effective supervision is a key part of this!

A Personal Story

As EU officials with a research background, we both feel deeply about the importance of supervision. Though we shared the good luck to have positive supervision experiences in our

own academic careers, we know this is not always the case.

Researchers at all levels, but especially those in the early career phase, need guidance and support in order to develop their research projects and careers. Not just that, but at supervisor level, we see an overloading of tasks, with supervision being crammed in with administrative duties, teaching, research and grant application. Supervisors, like the researchers that they guide, need the time to develop their supervision skills, the resources to support researchers within their team and recognition for the valued contribution that they are making to research through their work.



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Image by MidJourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina





Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

We know that the MSCA are full of amazing examples of supervision done right. We wanted to bring these to the surface and ensure that more institutions, supervisors and researchers can benefit from their examples.

State of the Art in Supervision

In 2021, the MSCA guidelines on supervision were published. These guidelines contain a series of recommendations for supervisors that could serve as a reference to ensure that researchers receive adequate supervision throughout the duration of their research project. The MSCA community had, of course, long recognised that effective supervision was essential to fostering excellent research and a positive research experience. It was chosen as the key topic of the German MSCA Presidency Conference in 2020,

where discussions with doctoral and postdoctoral researchers as well as supervisors from the academic and non-academic sector breathed life into a first iteration of the guidelines.

However, supervision practices and training have changed in the years since these initial discussions, and we want the guidelines to evolve with the needs of our institutions, supervisors and fellows as well as with policy developments such as the revised European Charter for Researchers. We specifically have taken note of the large strides made recently in supervisor training and collective supervision as well as the need expressed by stakeholders for more guidance on how to conduct effective supervision through concrete examples of best practices.

Evaluations of the MSCA by fellows have consistently shown an overall positive perception of their supervision experience. Still,

requests for action to set high standards of supervision have been made by the MSCA community. In order to discuss what these standards could be, a satellite event was organised during the MCAA annual conference in Milan in March 2024. This allowed us to discuss key questions related to supervision, hear from experts on good practices being implemented in MSCA projects and reflect on future pathways for further improving our policies in this area.

A Collaborative Process

The collaborative atmosphere fostered at this event motivated us to continue working on the guidelines in a participatory way. As our guidelines are designed on the principle that each actor—supervisor, researcher, and institution—brings unique perspectives to the collaborative research effort, we felt strongly that it was necessary to reflect this collaboration in the revision. With the assistance of our National Contact Points, we conducted several one-to-one interviews with leaders in supervision training and support across the research and innovation landscape in Europe to gather input and insights. This was followed by an invitation to a group of experts to join us in our efforts, bringing in their experiences as researchers, supervisors, and institutional research and training support staff. The experts also represented a number of important stakeholder groups, the MCAA of course who we see as our key partners in improving the MSCA programme, but also Eurodoc and the PRIDE Network of professionals in doctoral education. From within the

Commission, we also collaborated closely with colleagues in the Research Executive Agency (REA) who manage the implementation of all MSCA-funded projects.

The result was an enriching discussion, online and in person, about the nature of supervision, the (in)appropriateness of the term, the rights and obligations of researchers and many other topics. There was not always consensus among the participants, but the conversations, questions and discussions all served to shape recommendations for a broad range of groups, from a researcher applying to a doctoral programme to the leader of a doctoral school looking to update their framework.

The revised MSCA guidelines on supervision are the result of this process. They focus on the collaborative nature of supervision, the need for robust yet flexible supervision frameworks, a fostering of relationships based on open communication and institutional support structures that facilitate effective supervision through dedicated services, training and community-building.

We invite you to share these guidelines widely and to actively use them to contribute to an MSCA environment where research thrives and careers flourish.

Supervision practices and training have changed in the years since these initial discussions, and we want the guidelines to evolve

Building a Stronger Research Ecosystem: Europe's Path to Attract and Retain Talent

Europe thrives on knowledge and innovation, yet the competition for top research talent is more critical than ever. To maintain its global standing and ensure progress and sustainability in society, Europe must enhance its ability to attract and retain talented researchers. This challenge has been highlighted in the European Commission's Communication on '[A New ERA for Research and Innovation](#)' and reaffirmed in recent reports by [Heitor](#) and CAESAR (CAESAR, 2024).

"Universities are at the heart of nurturing talent and driving innovation. To fulfil this role effectively, we must ensure that research careers within our institutions are not only viable but highly desirable." (CAESAR, 2024)

The Need for a Stronger Research Ecosystem

The European Council's 2023 recommendation on a '[European framework to attract and retain research, innovation, and entrepreneurial talents](#)' underscores the urgency of strengthening research careers. Key priorities include:

- Enhancing mobility, skills, and career prospects for researchers.
- Promoting gender equality and diversity within academia.
- Increasing funding for initiatives like the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), with several groups advocating for a doubling of its budget (LERU, 2024).

Creating better career opportunities and improving working conditions for early-career researchers (ECRs) is essential for maintaining a sustainable European knowledge ecosystem. Universities, research organizations, policymakers, and industry leaders emphasize the importance of investing



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in these areas to ensure long-term growth and innovation.

However, these efforts are met with challenges, particularly regarding ECRs' health and well-being. At the same time, research suggests that young people's perceptions of their professional lives are changing, introducing additional challenges (Drive, 2009; Haski-Leventhal, 2020).

Addressing the Future of Academic Careers

Are European universities equipped to meet the evolving needs and

expectations of early-career researchers? The 2025 MSCA Presidency Conference, hosted by the Technical University of Denmark on September 18-19, 2025, will address these pressing questions. With a human-centered outlook, the conference will explore how academic institutions can adapt to attract and retain the brightest minds. Key topics include:

- Understanding the career aspirations of millennials, Gen Z, and future researchers.
- Developing strategies for an attractive and supportive research environment.
- Sharing best practices

Universities are at the heart of nurturing talent and driving innovation. To fulfil this role effectively, we must ensure that research careers within our institutions are not only viable but highly desirable

- across sectors to enhance career opportunities.
- Integrating perspectives from current and aspiring early-career researchers.
- Providing universities with insights into the future of academic working conditions.
- Encouraging intersectoral mobility and valuing research experience across sectors.

A Platform for Impactful Dialogue

The conference will bring together university leaders, policymakers, industry representatives, and other key stakeholders, including MSCA fellows, MCAA and Eurodoc members, funding agencies, and think tanks. By fostering discussions on topics such as working culture, well-being, academic talent programs, international initiatives like CoARA, the supervisor role, and intersectional mobility, the conference aims to generate actionable recommendations for the future MSCA programmes

on motivation and working-life of MSCA fellows.

With a focus on purpose, well-being, and diversity, the 2025 MSCA Presidency Conference will serve as a key platform to shape the future of research careers in Europe. The time to act is now – ensuring that Europe remains a powerhouse of knowledge and innovation, depending on how we invest in the next generations of researchers.

Join the discussion!

Attracting and Retaining Research Talent in Europe (ART) – the Annual MSCA Presidency Conference 2025.

18-19 September

Technical University of Denmark
Lyngby, Denmark

For program details and registration see [MSCA2025.dtu.dk](https://msca2025.dtu.dk) (open April 2025)

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NETWORKING

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Shaping the Future of Research Careers: The SECURE Project and the Path to Sustainability



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The research landscape is at a pivotal moment. While scientific advancement propels innovation and societal growth, the real-life experience of many researchers is marked by uncertainty and instability. The Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment (SECURE) project, an initiative funded by Horizon Europe, is stepping in to directly tackle this challenge by creating a comprehensive Research Career Framework (RCF), aimed at enhancing career sustainability across Europe. Implemented by a consortium of eighteen organisations, including active involvement from the MCAA, SECURE is set to reshape research career structures and foster a more supportive and stable environment for researchers.

A Fresh Vision for Research Careers

At the heart of SECURE's mission is the commitment to develop, test, and implement a unified RCF. This framework is more than a set of guidelines; it provides practical tools for institutions to refine their management of researchers, addressing key areas such as recruitment, employment, training, career development, and mobility. By mitigating precarity and nurturing a dynamic research ecosystem, SECURE strives to establish long-lasting, fulfilling career paths for researchers.

Structured around seven interconnected work packages (WPs), SECURE embraces a collaborative approach:



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Photo by Ivano De Pinto

Discussion on Researcher Career during the MCAA Annual Conference 2024 Milan. Speakers from the SECURE project partners



WP1: State-of-the-art on Research Careers
 WP2: Drafting the common Research Career Framework.
 WP3: Developing a flexible tenure-track-like model (TTLM).
 WP4: Implementation of the Research Career Framework
 WP5: Mainstreaming the Research Career Framework
 WP6: Project Coordination and Data Management
 WP7: Dissemination, Communication, and Exploitation

[classification](#) and the revised EU Charter for Researchers, the project is firmly rooted in recognized frameworks.

Crafting a Comprehensive Research Career Framework

The development of the RCF in WP2 has been a dynamic, iterative endeavor. The team scrutinized the 44 recommendations from the EU Council document, evaluating their applicability for Research Performing Organizations (RPOs) and Research Funding Organizations (RFOs), while organisations such as the MCAA added the perspectives of individual researchers. Key questions guided their exploration: How do these recommendations align with the Charter? How can they alleviate career precarity? What challenges exist in implementation?

Through collaboration with pilot institutions in WP4 and feedback from a survey conducted with researchers, the SECURE team refined its strategy. The second draft of the RCF now comprises

Aligning with European Policy

SECURE began its journey with a thorough literature review on researcher careers and tenure-track models. A major milestone was the release of the EU Council Recommendation on attracting and retaining research talent in December 2023. SECURE promptly integrated these insights, aligning its efforts with evolving European research policies. By leveraging established tools like the [ESCO](#)

“SECURE has the potential to revolutionize Europe’s research landscape



Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

around 80 actionable items organized into eight thematic areas: Interoperability, Conditions, Development, Mobility, Assessment, Contracts (TTLM), Pathways, and Governance. This structured “shopping list” empowers institutions and researchers to choose actions tailored to their specific needs.

Building a Flexible and Inclusive Tenure Track-like Model

WP3 delves into the intricacies of tenure-track systems across Europe, acknowledging that a universal solution is not feasible given the diverse national laws, institutional structures, and funding mechanisms at play. Instead, SECURE has pinpointed the fundamental principles that are essential for effective TTLMs: stability, transparency, competitive and inclusive recruitment, fair compensation, professional development, and responsible evaluation. By centring on these shared principles, the framework remains adaptable across varied research environments.

Driving Adoption and Empowering Researchers

To achieve the widespread adoption of the RCF, WP5 is dedicated to developing mainstreaming strategies. While institutions are crucial players, it is equally important for researchers to be empowered advocates for sustainable career structures. SECURE’s “shopping list” serves as a resource for both institutions and researchers’ organizations, encouraging collaborative support at both

institutional and national levels.

The MCAA has played a critical role in these initiatives, actively participating in discussions and promoting the outcomes of SECURE. During its annual conference, MCAA hosted a focused session on mainstreaming project findings, ensuring that the research community’s voice informs policy implementation. Additionally, specific instructions for researchers on how to navigate the new framework are under development.

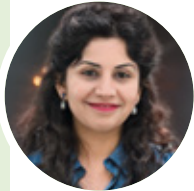
A Sustainable Future for Research Careers

The SECURE project represents a crucial step in addressing the structural challenges that researchers encounter. By fostering collaboration, defining universally applicable principles, and equipping researchers with the tools necessary to advocate for improved career conditions, SECURE has the potential to revolutionize Europe’s research landscape. MCAA’s involvement ensures that the voices of researchers remain integral to these advancements, fostering impactful change in the future of research careers.

Through SECURE, Europe is laying the groundwork for a more sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant research environment—one where researchers can thrive, innovate, and drive the scientific breakthroughs of tomorrow.

Breaking Barriers: How MCAA Supports Researchers in Citizen Science

European Citizen Science empowers researchers and the public to collaborate, making citizen science more inclusive and impactful. Through the Network of Researchers for Citizen Science and targeted workshops, the MCAA equips researchers with training, open resources and a dynamic network to integrate Citizen Science (CS) into their work.



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The European Citizen Science (ECS) Project bridges professional researchers and the public, fostering inclusivity, interdisciplinary collaboration and open science with real-world policy impact. By democratising science, ECS enhances large-scale data collection, reproducibility and cross-disciplinary insights. As a consortium partner, the MCAA aligns with these goals, equipping its research community with citizen science (CS) knowledge and skills.

Survey on Researchers' CS-Training Needs

In 2023, in collaboration with Université Paris Cité/Learning Planet Institute (UPCité/LPI), the MCAA conducted an online survey assessing researchers' interest in CS training. With 171 responses, the survey revealed strong engagement from MCAA members (43.37%) and MSCA fellows (20.48%). While many had experience in public



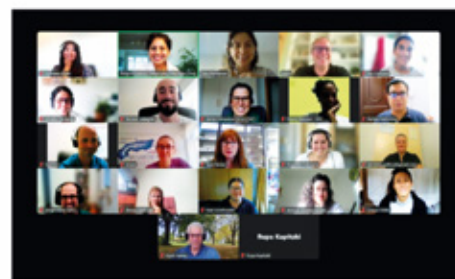
engagement, key training needs emerged: understanding impact, ensuring data quality and integrating engagement into research. Challenges included institutional skepticism, lack of support and unclear methodologies, emphasising the need for structured training.

Launching NR4CS

To address these gaps, the Network of Researchers for Citizen Science (NR4CS) - a collaborative initiative between the MCAA and UPCit  /LPI, was established. Since its launch in December 2023, NR4CS has facilitated training, knowledge exchange and researcher engagement. The NR4CS 2024 Training Series featured expert-led sessions on public engagement, participatory mapping, ethics, publishing, data quality and impact assessment. Sessions integrated member-led presentations, interactive discussions and open-access resources.

Open Access CS Training

Recognising the importance of open knowledge, NR4CS offers free membership to researchers across disciplines and career stages. Members gain access to key resources, including community-led discussion points, training summaries and videos (on Zenodo and on the MCAA YouTube Channel), and a mailing list for ongoing community engagement (nr4cs-subscribe@eu-citizen.science). An open feedback platform allows members to share experiences, improving future training sessions. By advancing accessibility, NR4CS reinforces inclusivity and collaboration in CS.



Collage showcasing NR4CS, MCAA events and ECS Consortium members

MCAA's Key Contributions to ECS

The MCAA has led critical initiatives within ECS to train researchers in CS. The project launched with a Satellite Event on Science Communication at the 2023 MCAA Annual Conference (AC) in C  rdoba, Spain, organised by Ruben Riosa and Mostafa Moonir Shawrav. This hands-on session provided researchers with practical skills for engaging the public and journalists.

In January 2024, Cl  a Montanari and Muki Haklay (UPCit  /LPI) co-led a virtual event where they explored "In what ways does citizen science

transform education?”. At this event, Pooja Khurana presented her volunteer project, “Menstrual Health is Public Health: Engaging Citizens to Break Social Taboos”, highlighting how CS principles can address societal challenges.

During the MCAA’s 10th anniversary celebration in Milan, Italy (2024 AC), two significant events reinforced our commitment to participatory research - a satellite event on “Public Engagement and Participatory Research: The Whys and Hows of Implementing Citizen Science in Your Research” and a panel discussion on “Stakeholders within Citizen Science: Don’t Forget the Citizens”. Both events received positive feedback for their informative content, inspiring speakers, and diverse perspectives. More details are available in our blog “Empowering Citizen Science: Discover insider tips and techniques.”

In September 2024, at the training workshop for Researchers participating in the Mediterranean Researchers’ Night (MEDNIGHT), co-organised by the MCAA and MEDNIGHT, Pooja Khurana led a session on “Engaging Our Youth: Bridging Academia and Schools through Citizen Science,” discussing how CS can enhance school curricula, promote scientific literacy and encourage student involvement in real-world research.

Expanding CS Support in 2025

Early-career researchers often face barriers such as limited funding, field-specific guidance and minimal grant-writing knowledge. To address these challenges, NR4CS is expanding its support in 2025 with two key initiatives. From May to July, a three-part MSCA

Fellowship Workshop Series will help researchers integrate CS into their grant proposals through expert insights, proposal development and mentorship. Additionally, the NR4CS Training Series 2025 will run bi-monthly from February to December, covering interdisciplinary CS topics such as social sciences, health data, big datasets in astronomy, and networking across CS communities.

Enhancing CS Integration in Research

Effectively integrating CS into research requires structured capacity building, greater awareness among funding bodies and tailored training for researchers. Strengthening collaboration between researchers, institutions and citizen volunteers is crucial, alongside targeted funding and recognition systems. Through NR4CS, the MCAA champions inclusivity, sustainability and impact, advocating for data privacy, CS integration in research assessments, and stronger academic recognition in collaboration with the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) and ECS. Research must be fair, ethical, diverse and sustainable, driving innovation and societal progress. Moving forward, centralised training, stronger interdisciplinary networks, and structured recognition will help bridge research and society, ensuring CS becomes a transformative force in shaping science and public engagement.

Through NR4CS, the MCAA champions inclusivity, sustainability and impact, advocating for data privacy, CS integration in research assessments, and stronger academic recognition in collaboration with CoARA and ECS



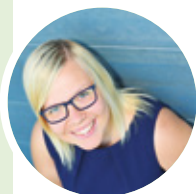
OUR VISION

**WE ENVISION
AN INCLUSIVE
AND SUSTAINABLE
RESEARCH
ENVIRONMENT
THAT ENABLES
KNOWLEDGE TO
BENEFIT SOCIETY**

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Change in Research Assessment Through CoARA Boost

The urgency for reforming research assessment is apparent. Traditional systems, which rely heavily on publication metrics such as citation counts, fail to recognise the full spectrum of scholarly contributions, including teaching, outreach, and community engagement. These methods often dissuade diversity in research practices. The MCAA recognizes these challenges and is dedicated to promoting more inclusive, transparent, and effective assessment methods. Through its robust network, the MCAA actively supports reform initiatives and is a key player in the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA), a global effort to transform research assessment practices.



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What is CoARA?

CoARA is a global coalition of research organizations, funders, and professional societies dedicated to reforming research assessment. It was established to provide a comprehensive framework for evaluating the diverse contributions of researchers, ensuring that qualitative judgment plays a more prominent role alongside quantitative metrics. Over 700 organizations have committed to the vision of CoARA so far, concurring with the [Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment](#), which outlines the guiding principles for a more inclusive and effective assessment system. CoARA's mission is to enable systemic reform through collaborative action, knowledge exchange, and mutual learning.

The MCAA's Involvement in CoARA Boost

Launched in October 2023, the CoARA Boost project aims to enhance the operational capacity of CoARA by providing essential resources and support to implement reforms in research organisations globally. This 36-month project seeks to develop new models for research assessment and expedite their adoption by institutions worldwide. Over half of the project's budget is allocated to institutions through cascade funding grants, which will directly support these institutional reforms.

The MCAA is excited to contribute to this initiative, collaborating with esteemed partners such as



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Co-Chairs Forum in Helsinki

Agenzia Nazionale di Valutazione del Sistema Universitario e della Ricerca (ANVUR), All European Academies (ALLEA), Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC), Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), European Science Foundation (ESF), Hungarian Research Network (HUN-REN HQ), Science Europe, and Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN). These organizations are working together to strengthen CoARA's mission and ensure its success.

Supporting CoARA's Working Groups

The MCAA and YERUN are leading the effort to provide operational

support to the CoARA working groups (WGs). These WGs are tasked with exploring and implementing innovative models of research assessment that align with CoARA's vision. The focus on operational support by the MCAA includes several key initiatives:

1. Supporting Working Groups

The MCAA, alongside the project partners, is actively involved in establishing a structured operational framework for all 13 of CoARA's WGs. This includes offering guidance, resources, and organizational support to ensure the effective functioning of these groups. These efforts help the working groups focus on their mission to explore and test new models for research

assessment. The MCAA is providing support to the following three WGs:

- Improving practices in the assessment of research proposals
- Multilingualism and language biases in research assessment
- Responsible metrics and indicators

2. Monitoring Progress

In collaboration with partners, the MCAA has developed a monitoring template to track the progress of the WGs, ensuring that each group is aligned with CoARA's goals. This tool promotes transparent sharing of lessons learned and provides a way to capture the WGs' milestones, challenges, and successes. Most of the CoARA WGs have already reached their first-year milestone, providing an opportunity to reflect on the progress and lessons learned.

3. Facilitating Knowledge Exchange

As part of its mission to foster collaboration and shared learning, the MCAA helps facilitate knowledge exchange among the WGs and the broader CoARA community. For instance, in collaboration with Finland's learned societies ESF, YERUN, and other partners, MCAA co-organized a Co-Chairs Forum in September in Helsinki, Finland. The event gathered Co-Chairs of CoARA's WGs, Steering Board members, and the Secretariat to reflect on challenges and achievements.

The Path Forward

CoARA Boost is well on its way to achieving its goal of strengthening CoARA's operational capacity and accelerating the global reform of research assessment.

With the MCAA's continued support and the involvement of its partners, the project is set to impact the research community significantly. By advancing new models of assessment, the MCAA is helping create a more inclusive, transparent, and effective research ecosystem—one where diverse contributions are valued, and research impacts are recognized beyond traditional metrics.

More information about CoARA can be found on coara.eu.

In Memoriam: Jean-Emmanuel Faure – A Tribute to His Legacy and Contributions

Jean-Emmanuel Faure, the team leader of Research Assessment within DG Research & Innovation, was a key figure in the establishment of the CoARA initiative. He also held the position of Project Officer for CoARA. It is with great sorrow that we acknowledge his untimely passing on February 14, 2025. Since 2021, the MCAA has had the privilege of collaborating with him. His steadfast commitment to the research agreement, culminating in the creation of CoARA, was truly commendable. Jean-Emmanuel was not only a distinguished professional but also an empathetic listener. We profoundly mourn his sudden loss and extend our heartfelt condolences to his family. We pay our respects to his memory and contributions; he will be sincerely missed.

The MCAA, alongside the project partners, is actively involved in establishing a structured operational framework for all 13 of CoARA's working groups

Unveiling the Spirit of Collaboration: MEDNIGHT and the Role of MCAA



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The Mediterranean Researchers' Night (MEDNIGHT) Project, funded by Horizon Europe under the MSCA, is a vibrant initiative showcasing the significance of research and innovation in the Mediterranean region. By bringing together researchers, communities, and stakeholders, MEDNIGHT emphasizes the rich tapestry of Mediterranean science while fostering engagement and understanding across diverse audiences.

As a proud partner in this endeavour, the MCAA has played a pivotal role in advancing MEDNIGHT's mission. Leveraging its expansive network of researchers and alumni, MCAA has contributed significantly to building bridges between the scientific community and the broader public. This article delves into the MEDNIGHT project and highlights the impactful contributions of MCAA.

At its heart, MEDNIGHT is about breaking barriers - between science and society, between nations, and between generations. Events such as exhibitions, educational workshops, and public science nights provide accessible platforms for interaction and dialogue.



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MCAA's Role: A Catalyst for Connection

The MCAA has been instrumental in driving several key MEDNIGHT activities, showcasing the unique value of its alumni network. Here are some highlights of the association's contributions:

MEDNIGHT's Core Vision

MEDNIGHT is more than a celebration of science - it is a call to action. By bringing together researchers, educators, and the public, it seeks to address pressing societal issues while fostering a sense of shared Mediterranean identity. The initiative emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration across thematic areas such as marine conservation, sustainable energy, health, and cultural heritage.

The "Marie Curies of the Mediterranean" Exhibition

Launched across multiple countries, this exhibition shares insights into



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Photo by CoARA



Workshop “the magic of science” by MCAA Western Balkan Chapter’s representative Samira Smajlović at primary school “JU Druga osnovna škola” in Srebrenik (Bosnia and Herzegovina)

the lives of 29 female researchers from the Mediterranean region, all MCAA members. Designed collaboratively by El Caleidoscopio and MCAA, and translated into nine languages - English, Portuguese, Spanish, Greek, Italian, French, Turkish, Arabic, Bosnian - the exhibition demonstrates the power of diversity and inclusion in science. By sharing these scientists’ stories, the event promotes gender equity in research, inspiring visitors of all ages with stories of resilience and discovery.

5th Young Researchers at Schools International Meeting

Held virtually in September 2024, this meeting featured sessions in five languages: Spanish, Greek, French, Arabic, and English. With themes ranging from climate change to biodiversity, young researchers shared their work with students from secondary and high schools across the Mediterranean. MCAA members played a dual role, as speakers and moderating discussions, making

science accessible and engaging for hundreds of young participants.

Mediterranean Researchers’ Night

As part of the European Researchers’ Night on September 27, 2024, MCAA Chapters from France, Spain & Portugal, Italy, Greece, the Western Balkans, and beyond participated in events across the region. Activities included interactive science experiments, games, and talks by MSCA fellows about their research projects. MCAA members also managed EU corners and supported event logistics, making science accessible and engaging for thousands of participants. This year’s Mediterranean Researchers’ Night, MEDNIGHT 2025, will be held on September 26, 2025. We expect many MCAA members to join us again all over the Mediterranean basin!

Tales of Midnight (Junior Edition)

This innovative science-themed literary contest for children culminated in the publication of the “Tales of Midnight” book in December 2024. Featuring stories in multiple Mediterranean languages, the initiative targeted diverse audiences, including children in hospitals and migrants in reception centres. The tales are available in 7 languages and can be freely downloaded: English, Spanish, Greek, Italian, French, Turkish, Arabic. By making science fun and relatable, MCAA contributed to nurturing curiosity and creativity among younger generations.

A Broader Impact: Opportunities for MCAA Members

For MCAA members, MEDNIGHT represents more than an outreach initiative - it is a platform for growth and collaboration

For MCAA members, MEDNIGHT represents more than an outreach initiative - it is a platform for growth and collaboration. By participating in events, members gain valuable experience in science communication, public engagement, event organisation and project management. These activities not only enhance their visibility as researchers but also provide opportunities to network across disciplines and cultures. The MCAA's involvement in MEDNIGHT demonstrates how collective expertise can drive impactful initiatives, inspiring members to take an active role in shaping the future of science in their regions.

to advancing its goals. Together, we are building bridges between researchers and society, fostering a deeper appreciation for science, and highlighting the Mediterranean's contributions to global innovation.

Whether you're an MCAA member or a supporter of science outreach, MEDNIGHT is a reminder of what we can achieve through collaboration and shared purpose. By harnessing the collective energy of the Mediterranean's research community, this initiative illuminates not only the region's scientific heritage but also its boundless potential.

For more information on MEDNIGHT and how to get involved, visit [MEDNIGHT.eu](https://mednight.eu) or reach out to the MCAA coordination team at mednight@mariecuriealumni.eu.

A Shared Future for the Mediterranean

As MEDNIGHT continues to evolve, the MCAA remains committed

"The Marie Curies of the Mediterranean" exhibition at the Learning Planet Institute in Paris, on the occasion of the French Chapter commemoration of the International Day of Women and Girls in Science.



The Observatory of Whistleblowing in Academia



In 2024, the MCAA joined a coalition of European partners to implement the ambitious project “**PAOLA: The PAndora bOX of whistLeblowing in Academia**”. This initiative highlights the MCAA’s commitment to fostering ethical practices and integrity within academic institutions.



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A Collaborative Initiative for Academic Integrity

Led by Instante Falante (Portugal), the project brings together a diverse consortium, including Stichting Scilink (Netherlands), Transparencia Internacional (Portugal), Università Commerciale Luigi Bocconi (Italy), and Dublin City University (Ireland) as Associate Partners. Throughout the project, the MCAA has played a key role as a representative of the academic and research community. The project’s primary goal has been to establish an Observatory for Academic Whistleblowing in Europe and to disseminate its mission through a comprehensive outreach plan.

Key Activities of the PAOLA Project

The PAOLA project stands as a testament to the value of cross-sectoral collaboration, a cornerstone of the MCAA’s mission to connect and empower its members globally.

The main activities undertaken include:

- Literature and legal reviews: providing a foundational understanding of whistleblowing across several European countries, contributing to the Observatory’s framework.
- Data collection: using both quantitative methods (surveys) and qualitative (focus groups) approaches to gather insights from diverse stakeholders, reflecting the complexity of academic misconduct and whistleblowing experiences.
- Development of an online platform: shaped by input from the community, the MCAA members and project partners, this platform provides individuals and organisations with valuable resources and inputs related to whistleblowing in academia. It also outlines the Observatory structure, mission, and operational procedures.
- Creation of an online Communication Toolkit:



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Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

designed to disseminate the key indicators and steps toward academic integrity. The toolkit offers practical resources to raise awareness and share best practices that academic organisations can implement to promote integrity and transparency in reporting unethical issues in academia.

- Outreach initiatives: targeting key stakeholders to communicate the Observatory's mission and resources, fostering connections between academic and research institutions to advance ethical practices.

as a centralized hub for sharing communication toolkits, international laws and guidelines, resources and research outcomes addressing unethical behaviour, misconduct or corruption within universities and research organisations. Importantly, the Observatory ensures that whistleblowers in academia are heard, protected and that their contributions lead to meaningful reforms in academic governance and ethics. By addressing these critical issues, the Observatory aspires to create a culture of accountability and trust within universities and research organizations.

The Launch of the Observatory: a Milestone for Transparency

Five years after the release of the European Directive on Whistleblowing, the Observatory of Whistleblowing in Academia was officially launched on 23rd of October 2024. This platform is dedicated to fostering transparency, accountability and integrity in academic institutions. It serves

To maximize its impact, the project includes a series of webinars introducing the Observatory and its accompanying Communication Toolkit. These webinars also offer insights from experts on relevant topics, empowering stakeholders to foster ethical practices in academia. Between 2024 and March 2025, five webinars were successfully held.

Moreover, the PAOLA project gained recognition from civil society

“The MCAA’s involvement in PAOLA provides unique opportunities to champion its values and extend its impact.



Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

by being named a finalist of the Tagides Award that recognises individuals and organisations that show efforts to promote integrity and transparency at different levels. While the primary objectives were to develop the Observatory of Academic Whistleblowing and implement an effective outreach plan, the PAOLA project also aims to:

- Enhance knowledge about whistleblowing in academia across Europe.
- Raise awareness within academic sectors about best practices for reporting unethical behavior.
- Promote discussions on policies related to misconduct and explore effective support systems for whistleblowers to prevent retaliation.

champion its values and extend its impact. By actively contributing to the Observatory’s development and outreach activities, the MCAA reinforces its role as a driver of positive change in academia. Through its global network of members, the MCAA facilitates data collection, shares insights from diverse academic contexts, and disseminates resources to amplify the Observatory’s reach.

Through the collective efforts of its partners, the PAOLA Project is set to make a lasting impact, providing researchers and academics with the tools and knowledge needed to address unethical practices and support whistleblowing initiatives, effectively.

The MCAA’s Role in Driving the Change

The MCAA’s involvement in PAOLA provides unique opportunities to



inaccessible

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 past issue, IRRADIUM has a new layout. The new design makes 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 through 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 a sans serif font, where all the characters are unique. Last but not least, the PDF file now complies with PDF accessibility requirements and can be used by screen readers.

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POLICY

**WE ARE A
VOICE FOR
RESEARCHERS**

WWW.MARIECURIEALUMNI.EU



12th MCAA ANNUAL CONFERENCE & GENERAL ASSEMBLY KRAKOW 2025

WHO WE ARE

- A international non-profit organisation informally launched in 2012, formally established in 2014, and supported by the European Commission.
- Members are current or past beneficiaries of the **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions**, one of the most prestigious funding programmes in Europe.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS



22,500+
members



155
nationalities



5
continents

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