



European Association of Geochemistry

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EUROPEAN JOB OPPORTUNITIES: MARIE CURIE ACTIONS

The European Commission has become a major source of research funding, but the variety of different programmes, actions and acronyms can seem daunting. An early understanding of these opportunities can be a huge advantage, however, as they can provide support at key points in a researcher's career. As part of a periodic examination of European job opportunities, we attempt to summarise and simplify funding opportunities under the Marie Curie actions of the EC 7th Framework funding round.

The 7th Framework (2007–2013) is subdivided into 4 themes aimed at supporting different aspects of European research through various actions, i.e. grants, fellowships, etc. *Cooperation* actions are to improve academia–industry links; *Ideas* supports frontier research; *People* comprises Marie Curie actions and *Capacities* funds research infrastructure. Here we only address current and future Marie Curie actions.



Marie Curie actions are to encourage mobility across member and associated (M/A) states in the EU, with the aim of providing borderless training and career development. The complexity starts once you see that the Marie Curie actions are then subdivided into a further 5 sections: Initial Training, Life-long Training, Industry Academia, International Dimension and Specific Actions. Each of these subsections can be further broken

down into actions that are applied for by individuals, such as fellowships and grants, and other network/partnership programmes that are initiated by host universities or other institutions. To remain coherent, it is better to summarize Marie Curie actions in the order of the types of funding provided. The most up-to-date information can be found in the pdf document "2011 Work Programme-People"; go to <http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people>, then look under "Find a document".

Fellowships

There are three types of Marie Curie fellowships that can provide salary, travel and research funds for individuals with at least 4 years of research experience, i.e. normally with a PhD. Probably the most familiar are *Intra-European Fellowships* (IEF), which can be held by researchers of any nationality or career stage, working in a European M/A state; these fellowships fund individuals to work within another M/A state for up to 2 years. *International Incoming Fellowships* (IIF) are designed to attract researchers from outside Europe, who are then funded at a host institution in an M/A state for up to 2 years. *International Outgoing Fellowships for Career Development* (IOF) are for up to 3 years; however, these have quite a complicated implementation. A researcher in an M/A state is funded to work in another M/A state, but before they go there they spend up to 2 years at a host institution outside Europe altogether. The application deadline is normally the same for all three fellowship types and seems to be in August each year. The fellowships have a strong emphasis on career development and knowledge exchange, and these aspects are weighted heavily in the proposal evaluation.

Grants

In 2011, there will be only one type of Marie Curie grant for individual researchers, the Career Integration Grant (CIG), which is an amalgamation of the former European Reintegration Grant (ERG) and International Reintegration Grant (IRG). This grant is mainly to provide research funds rather than salary, although it may support part of a salary, and applicants must be returning to an M/A state after some period abroad. This grant could, for example, be used to provide start-up funds for a new faculty member.

Networks and Partnerships

There are 4 such actions, with the most relevant to individuals being the *Marie Curie Initial Training Networks* (ITN). These networks normally comprise at least 3 universities (although a single site ITN is possible), but can also include industrial partners; they provide training for researchers in the first 5 years of their careers in a field defined by the network. A student studying for a PhD in their home M/A state could travel to an ITN member department in another M/A state and receive training for up to 3 years. Some networks offer complete PhD positions or 2-year post-doc positions. To find an existing network, search People, ITN at http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/projects_en.html. You should be able to find PhD vacancies by searching Marie Curie vacancies at the EURAXESS job database, <http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/index.cfm/jobs/index>.

The COFUND programme provides additional funds to national or regional funding bodies so that they may include a European mobility aspect to their fellowships. To most individuals this might seem irrelevant unless you happen to be the head of a national funding body; however, by looking at the national bodies that are funded under this programme you can find a range of further national fellowship programmes designed to attract foreign nationals; go to http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/people/cofund_en.html.

Two further actions are less relevant in the context of this article, but for completeness they are *Industry-Academia Partnerships and Pathways* (IAPP), which funds staff exchange and workshops to achieve the aim in the title, and *International Research Staff Exchange Schemes* (IRSES), which are self-explanatory.

One final **Specific Action** of the Marie Curie programme funds events during "European Research Night", which occurs yearly in September in European cities to engage the public in science and research.

So that's the Marie Curie programme in 900 words. The websites mentioned were correct as of December 2010. Sometimes we found that websites were not updated with the latest information, and in these cases we feel it is important to provide feedback through the help e-mail contacts on these sites. It is also worth remembering that the programme has always evolved, and there are changes to most actions in each call. So what are you waiting for? Go fund yourself!

This short summary may contain inaccuracies or omissions; full information can be found at the aforementioned websites. Feedback is very welcome at office@eag.eu.com; see www.eag.eu.com for further job opportunities.

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Pieter Bots, from the Netherlands, is a Marie Curie Fellow on a Research Training Network working as a PhD student at the University of Leeds, UK. Pieter first found out about Marie Curie Fellowship programmes through his professor in the Netherlands. He thinks one of the main benefits of this fellowship is the opportunity to go abroad, with the freedom to decide where, when and for how long. Being a Marie Curie Fellow has enabled Pieter to become part of a larger scientific

community, mostly through network meetings. At these meetings, he has had the chance to get to know other scientists working in his field, which is motivating and opens opportunities. When asked what advice he would give to other scientists thinking of applying for a fellowship, Pieter's response was, "Go for it, be yourself and show that you care about what you do."



Vasileios Mavromatis, from Greece, is a Marie Curie Fellow working as a post-doc at the LMTG, Toulouse, France, for eighteen months as part of a Research Training Network. Coming from marine geochemistry, the greatest challenge Vasileios faced was making the transition to experimental geochemistry, but his reward has been all the knowledge he has gained working within a large group and in a very friendly environment. The Marie Curie Networks bring together scientists from the same

field, and to Vasileios, these productive meetings are also an important step towards future collaborations. When asked about his advice to others, Vasileios recognizes that there can be some cultural challenges in moving to another country, but these can be overcome with a relaxed attitude; so he strongly encourages others to do the same.



Juan Diego Rodriguez-Blanco is a Marie Curie Fellow who has been working as a post-doc at the University of Leeds, UK, for the last three years as part of a Research Training Network. Juan Diego originally came from Spain, and for him, one of the most challenging aspects of moving to another country to do research was the language barrier. But that challenge was quickly overcome with practice. Another challenge was dealing with completely new topics and techniques.

However, many support mechanisms were available to him to make this adjustment easier: meetings, training courses and helpful interactions with specialists in the field. When asked why others should pursue a Marie Curie Fellowship as part of their career, Juan Diego explains that being a Fellow is not only about the research; it also involves lots of contacts and valuable interactions with other researchers, and since he has become a Fellow, his CV has considerably expanded in terms of experience, publications, proposals, specialized national and international courses and collaboration. It has certainly broadened his horizons.

Detailed interviews with these Marie Curie Fellows can be found at www.eag.eu.com/about/video-interviews/mc/.

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Farewell Words



Eric Oelkers, Past-President

I have just completed 2 years as EAG President, preceded by 2 years as Vice-President. What struck me most during this time is how much scientific societies are businesses rather than friendly organizations for the promotion of science. If run to maximize earnings, scientific meetings and publications can make huge profits. Private businesses know this and are doing their best to take over these profitable activities, leaving the societies to attempt to collect dues and give away some medals every now and again. The potential profits from meetings and publications are

huge. Consider this issue of *Elements*. I consider *Elements* the most significant new publication to be launched in our field in decades. The cost of this issue, paid by you through your society dues, is less than 2 euros; the annual subscription cost to your society is 12 euros. This can be compared to the official annual subscription price of *Chemical Geology*, which is 4586 euros. One can ask, where do these huge subscription fees go? They are not given to the reviewers or to the authors of the manuscripts, who generously provide these to the publishers for free. We are left with the question, why do your scientific societies continue to sponsor these for-profit journals, when they are draining our limited resources away from science. I also wonder why many of our employers believe that providing reviews and editing for free to for-profit publishers is a criterion considered in promotion decisions.

If properly managed, our scientific societies can run hugely successful meetings and a suite of scientific publications. The profit from these meetings and publications can be used to run speakers programs, provide travel fellowships to students, promote public outreach, and hire lobbyists to promote science to our government decision makers. In the business world there are many hoping to take these profits away from the societies. Going forward, the EAG and our fellow societies need to protect the meetings and publications we currently own and we should move to recover those we have lost, so we can better serve our community in the future.

Eric H. Oelkers
EAG Past-President

The EAG invites you to its social event
at the European Geosciences Union
General Assembly 2011
Vienna | Austria | 03 – 08 April 2011

Come, enjoy free drinks and snacks,
and find out about the EAG at the
«EAG Social Event» during the EGU General Assembly 2011.

Date and location will be on the EGU Program and at www.eag.eu.com

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