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The annual magazine of the MCAA

IRRADIUM MAGAZINE



Image by Fabrizio Martina

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The fruit of accumulated preliminary work

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Designing impact beyond research

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From advocacy to impact



MCAA
MARIE CURIE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Bridging minds, building futures

An alumni network
beyond research

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The fruit of accumulated preliminary work

As I write this **final letter as Chair**, I find myself reflecting on my four years on the Board, the last two as Chair, and on what we have built together and what may come next for the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA).

The MCAA has always been **driven by its members**. Over these years, it has grown not only in size but in how it works, moving towards a more independent organisation with stronger structures. That shift was not simple. It asked a great deal of many people and required rethinking how the Association should function to keep growing sustainably.

What follows is only a brief and selective account of some of the work carried out over these past years. It cannot do justice to everything that has been done, but I hope it may at least give a sense of the breadth of the effort and of the many achievements it represents.

Building structure and continuity

A real turning point came with **the move towards full autonomy** through the monobeneficiary Coordination and Support Action (CSA). But before that structure was in place, the Association went through a difficult transition. When the 2022–24 Board took office, it found itself with only very limited support from the outgoing contractors

and, for several months, almost none at all. Many essential tasks fell directly to Board members, on a voluntary basis, out of a sense of responsibility towards the community.

I remember this especially clearly in the preparation of the 2023 Annual Conference in Córdoba. Much of the work in the days leading up to the event happened at night, after full working days. I found myself spending long nights on countless practical details, such as designing badges and room signage, while constantly messaging Fernanda, Gledson, and Alexandra, who were also devoting an extraordinary amount of time to the tasks needed to make the conference possible. Alexandra, in particular, carried the additional responsibility of serving as local host at a moment when we had no Secretariat and no contractor support. Only at a very late stage were we able to bring in a local event manager.

What stands out most from that period is **the commitment that carried the Association through it**. In the past two years, we built on those efforts, securing a second CSA and growing the Secretariat into **an operational team of more than 15 people**.

Strengthening the organisation

Another major part of this journey has been strengthening the way the Association works. The 2024-26 Board may well be remembered as **the Board of procedures**. I say that with a smile, but the point is serious. We moved away from reliance on unwritten knowledge towards clearer, documented processes that help the Association function beyond any one mandate. A key result is the **Operational Framework**, an internal handbook bringing together



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the main rules and procedures that support much of our work.

We also paid close attention to governance and ethics, including through the creation of a whistleblowing channel that gives members a confidential way to raise concerns. **Growth matters, but the way we grow matters just as much.**

Serving on the Board today requires a broader understanding of governance and policy than in the Association's early years. We introduced **Board Contact Points** to give clearer responsibility for specific areas, and a Leadership Microgrant for Board members to pursue targeted training. We have also been developing a framework for how Working Groups (WGs) and General Interest Groups are created and operate, working towards more consistent practices across the Association.

A growing and truly global community

During these four years, the MCAA has continued to grow as a global community. We now have **41 Chapters**, and with the creation of the Oceania Chapter, the Association has expanded to a new continent. Our membership has grown from around 20,000 to **more than 24,000 members**, representing **161 nationalities**.

This growth is one of the Association's great strengths, but it has to be matched by the ability to support members well and to create meaningful ways for them to participate.

We also revived an earlier practice with **a dedicated in-person meeting of Chapter and WG Chairs**. Held in Athens in September 2024, it created

a space for exchange that online meetings cannot replace. I very much hope it becomes a regular initiative.

We also introduced **a structured call for regional events with dedicated funding**, supporting activities in several areas, including Latin America, North America, and Central Europe, because for a global association, meaningful engagement cannot happen only in Europe.

Expanding our role in training

Another area of progress has been professional development. Training activities in science communication were piloted successfully over the past three years, and a new course on policy is being prepared for the start of the next mandate. **The MCAA Training Programme** is still at an early stage, but it marks an important shift and has real potential.

Communicating who we are

A significant effort has also gone into communication. The **new MCAA website**, long-awaited by our community, marks a major step forward in how we serve our members. Closely linked is **the renewal of the MCAA brand identity**, reflecting the Association's evolution from a growing network into a more mature organisation with a clearer public presence.

The MCAA Newsletter has been rethought in format and purpose, reaching beyond the membership to a wider audience. The MCAA Insider has been revamped as a monthly bulletin for Chapter and WG Chairs, strengthening internal communication. We have also taken further steps to support the MCAA in its **role as a publisher**. As

“
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just as much

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The very nature of this Association is to bring people together

the MCAA continues to grow and consolidate the standing it has reached, I believe the importance of this area will only become clearer.

The opening of a proper office in Brussels is another milestone. After years with only a legal address, the Secretariat now has a real operational base, reflecting the stronger place the MCAA has earned in the European research and policy landscape.

Engaging at a higher level

Perhaps the most significant change has been the strengthening of the MCAA's role in the wider research and innovation ecosystem through more structured relationships with major institutional actors at the European level.

This was visible in key moments: **the first-ever on-site participation of a European Commissioner at an MCAA Annual Conference**, and the decision to hold **the first Annual Conference in Brussels**.

That trajectory reached an important milestone in December 2025 with **the first MCAA Policy Forum** at the European Parliament and the publication of the first MCAA Policy Study, **the MSCA Impact Report**. Together, these marked the beginning of a more active policy role for the Association. In parallel, the MCAA has deepened its engagement in the ERA Forum and in ERA Structural Policies and Actions, including through Stakeholder Group 4.

A collective achievement

None of this is the result of one person or one Board alone. These

achievements rest on foundations built over twelve years by many members who gave their time and energy to this Association. What the past two Boards did was build on that work and carry it further.

Looking ahead

As I conclude my mandate, I do so with a sense of both **completion and continuity**. Important steps have been taken that will strengthen the Association in ways that, I believe, will endure.

At the same time, **the work is far from finished**. What we have built is **not an endpoint but a foundation for the future**.

If there is one message I would leave, it is that **the strength of the MCAA** lies in its ability to evolve, adapt its structures and respond to the needs of its community while remaining true to its core values.

It has been a privilege to serve this community. I would like to sincerely thank all MCAA members who have shared this journey with me over the past four years.

Just over a month after the publication of this issue of IRRADIUM, elections for a new Board will take place. I would like to strongly encourage members to **consider putting themselves forward**.

Let me be frank: serving on the Board is demanding, very demanding, especially if one approaches the role with a sense of duty and responsibility towards the community. But it is also deeply rewarding. It is an experience that gives back a great deal and allows you to contribute directly to **shaping**

the future of the Association and supporting a global community of researchers.

When I reflect on my four years on the Board, I am often reminded of a passage in Marie Curie's biography of Pierre, where she says that the life of a "scientist in his laboratory is not, as many may think, a peaceful idyll. More often it is a bitter battle with things, with one's surroundings, and above all with oneself. A great discovery does not leap completely achieved from the brain of the scientist, as Minerva sprang, all panoplied, from the head of Jupiter; it is the fruit of accumulated preliminary work. Between the days of fecund productivity are inserted days of uncertainty when nothing seems to succeed, and when even matter itself seems hostile; and it is then that one must hold out against discouragement" (Curie, 1923, p. 144).

While these words describe research work, they resonate strongly with the experience of serving on the Board. **Much of the work is not immediately visible.** It is built through long phases of preparation and effort, where progress may seem slow and results distant. There are moments of uncertainty and, at times, frustration, when things do not come together as expected and it is necessary to persist despite discouragement.

At the same time, as in research, results are often born of collaboration. What we accomplish within the Association is the result of a collective effort: the dedication of individuals, certainly, but also the contribution of others, the professional support of the

Secretariat, and the energy and passion of our members.

This is not to diminish individual effort and dedication, which can play a decisive role, especially when progress depends on the persistence of those willing to carry ideas forward despite challenges. But **the very nature of this Association is to bring people together**, combining efforts and perspectives to achieve something that goes beyond what any individual could accomplish alone.

To adopt Marie Curie's language, everything I have described in this letter is, in one way or another, the fruit of accumulated preliminary work carried out by those who came before us. In the same spirit, I believe that the work done over these past four years, work I have had the privilege to help shape and support, will in time be **recognised as accumulated preliminary work of a particularly important kind:** the patient and often unseen work of laying foundations on which the Association will continue to grow, strengthen, and flourish.

As I pass on this responsibility, I do so with **confidence in the structures we have put in place** and in the community that continues to give life to this Association.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

I look forward to seeing where you will take it next.



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The strength
of the MCAA
lies in its ability
to evolve



Image by Nano Banana Pro, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

MSCA at 30: From individual to collective progress

This year marks a truly significant milestone in the history of the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA). Our community would not exist without the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programme, which has now been supporting researchers for 30 years. **Three decades of fostering mobility, excellence, and opportunity**, transforming countless careers and lives along the way.

experiences many of us carry. I hope that, as you read, you will recognise fragments of your own path and feel, once again, the strength of belonging to this remarkable community.

MSCA as a life changing experience

Eleni Ilkou, Polat Goktas, and Kannan Govindaraj share their personal journeys as MSCA fellows. The stories resonate deeply with the

Eleni describes her doctoral peers as a **family**. Through this journey, she not only contributed to research but also became part of the global MCAA community, gaining continued access to training, opportunities, and a lifelong professional network.

Polat portrays his fellowship as far more than project funding, a **true turning point** that shapes a researcher's trajectory. Through



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a strong focus on impact, the experience becomes an intellectual reset, fostering responsible and purposeful research design, while learning to communicate it across audiences.

The global spirit of the MSCA strongly resonated with Kannan. His fellowship took him from Europe to Harvard, where he strengthened his research skills, broadened his perspective, and grew into a confident, independent researcher with a real-world impact.

The MSCA is just the beginning

Receiving an MSCA grant is **competitive, prestigious, and intellectually demanding**, but its value does not end when the funding period closes. Through the MCAA, that achievement becomes the beginning of a **life-long journey** within a living, dynamic community of researchers and professionals from all disciplines, sectors, and career stages. United not only by scientific ambition but also by the shared experience of crossing borders, adapting to new environments, and growing through challenges.

The MCAA transforms this shared background into **ongoing opportunity**: training events, webinars, conferences, mentorship programmes, career development, acquisition of new skills, etc. The MSCA is the foundation for **continued growth**, impact, and meaningful engagement with global challenges. Each edition of IRRADIUM reflects this energy, and the diversity of topics and the expanding global reach of

our activities is highlighted in the traditional “A year in review” article.

The foundation built through the MCAA is also **a collective voice for the future of the scientific environment**. Having navigated mobility, interdisciplinarity, career uncertainty, and growth across borders and sectors, the MCAA community speaks not as observers but as evidence of what sustained investment in people can achieve. From this lived reality, the MCAA articulates a united position: that **excellence-driven, bottom-up programmes** like the MSCA must remain a core pillar of scientific excellence, ensuring that Europe continues to build its strength on talent, opportunity, and human potential.

Transforming the future

Looking ahead, we shall be confident that the strength of this community will continue to translate into meaningful impact for science, for society, and for future generations of researchers. The connections built through the MSCA and sustained within the MCAA do more than support individual careers; they create a **resilient, collaborative network capable of addressing global challenges** with creativity and responsibility.

Welcome to IRRADIUM 2026.

Enjoy the read!



MSCA postdoctoral fellowships: Learning to design impact, not just research

From preparing a competitive Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Postdoctoral Fellowship (PF) proposal to mentoring others through the MCAA Chapters, I learned that the MSCA PF is not just about funding a project, but about shaping a researcher's trajectory. In this piece, I reflect on how structured guidance, mobility, and impact-driven planning have shaped my own thinking about research careers and contributed to my development as a more confident and independent researcher.

Every year, the MSCA PF call attracts thousands of highly qualified researchers from around the world. Its reputation is well deserved. The MSCA PF is not simply a funding scheme; it is a career-shaping experience that forces researchers to think deeply about who they are, where they want to go, and how their research can generate lasting impact.

The MSCA PF as a turning point in a research career

From my own MSCA PF journey, I can say with confidence that the fellowship fundamentally changed how I approach research. Prior to the MSCA PF, I saw projects primarily through a scientific lens: hypotheses, methods, and results. The MSCA PF forced me to expand that view. It required me to articulate why my research mattered, to whom, and beyond the duration of the project. Through my interactions with MSCA support structures, I

have seen that successful MSCA PF proposals are not defined by the most ambitious technical claims, but by coherent narratives linking excellence, training, mobility, and long-term impact. They are about the researcher as a future leader, not only the science.

Designing a researcher, not only a project

One of the most valuable aspects of the MSCA PF is that it treats the researcher, not the project, as the central unit of evaluation. This understanding has also been shaped by my engagement with MSCA alumni and my own proposal development process. Advice on structuring the proposal using narrative tools such as the ABT framework (And-But-Therefore) resonates strongly with my experience. MSCA evaluators read dozens of proposals; clarity, flow, and purpose matter.



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Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

During my own fellowship preparation, learning to align the Impact section with my narrative CV and long-term career goals was transformative. The MSCA PF taught me to think strategically about skills acquisition, leadership development, and knowledge transfer. It forced me to define not only what I would do during the fellowship, but who I would become because of it.

Training, mobility, and independence

Another defining feature of the MSCA PF is its emphasis on training through mobility. Moving to a new research environment is not simply a change of location; it is an intellectual reset. Exposure to new institutional cultures, interdisciplinary collaborations, and alternative ways of thinking accelerates independence and maturity as a researcher.

Questions about host selection and mobility rules are among the most common concerns I encounter when

mentoring applicants. My advice, based on experience, is simple: choose a host that challenges you, complements your expertise, and genuinely invests in your development. The MSCA PF is a partnership, not a transaction.

Planning for impact and feasibility

One of the most practical yet impactful lessons from my MSCA PF experience relates to planning. The requirement to develop a detailed Gantt chart, dissemination strategy, and exploitation plan may initially feel bureaucratic. In reality, it trains researchers to manage complexity and risk, skills that are indispensable across academia, industry, and the public sector. Throughout my mentoring and proposal-support activities, I emphasise the importance of setting SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) objectives and distinguishing between short-term outputs and long-term outcomes. The MSCA PF encourages realistic ambition. It

rewards proposals that demonstrate feasibility, awareness of European Union priorities, and a credible path to impact, rather than speculative promises.

Beyond the fellowship: Lasting impact

Perhaps the most enduring value of the MSCA PF lies in what happens after the project ends. The fellowship strengthens international networks, enhances visibility, and opens doors to leadership roles, funding opportunities, and cross-sector collaborations. It also embeds researchers within a wider community, exemplified by the MCAA, that continues to provide support long after the grant period. This lasting impact is also visible in the way MSCA fellows actively support and mentor the next generation of applicants. By bringing together National Contact Points, alumni, and prospective researchers through community-driven initiatives, the MSCA ecosystem

demonstrates how fellows give back, strengthen collective expertise, and raise the quality of future applications.

Reflections from my experience

Looking back, the MSCA PF was not just a prestigious line on my CV. It was a structured opportunity to reflect, reposition, and grow. It taught me to design research with intention, to communicate across audiences, and to think of impact as a responsibility rather than an afterthought. For those preparing to apply, community-driven mentoring initiatives and peer-exchange spaces are invaluable. They remind us that, while competitive, the MSCA PF is also deeply human, built around curiosity, resilience, and the belief that research careers can be both excellent and meaningful.

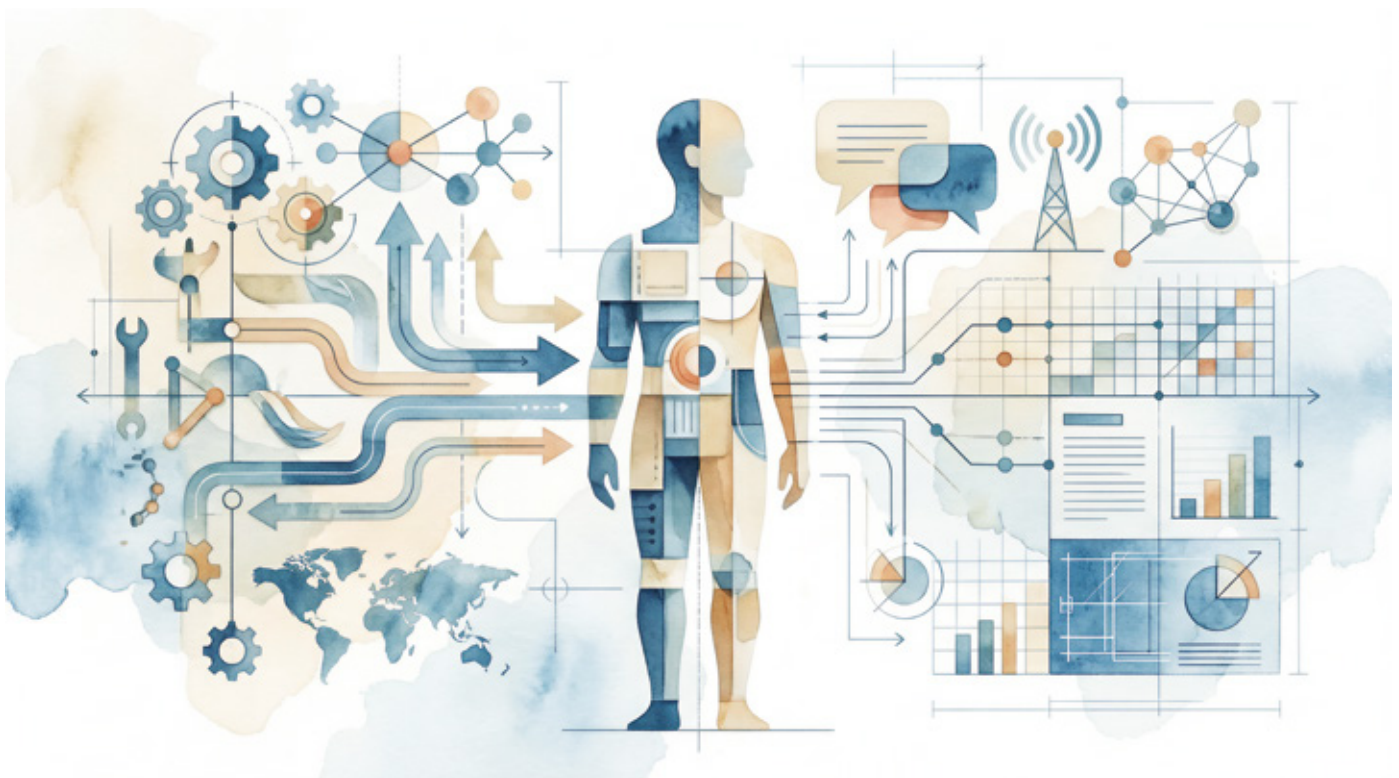


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From Twente to Harvard and back: My MSCA journey

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) Global Fellowship took me from Europe to the Harvard Medical School, connecting me with brilliant minds worldwide. From Boston's biotech hub to exclusive scientific conferences, this journey transformed my research, collaborations, and vision for a truly global scientific community.

The MSCA and me

When I first learned about the MSCA Global Postdoctoral Fellowship, I saw it as more than just a research grant: it was an **opportunity to grow as a scientist in a truly global context**. After completing my fellowship at Harvard Medical School and Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, I can confidently say it has been one of the most transformative experiences of my academic life. The fellowship strengthened my research skills, expanded my worldview, and built my confidence as an independent researcher ready to contribute to Europe's scientific future.

My fellowship focused on understanding **fundamental biological questions with implications for regenerative medicine and disease biology**. Working at Harvard Medical School provided access to world-class facilities and mentors and placed me in a vibrant scientific ecosystem that thrives on collaboration, curiosity, and innovation.

My experience in Boston

Boston is often described as the world's biotech capital, and truly lives up to its reputation. Every week, there was a scientific event somewhere in the city: conferences, workshops, trade shows, and networking sessions connecting academia and industry. Immersed in this environment, I had endless opportunities to learn about cutting-edge technologies and translational research. This exposure shaped my understanding of **how science can move from the bench to real-world impact**.

During my time in Boston, I published **two high-impact review articles and two research articles** which also represent the global spirit of the MSCA. Collaborating with researchers from Singapore, Mexico, China, the USA, and South Korea taught me how to build and sustain international research networks – an essential skill in today's interconnected scientific landscape.

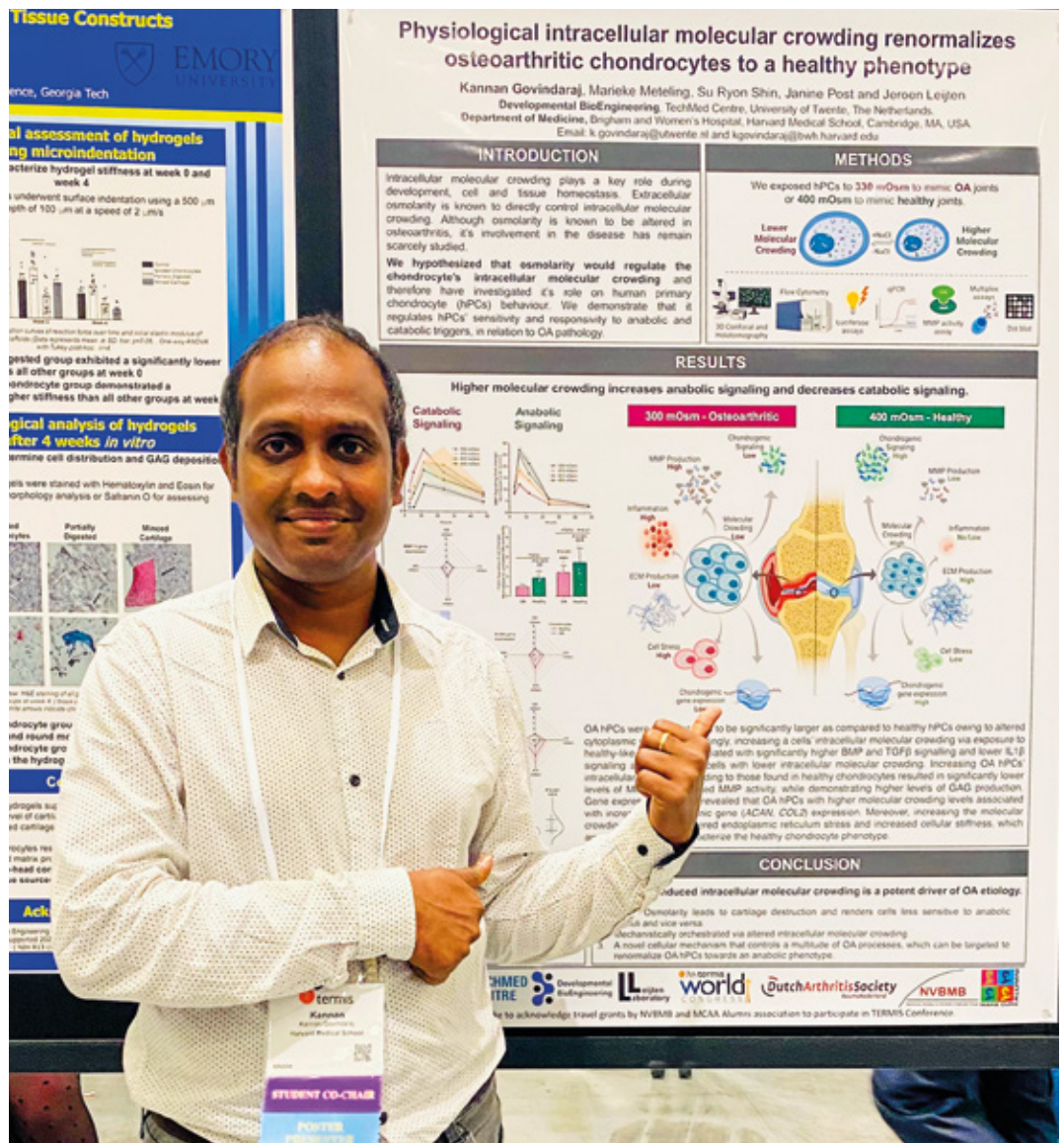


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Poster presentation at the TERMIS 2024 international conference, during my stay at Harvard.

Holding this prestigious fellowship and working at Harvard also opened doors to **exclusive, competitively selected, fully funded scientific meetings**. I was invited to a conference at the HHMI Janelia Research Campus and a Journal Workshop in London, organized by the Company of Biologists. These selective meetings brought together exceptional scientists from around the world in intellectually stimulating settings. Engaging with such diverse talent helped refine my scientific thinking and broadened my vision for the kind of research community I hope to build in the future.

Outcome of the MSCA fellowship

What stood out most during my fellowship was the **spirit of collaboration**. Every challenge I faced in my research was met with a helping hand – whether it was experimental advice, data feedback, or brainstorming new approaches. The intellectual generosity of the Harvard community taught me that science is truly a collective endeavor. These collaborations continue beyond my fellowship and are shaping my ongoing academic projects.

The fellowship also gave me the opportunity to **supervise students**

from Mexico and China, enriching my mentoring skills and helping me appreciate the diversity of thought and culture in science. Working with students and researchers from multiple countries taught me to communicate effectively across cultures and adapt my mentoring style to different backgrounds.

Beyond the lab, Boston offered a cultural and intellectual vibrancy that was equally enriching. From discussions in coffee shops near Kendall Square to lectures at MIT and networking events in Cambridge, the city provided a constant flow of inspiration. It was impossible not to feel energised by the sense of possibility and innovation that defines the Boston research community.

Reflecting my MSCA journey

I realise that **none of this would have been possible without the MSCA Global Fellowship**. It opened the door to Harvard Medical School, provided the freedom to explore ambitious ideas, and gave me a

platform to connect with some of the brightest minds in biomedical research. The fellowship equipped me with not only advanced technical expertise but also the soft skills essential for building a sustainable and collaborative scientific career.

Now, as I continue my research at the **University of Twente in the Netherlands**, I bring with me the knowledge, skills, and global connections developed in Boston. My goal is to strengthen Europe's role in interdisciplinary and international science by fostering collaborations that cross borders and disciplines.

The MSCA Global Fellowship is more than a funding programme – it is a **bridge between continents, ideas, and people**. For me, it has been a bridge from aspiration to achievement, from local curiosity to global impact. And most importantly, it has reminded me that science knows no boundaries – only possibilities waiting to be explored.



Image by Midjourney, prompt by Fabrizio Martina



3+1 reasons to do an MSCA doctorate

Joining an MSCA Doctoral Network (DN) is a life changing experience, one can only imagine before experiencing. This odd opportunity to do your PhD offers a unique opportunity to be introduced to academia, network and flourish.

The team

The human factor is probably the most critical aspect of research. Joining an MSCA DN project is like being a newborn researcher in a big family with a strong household name.

This big extended family offers **important chances for collaboration, and works together towards a common overarching goal**, advancing the project's objectives towards various directions.

Your cousins, the 10+ PhD fellows who are assigned to universities across Europe, will be your strong companions, the people you will grow together with, celebrate each other's wins, and share the PhD journey.

The topic

Becoming a PhD fellow in an MSCA DN project means you will be working on **state-of-the-art research pushing the boundaries of what humanity knows**, and developing solutions as the project outputs that others will use at large.

Your uncles and aunts, the legends in the field some wish to get in touch with, will be your second advisors providing you with insightful feedback, support and guidance and making you realise what is possible.

Although your research topic is predefined in the project proposal by deliverables and objectives as a general road map, there is enough



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flexibility to find your own path on what will be developed.

Further, besides your own narrow focus, due to the participation of the project's network and its activities, you'll be heavily exposed to overlaying research problems and interconnecting directions to your own. This greater understanding of the influence and additional aspects of your research topic is an invaluable wisdom that can't be gained simply from checking the literature.

The benefits

Although no one does a PhD for financial compensation, it is worth mentioning that MSCA DN projects offer a competitive salary often way higher than the stipend for national PhD candidates.

Also, there are **plenty of training opportunities** to excel your presentation skills. You should be aware that joining such a project works best if you ever dreamed of becoming a flight attendant. The project will have a series of **networking events** planned in a short duration of 3 years. Get ready for a **workshop/summer-winter school** every semester, **secondments** aka 2+ month research or industrial visits to another city or country around once per year, attending **conferences** to present your research output, and all this while trying to finish your PhD. Other than your friends asking you first "where" you are and then "how", be prepared to gain immense networking opportunities, explore new cities, cultures, and tasty food across Europe.

Bonus: The MCAA

Earning an MSCA fellowship **grants you access to the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA)**. As an MCAA member, you will have access to exclusive grants, training, and opportunities.

Also, the MCAA serves as a great **volunteering network** connecting alumni in subgroups based on the geographical location (i.e. the MCAA Germany Chapter), or interest in Working Groups (WGs) (i.e. the MCAA AI WG). The MCAA holds annual conferences and assemblies each year for its members, and the next edition will be held in Brussels, Belgium on 22–25 April 2026, celebrating the 30 years of the MSCA programme.

Not all honey

Kindly keep in mind it can be a lot to handle while aiming to balance work and personal life; your social life might get a hit, your research could be delayed with constant moving and side quests, but also your interpersonal and communication skills will advance.

Depending on the country, the 3-year funding period might not be sufficient to complete your PhD. Also, as it is a rather unique PhD journey, it can lead to feeling isolated compared to the "normal" path.



Photo by Lenoir Photography

The MCAA Policy Forum 2025 gathered representatives from the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union, and the European Commission in Brussels in December.

From advocacy to impact: A milestone at the inaugural MCAA Policy Forum

For many years, the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) has been more than just a network; it has been a growing force in the European research landscape. During my time as Chair of the MCAA, our mission was clear: to ensure that the voices of researchers were heard where it mattered most. We spent time engaging with policymakers and building bridges with a vast array of stakeholders, from funding agencies to the European Commission to Member States.

There were many proud moments along the way, from addressing high-level policymakers to collaborating with MEPs. Yet, throughout those years of advocacy, a dream began to

take shape within our community. We did not just want to be guests at the table; we wanted to host the conversation. We dreamed of organising our own flagship event inside the very heart of European democracy: the European Parliament.

Why now? The stakes for European research

As we looked back at the policy landscape of the past few years, the timing felt more critical than ever. With intense discussions surrounding the 10th Framework Programme (FP10), the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), and the future of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), we realised that passion



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Photo by Lenoir Photography

From left to right:
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 Lina Gálvez Muñoz,
MCAA Chair Gian Maria
 Greco, *MEP* Ivars Ijabs,
Minister Counsellor
at the Permanent
Representation of
Denmark to the EU
 Jimmy Bruun Felthaus,
 and *MCAA Executive*
 Director Mostafa
 Moonir Shawrav.

alone was not enough. To protect the future of the MSCA, we needed to demonstrate its undeniable impact on policymakers with hard evidence.

We believed that showing the tangible returns of the MSCA, not just in terms of scientific discovery, but in driving innovation, competitiveness, and societal progress, was crucial to the upcoming negotiations. With this vision, we began our preparations in late 2024. It was a long road of strategic planning, but on 4 December 2025, that dream finally became a reality.

A landmark day in Brussels

Under the patronage of MEP Christian Ehler, the inaugural MCAA Policy Forum convened at the European Parliament. The forum served as the stage for us to present our comprehensive evidence-based report, published officially on that very day.

The meeting was filled with high-level dialogue. MCAA Chair Gian

Maria Greco opened the forum by emphasising how investment in researchers strengthens Europe's global leadership. As I stood there to present the report, I was struck by the convergence of insights from our own survey data and major policy analyses like those of Enrico Letta and Mario Draghi: Europe's competitiveness depends fundamentally on the talent it attracts and retains.

The presence of influential MEPs like Christian Ehler, Lina Gálvez Muñoz, Ivars Ijabs, and René Repasi turned the event into a truly interactive policy roundtable. We didn't just present data; we engaged in difficult but necessary conversations about career precariousness, administrative burdens, and the need for a standalone, well-funded FP10. The meeting also saw the active participation of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission, represented respectively by Jimmy Bruun Felthaus, Minister Counsellor at the Permanent Representation of Denmark to the EU, and Claire Morel, the Head of the MSCA Unit. Their

speeches and reactions reinforced how much the MCAA is now recognised as a key stakeholder in these high-level negotiations.

A milestone built on collaboration

Reflecting on the event, its success was not just about the quality of the speakers or the data in our report. It was the culmination of years of persistence and the tireless work of a dedicated team. This dream came true because of the continuous support and hard work of several key individuals.

I want to extend a massive thank you to Gian Maria Greco for his leadership, and to Tereza Szybisty and Nicolas Defaye for their unwavering dedication. Our success was also driven by the behind-the-

scenes brilliance of the entire MCAA Secretariat, who ensured solid and effective support to all aspects of the event.

The first MCAA Policy Forum represents a milestone in the history of our organisation, but it is also a beginning. As we celebrate the 30th anniversary of the MSCA in 2026, we have proven that we are no longer just participants in the policy dialogue; we are driving it. The MCAA has found its home in the halls of the European Parliament, and we will continue to ensure that the voice of the researchers remains at the centre of Europe's future.

The MCAA Policy Forum 2025 included the presentation of the MCAA's new report "Impact of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Driving knowledge, innovation and EU competitiveness."



Photo by Lenoir Photography

The 2025 MSCA Impact Report: Purpose and findings

In December 2025, at the European Parliament in Brussels, the Marie Curie Alumni Association (MCAA) launched its landmark report on the impact of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Having contributed to this study, I witnessed the meticulous effort to synthesise thirty years of research excellence into a single narrative. This pivotal document now offers crucial insights into driving innovation and shaping the future of the European Research Area (ERA).

The rationale: Why impact matters now

The timing of this report was anything but accidental. As Europe begins to negotiate the architecture of the 10th Framework Programme (FP10), the research community faces a pivotal moment. Amidst shifting geopolitical alliances and economic uncertainty, impact has become the currency of policy debate.

While the MSCA have long been celebrated as the jewel in the crown of EU research funding, we realised that the program's value was often discussed in narrow terms, focusing solely on individual training. Our rationale was to broaden this perspective. We wanted to demonstrate that the MSCA is not just a fellowship programme; it is a structural engine for European competitiveness, a standard-bearer for research integrity, and a primary driver of knowledge transfer across borders and sectors.

How the work was done: An evidence-based journey

Excellence, mobility and international collaboration sit at the heart of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Together, they translate into tangible academic, economic, technological and societal impact across Europe and beyond. In doing so, the MSCA directly supports the European Union's ambition to remain a competitive, knowledge-driven and innovation-oriented economy. Building on these foundations, this report highlights the concrete ways in which the MSCA shapes academia, strengthens innovation ecosystems, and contributes to society at large.

At its core is evidence generated by the MCAA, highlighting the experience of a global community of more than 24,000 MSCA researchers. Insights from the MCAA Major Survey 2024, along with previous MCAA statements and consultations,



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ensure that the analysis reflects the real experiences, career paths and contributions of MSCA fellows across sectors and countries.

This community-based evidence is complemented by official programme data, including the MSCA end-of-fellowship evaluation questionnaires (Horizon 2020 - 2023 and 2024 updates), and the ex-post evaluation of Horizon 2020. To position the findings within the broader European policy debate, the report also draws on key strategic documents shaping the EU's competitiveness agenda, including Heitor's report, Draghi's report, Letta's report, the Warsaw Declaration, and the Competitiveness Compass. Together, these sources provide both quantitative indicators and qualitative insights. The drafting process was supported by an internal consultation with MCAA experts, helping to ensure that the conclusions reflect the latest insights and the lived realities of MSCA researchers.

What the report says: Some key findings

The report reveals a program that has fundamentally reshaped the European research landscape. Below, I report some of the most compelling insights.

A catalyst for careers. The MSCA delivers outstanding career outcomes: 95% of fellows are employed after their fellowship, with most continuing in research and innovation roles. Fellows consistently report strengthened career prospects and improved employability, including beyond academia.

The industry bridge. By engaging thousands of non-academic organisations, the MSCA closes the gap between discovery and application. Under Horizon 2020, €602 million supported research in the non-academic sector, reinforcing intersectoral mobility and innovation capacity.

Setting global standards. Since 1996, the programme has supported 150,000+ researchers, with around 40% coming from outside the EU. The MSCA strengthens Europe's global attractiveness and supports balanced brain circulation across the European Research Area.

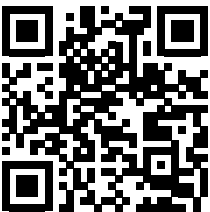
Resilience and competitiveness. In an era of global competition for talent, the MSCA remains Europe's most powerful tool for attracting and retaining world-class researchers. It provides the stability and prestige necessary to keep Europe at the frontier of scientific discovery.

A call to action for the future

The report concludes with a clear strategic vision for FP10: the MSCA must remain a strong, autonomous, excellence-driven instrument with

a substantially increased budget. Diluting its bottom-up nature would risk undermining precisely the flexibility and scientific ambition that have made the MSCA one of Europe's most successful programmes.

As authors, our goal was to provide the MCAA community with a tool for advocacy. This report is a testament to the fact that when we invest in researchers, the impact isn't just a line in a budget, it is the foundation of Europe's future. We invite the entire MCAA community to engage with its findings, share its evidence, and help ensure that the MSCA continues to shape Europe's knowledge, innovation, and competitiveness for decades to come.



Scan the QR code to read and download the MSCA Impact Report

Impact of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA). Driving knowledge, innovation, and EU competitiveness



Turning research into competitiveness: Time for a European Research Area Act

The debate on the future of the European Research Area (ERA) Act comes at a critical moment for Europe's research ecosystem. In the recent public consultation, the MCAA, as part of the ERA Forum Stakeholder Group 4, set out its position.

The European research landscape is fragmented. Despite decades of collaboration, research funding, career opportunities, and mobility conditions still vary widely between Member States, slowing innovation and limiting Europe's ability to compete globally. At the same time, science faces growing politicisation and post-truth narratives that increasingly threaten academic freedom.

The proposed European Research Area (ERA) Act offers a unique opportunity to tackle these challenges, strengthen Europe's resilience and strategic autonomy, and position the continent as the world's leading destination for researchers. In this context, engaging stakeholders is essential to ensure the ERA Act's legitimacy, effectiveness, and long-term success.

initiated key partnerships, and joined alliances and initiatives that advance science, research, and innovation in Europe.

As part of the ERA Forum Stakeholder Group 4, representing individual researchers and innovators of all career stages, we have pushed for an ambitious ERA Act. Together with the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc), the Association of ERC Grantees (AERG), and the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE), we outlined our vision of a more coherent, attractive, and resilient ERA in a joint statement published on 26 January 2026 (Association Of ERC Grantees (AERG) et al., 2026). This vision is based on sustainable investment, greater alignment of research and innovation (R&I) policies, and shared European values.



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Four stakeholders, one shared vision

Stakeholder engagement has always been central to the MCAA's advocacy strategy. We have built coalitions,

Investing more to promote European values

We do not want the European Union to deliver yet another

framework. What Europe needs is a transformative, research-centred ERA Act. This requires sustained public investment in people, infrastructure, and knowledge to fully leverage Europe's R&I capacity. One of our main priorities is to ensure that Europe reaches the long-standing target of investing 3% of its gross domestic product in research and development (R&D), around €220 billion, through stronger commitment from Member States.

At the same time, greater alignment of R&I policies, investments, and programmes across the EU and its Member States is needed to reduce fragmentation and improve efficiency. This is only possible through coherent framework conditions, governance, and interoperability based on shared European values, ensuring that national and European efforts reinforce each other rather than remain scattered.

These are necessary steps to improve the overall conditions for

research and researchers in Europe. Freedom of scientific research is a fundamental value of the ERA and must be safeguarded. This is a prerequisite for innovation, democratic resilience, and public trust in science. Moreover, promoting gender equality, equal opportunities, and attractive and sustainable research careers, including fair mobility opportunities, will be essential to make Europe more appealing to talent from across the world.

Last but not least, we defend the free circulation and valorisation of scientific knowledge. Ensuring that research results can circulate freely, while being effectively translated into societal and economic benefits, will be key to turning scientific excellence into innovation and competitiveness for Europe.

Europe at a crossroads

Europe stands at a decisive moment. The ERA Act offers an opportunity to turn scientific excellence into a





Image by Nano Banana Pro, prompt by Fabrizio Martina

coherent, competitive, and values-driven ecosystem. It can address existing gaps across EU Member States by aligning investments and policies, while safeguarding the freedoms and values that underpin research.

Seizing this momentum is essential to transform brain drain into brain gain, while attracting talent across Europe. This is the only way to ensure our common resilience and competitiveness, while strengthening our societal impact.

The MCAA will continue to engage with meaningful stakeholders to ensure that the ERA Act reflects the

realities of the research community and delivers practical solutions. Our policy team is driven by this ambition and is committed to turning it into political action among decision-makers. The coming months, with the negotiations on the next R&I Framework Programme (FP10) underway, will be crucial in shaping the future of the European research landscape. The MCAA is already at the helm. The choices made today will determine whether Europe cements its place as a global leader in research and innovation or falls behind. The time to act is now.

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2025 in focus: Expanding research cultures, changing scientific practice, and global connectivity

In 2025, the MCAA consolidated its role as a global, researcher-led network responding to shifting research environments, evolving career pathways, and new modes of scientific collaboration. Chapters expanded their regional presence, Working Groups deepened thematic engagement, and cross-border initiatives strengthened international dialogue. Several initiatives reached new levels of maturity, most notably the transition of the Artificial Intelligence group from a General Interest Group into a formal Working Group, reflecting the structural importance of AI in contemporary research practice. At the same time, the creation of new and emerging Chapters further extended the Association's regional footprint, including the establishment of the Finland Chapter, reinforcing the MCAA's global reach.



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Across these developments, three interconnected dimensions shaped the year's activities: expanding research cultures, changing scientific practice, and strengthening global connectivity. Together, they reveal an Association increasingly attentive not only to scientific excellence, but also to the cultural, ethical, and international policy contexts in which research unfolds.

Expanding research cultures: Equity, identity, and mental well-being

Across the MCAA community, 2025 marked a shift in how research excellence is understood. Questions of equity, identity, and mental well-being became widely recognised as integral to sustainable and high-quality research. Chapter and Working Group activities reflected

a growing consensus that inclusive and supportive research cultures are essential for both scientific integrity and long-term career development.

Mental health and well-being emerged as a shared priority. The launch of the Genders, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (GEDI) Task Force (TF) on Mental Health represented a significant step towards addressing structural pressures faced by researchers at different career stages. Through surveys and discussions, the TF aims to identify recurring stressors such as precarity, hypermobility, and productivity expectations, while facilitating access to appropriate professional support. Importantly, these efforts frame mental well-being not as an individual responsibility, but as a collective and institutional concern.



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Image by Cristina Florea



From its inaugural kick-off meeting in Helsinki to subsequent activities across 2025, the Finland Chapter begins building its local MCAA community

At Chapter level, discussions of well-being were embedded within broader professional development activities. Events in Italy, Austria, Finland, and Denmark integrated conversations on burnout, work-life balance, and expectations of academic performance into networking sessions and workshops. Postdoctoral and early-career researchers engaged in open dialogue about career sustainability, linking healthier research cultures directly to long-term scientific productivity.

Equity and representation continued to shape a wide range of initiatives. Flagship activities such as “Her Science Sparks” and the travelling exhibition “The Marie Curies of the Mediterranean” celebrated the contributions of women scientists across disciplines and regions. Hosted in Ankara, Vienna, Cleveland, Paris, and other cities, these initiatives combined exhibitions with panel discussions addressing visibility, career progression, and structural barriers in academia. Coordinated celebrations of the International Day of Women and

Girls in Science spanned Europe, Latin America, Asia, and Africa, with contributions from the GEDI and Career Development Working Groups, and the Spain-Portugal, France, India, and Argentina Chapters. These events fostered intergenerational dialogue and highlighted diverse role models within the global Marie Curie community.

Beyond gender representation, MCAA activities increasingly addressed inclusion in global science more broadly. In Latin America, the event “Bridging Science and Society for a Better World” in Mexico City brought together researchers, policymakers, and civil society actors to explore the social responsibilities of science. Discussions addressed mental health, ethical dimensions of artificial intelligence, and the importance of locally grounded perspectives in shaping international research agendas. By linking scientific practice to societal accountability, the event underscored the interconnected nature of equity, responsibility, and impact.

Belonging and community also remained central to the MCAA's activities. Across Chapters, initiatives created spaces for connection beyond formal academic structures, including inter-chapter mentoring, informal meet-ups, and community-focused campaigns. In France, activities such as the "Women of Science" photo campaign complemented broader efforts to strengthen visibility and solidarity within local research communities. Events addressing mobility, family life, and academic expectations reflected the lived realities of highly mobile research careers. Collectively, these initiatives illustrate how the MCAA in 2025 contributed to reshaping research cultures that value care, diversity, and belonging alongside scientific achievement.

Science in transition: AI, slow research, and rethinking impact

Alongside cultural change, 2025 highlighted profound transformations in how research is conducted, evaluated, and communicated. Across Chapters and Working Groups, discussions increasingly focused on emerging

technologies, ethical considerations, and alternative models of scientific practice.

Artificial intelligence (AI) featured prominently in this evolving context. The transition of the AI General Interest Group to a formal Working Group signalled sustained engagement with AI across disciplines and regions. Events explored how AI tools are already embedded in research workflows, grant preparation, project management, and science communication, while also raising critical questions around transparency, intellectual property, and accountability.

During the MCAA Annual Conference 2025, the AI General Interest Group (now, Working Group) organised a participatory workshop to identify barriers to responsible AI adoption in research. The outcomes of this process formed the basis of a meta-research study later presented at the AI for Science Summit in Copenhagen, demonstrating how bottom-up discussions within the MCAA can inform broader research and policy debates.

Panel discussion during "Her Science Sparks 2.0: Conversations, Curiosities, and Changemaking", held on 7 March 2025 in Madrid, Spain



Photo by Jenny Lind Elmaco

The scale of AI engagement was particularly visible in Asia. The China Chapter organised multiple large-scale hybrid events addressing AI-enabled innovation, talent development, and interdisciplinary research. Conferences and workshops reached extensive in-person and online audiences, illustrating new models of digital engagement and transnational capacity building. These initiatives positioned AI not merely as a technical tool, but as a transformative force reshaping collaboration patterns and career pathways.

Parallel to technological change, MCAA activities increasingly questioned dominant narratives of speed and productivity in academia. Webinars on slow science, organised by the Policy Working Group and Chapters in North America and Europe, invited researchers to reflect on research quality, integrity, and long-term societal value. These sessions explored how deliberate and reflective research practices coexist with policy relevance and technological advancement. Discussions linked

slow science to research assessment reform, ethical responsibility, and career sustainability, particularly for early- and mid-career researchers navigating competitive environments.

At Chapter level, reflections on scientific practice were grounded in everyday academic realities. In Italy, an in-person grant writing workshop and networking event brought together researchers from multiple institutions to exchange practical strategies, personal experiences, and lessons learned from both successful and unsuccessful funding applications. By combining expert guidance with peer discussion in a shared academic setting, the initiative emphasised mentorship, tacit knowledge transfer, and resilience as integral components of contemporary scientific practice.

Sustainability also became a more structured dimension of evolving scientific practice in 2025. The Sustainability Working Group launched a monthly webinar series to showcase members' research and foster dialogue on environmentally



Photo by MCAA Latin American Chapters / Instituto de Química, UNAM

Participants at the Bridging Science and Society for a Better World event

People participating in the AI General Interest Group workshop at the MCAA Annual Conference 2025



Photo by Quentin Loisel

responsible approaches to science. Beyond academic exchange, the Working Group actively contributed to the development of the new MSCA Green Charter, released in October 2025, reinforcing the MCAA's engagement with sustainable research frameworks at European level.

Science communication emerged as another key site of transformation. Events such as "Science Communication through Identity and Culture" challenged traditional notions of knowledge transmission by emphasising emotion, creativity, and cultural context. The Communication Working Group played a central role in advancing these discussions through initiatives such as the Science Speaks summer school in Valencia and the "Elevate Your Identity" workshop, which focused on storytelling, public speaking, graphic design, and personal branding. These activities highlighted growing recognition that effective communication is not an add-on to research, but a core scientific skill that shapes public engagement, policy dialogue, and societal trust.

Together, these initiatives reflect a broader rethinking of impact. Rather than focusing solely on outputs or metrics, MCAA activities in 2025 increasingly framed impact as relational, contextual, and socially embedded. By engaging with AI ethics, slow science, and creative communication, the Association contributed to ongoing conversations about what responsible and meaningful scientific practice looks like in a rapidly changing world.

Global bridges and local roots: The MCAA's regional integration and science diplomacy

The MCAA strengthened its role as a connector between local research communities and global scientific networks. Across five continents, Chapters deepened regional engagement while advancing international cooperation, reinforcing the importance of globally connected yet locally grounded research ecosystems.

Science diplomacy and research mobility formed a central pillar of this engagement. Targeted exchanges between Europe and Latin America, Africa, and Asia

supported dialogue on funding access, talent circulation, and institutional partnerships. In Chile, the Chapter organised information sessions on MSCA and Horizon Europe opportunities at the Universidad de Chile in collaboration with EURAXESS Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). In India, outreach during National Science Day and International Women's Day was complemented by specialised webinars on MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships and proposal writing, strengthening awareness of European funding frameworks across regions.

Engagement with research support structures and mobility platforms was further reinforced in Europe. In the United Kingdom, the British Council invited ten MCAA members to contribute to a consultation on the future of EURAXESS in the UK, bringing researcher perspectives directly into dialogue with policymakers and government representatives. In Japan, the Chapter co-organised an information session on Horizon Europe Doctoral Networks, contributing

to Europe–Asia research linkages. These initiatives collectively highlight the MCAA's growing role in shaping mobility ecosystems and strengthening international researcher representation.

Cross-Chapter collaboration continued to expand regional integration. The “Bridging Minds, Building Futures” event united the Poland Chapter with nine other Chapters to discuss mobility strategies and regional visibility within Europe. In Latin America, the MCAA LATAM Meeting in Mexico convened five Chapters to reflect on transatlantic collaboration and strengthen ties between European and Latin American research communities. Joint MSCA-focused training initiatives in India and Argentina further demonstrated the Association's commitment to capacity building and peer mentoring across continents.

Regional cooperation reached a new level through AsiaConnect, involving the China, India, Japan, and Southeast Asia Chapters. Originally emerging from an informal exchange



Jonathan Paul Lambert

MCAA Italy Chapter members during a grant writing and networking session at the University of Padova, Italy

Researchers participating in the Science Speaks Summer School



Photo by Ashish Avasthi

among Chapter representatives in 2024, AsiaConnect quickly evolved into a structured regional platform for scientific dialogue and cooperation. Hosted alongside the China Chapter's Annual Meeting, AsiaConnect created structured platforms for thematic exchange, matchmaking, and sustained cross-border dialogue. Its initial virtual conferences on environmental science and AI governance gathered nearly 7,000 participants across Asia, laying the groundwork for the 2025 Annual Meeting in Guangzhou and future in-person expansion planned for 2026. What began as informal exchanges evolved into coordinated regional collaboration, illustrating how grassroots initiative within the MCAA can develop into long-term transnational networks.

Public engagement initiatives anchored these international efforts in local communities. Chapters across Europe organised

outreach activities during European Researchers' Night and similar events, creating opportunities for dialogue between researchers and the public. Informal networking formats, including community meet-ups in Finland and regional gatherings in France, strengthened ties among members while reinforcing local scientific presence.

The MCAA also expanded its strategic footprint in emerging regions. Activity intensified across African, Latin American, and Asian Chapters, strengthening representation in global forums. In Asia, flagship gatherings such as the Global Young Talents Carnival in Guangzhou brought together researchers, policymakers, and institutional representatives through policy briefings, talent programmes, and community-building sessions for large in-person and online audiences. Complementing these multilateral engagements, bilateral

MCAA UK Chapter members at the British Council consultation on the future of EURAXESS in the UK, March 2025



Photo by Quentin Loisel

MCAA AsiaConnect members at the China Chapter Annual Meeting



Photo by Eugenio H. Otal

initiatives such as the China–Spain Academic Exchange provided structured platforms for institutional partnership and talent mobility dialogue, offering concrete examples of Europe–Asia science diplomacy in action. In North America, the newly established Canada Chapter held its inaugural meeting, marking further geographic expansion. Meanwhile, the Switzerland Chapter organised professional development initiatives that combined skills training with cultural exchange, illustrating how regional Chapters continue to adapt global MCAA objectives to local contexts.

Together, these initiatives demonstrate how the MCAA in 2025 balanced global reach with local relevance. By strengthening mobility frameworks, fostering science diplomacy, and building regional networks, the Association reinforced its position as a bridge between institutions, policymakers, and researchers across continents.

Looking ahead

Reflecting on 2025, the MCAA's activities reveal an Association increasingly attuned to the complexity of contemporary research landscapes. Across Chapters and Working Groups, members engaged

not only with scientific advancement, but also with the cultural, ethical, and social dimensions that shape how research is produced and shared.

The year demonstrated how expanding research cultures, changing scientific practices, and global connectivity are deeply interconnected. Initiatives addressing mental well-being, equity, and identity intersected with debates on AI, research integrity, and communication, while regional collaborations reinforced the importance of locally grounded, globally connected science. Together, these efforts positioned the MCAA as a space where researchers can reflect, experiment, and collaborate across boundaries.

As the Association looks ahead, the foundations laid in 2025 point toward continued engagement with questions of sustainability, responsibility, and inclusion in science. By fostering dialogue across disciplines and regions, and by supporting researchers at all career stages, the MCAA remains well-placed to contribute meaningfully to shaping the future of research in Europe and beyond.

Oportunius: A gateway to research excellence in Galicia

Over the last decade, Galicia, the north-west region of Spain, has progressively consolidated its position as a competitive and attractive region for research and innovation in Europe. One of the clearest expressions of its commitment to reinforcing the region's R&I strategy is the **Oportunius programme**. It is an initiative promoted by the **Xunta de Galicia** and managed by the Consellería de Educación, Ciencia, Universidades e FP through the Axencia Galega de Innovación that aims to strengthen scientific excellence across the region by attracting and supporting **European Research Council (ERC) grant holders, finalists and candidates**.

Oportunius accompanies researchers from the moment they begin to shape an ERC proposal through to the consolidation of funded projects in the region. For **researchers who secure an ERC grant**, the programme offers competitive contracts to carry out their projects in Galicia, together with complementary funding that reinforces ERC grant funding both during and beyond the grant period. At the same time, the programme pays special attention to **ERC finalists and candidates**, providing training, expert proposal

review and strategic guidance and interview preparation for those reaching the final evaluation stages. This continuous, hands-on support has not only improved success rates but has also strengthened Galicia's international visibility as an attractive destination for research career development.

The results achieved so far underscore the programme's impact. Since its launch in 2014, Oportunius has attracted and funded **41 ERC grantees** with an investment of €22M. More than **50 ERC projects have been developed in Galician host institutions**, and the programme has already supported 331 **ERC applications**.

Building on this success, the programme is now extending its support framework to include **Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)** fellows, by providing advice on candidature preparation, further reinforcing its role as a gateway for international research talent. The strategic objective remains clear: to continue increasing the number of national and international researchers who choose Galicia as their host region to develop their research careers.

“Since its launch in 2014, Oportunius has attracted and funded 41 ERC grantees with an investment of €22M.



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CIGUS: pillars of Galicia's research and innovation ecosystem

The growth of Oportunius is closely linked to the strength of Galicia's research environment, whose backbone is the **Rede CIGUS**, recognised for its scientific excellence and international competitiveness. This network brings together 10 leading research centres across the region's three public universities: the University of Santiago de Compostela (USC), the University of Vigo (UVigo) and the University of A Coruña (UDC). Together, they cover a broad range of priority research areas such as artificial intelligence, quantum communications and secure digital technologies, environmental and marine sciences, biomedicine and genomics, chemical biology, advanced materials and particle physics.

However, CIGUS is just the tip of the iceberg. Together, the three universities have 16 other research institutes, including three inter-university research centres, in fields as diverse as economics, mathematics, engineering, materials science, sociology and cultural studies. The Spanish National Research Council (Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, CSIC), the largest scientific institution in Spain, has four research institutes and two centres of the Spanish Institute of Oceanography (IEO) in Galicia. The ecosystem also includes the four health research foundations, which belong to the [Galician Health Knowledge Agency](#) (Axencia Galega de Coñecemento en Saúde).

This landscape is completed by unique research infrastructures, such as the [Galician Supercomputing Centre](#) (CESGA), which leads the Galicia Quantum Technologies Hub, one of the priorities of the Galician research

strategy, and has recently been designated as one of the European AI factories, as well as nine technology centres with a substantial investment of resources in research, and various other public and private research centres, alongside an industrial fabric of more than 1,700 innovative companies. This fosters not only the transfer of knowledge and technology to society but also the career development possibilities of junior and senior researchers.

Galicia: a place to build a research career – and a life

Beyond its scientific infrastructure and support programmes, Galicia offers an environment that combines professional opportunity with a high quality of life. The region is characterised by **medium-sized, well-connected** cities, a strong sense of community and a privileged natural setting, with more than **1,500 kilometres of coastline**, mountains and protected natural areas within easy reach.

For researchers at any stage of their career, working in Galicia means engaging in a **collaborative and internationally connected research ecosystem**, while enjoying a lifestyle that balances professional ambition with wellbeing. This combination of scientific opportunity, institutional support and living conditions has become one of Galicia's defining strengths – and a compelling reason for researchers from around the world to choose the region as the place to develop both their research projects and their lives.



inaccessible

Accessibility statement

The MCAA believes in a society grounded in diversity, one where diversity is the norm, not a deviation; a strength, not a weakness. Access barriers often arise in environments that fail to recognise and value diversity. For this reason, diversity and accessibility are fundamental to the flourishing of the research endeavour.

As a global community of researchers, the MCAA is committed to improving the accessibility of its products, services, and events. In recent years, the Association has promoted a series of actions aimed at enhancing inclusivity and reducing access barriers across its activities. Among these efforts, particular attention has been given to the IRRADIUM magazine. For this reason, its design was entirely renewed a few years ago to provide a more accessible and inclusive reading experience.

The IRRADIUM design contributes to accessibility by addressing a number of common barriers readers may face.

The layout complies with key requirements of major print and digital accessibility standards and guidelines. For example, background and foreground colours have been carefully selected and paired to meet the AAA level requirements for colour contrast defined by the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.1), while also taking into account colour blindness considerations. The text is not justified, ensuring consistent and regular spacing between words throughout. Line spacing and font size have also been revised and increased to improve readability. Each macro-section is identified by a distinct colour, helping readers navigate the content more easily. The layout adopts a sans serif font, where all characters are clearly distinguishable.

Finally, the PDF file complies with accessibility requirements and can be used with screen readers.

Acknowledgment



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13th MCAA Annual Conference Brussels 2026



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



24,000+
members



155+
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