

Recruiting through EU/MSCA for an Academic Freedom project

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Context:

Previous published research on the *de jure* legal protection for academic freedom in Europe had shown that there was considerable variation in the extent to which constitutional and legislative protection existed for academic freedom. This research pointed to a need to extend the legal analysis to other nations outside the EU, and also to try to assess the extent of *de facto* protection for academic freedom in Europe



The Funding Problem

Grant income was sought from the UK Research Grant awarding bodies, but it proved impossible to obtain grant income from this source. The system of higher education research funding has altered in the last two decades, and moved away from funding “blue skies” research, towards applied research. All research in the UK h.e. sector now has to show impact, preferably financially. Academic freedom research doesn’t create a fiscal impact



The Solution: EU Funding

After checking possible sources of EU it was decided to make a bid for EU funds under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action, which offers two types of Individual Fellowships: European Fellowships (within the EU for up to two years) and Global Fellowships (which cover all other countries for up to three years). Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions grants are available for all stages of a researcher's career, so two applications were made.



Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions

MSCA Fellows come from a wide range of disciplines – from physics to linguistics. EU Fellowships are for researchers moving into Europe, and can restart a research career after a break, such as parental leave and can also can help researchers returning to the EU to find a new position. Global Fellowships fund positions outside Europe for researchers based in the EU or associated countries. All Fellowships have to demonstrate benefit to the European Research Area



MS-C Fellows - Examples

- ❖ Locked between formulas: creativity in oral and transitional poetic texts
- ❖ Effective Clinical reasoning in Virtual Patients
- ❖ Multiregional rtfMRI Neurofeedback for the Prevention of Alzheimer's Disease
- ❖ Fiction, Imagination, and Early Cinema
- ❖ High Current All Printed Transistors



The BAFADIA Project

The first application focused on Building Academic Freedom And Democracy In Africa (“BAFADIA”) and the applicant was Dr Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua, from the University of Ghana. The project was designed to gather legal and constitutional instruments from all the African states, to assess the *de jure* levels of protection for academic, and create an online survey to gather information of the *de facto* state of academic freedom in the African States



The SAFE Project

The second application focused on Safeguarding Academic Freedom in Europe, and the applicant was Dr Klaus Dieter Beiter from the Max Planck Institute in Munich. The project was designed to create an online survey to gather information of the *de facto* state of academic freedom in the European Union States, and create a unified *de facto* and *de jure* measure of academic freedom, to be used as a template for a global measure of academic freedom.



Research Outcomes

All Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions grants have to lead to skills enhancements for the Fellows. In this instance, both Fellows were legal scholars and had to be trained in quantitative research, survey construction and social statistics. The research has generated a sizeable number of publications in academic journals of international repute, and has had an impact on academic freedom policy in both the UK and the Council Of Europe.



Using the MSC Actions for SAR Scholars

Neither of the Fellows, were at risk scholars, but both were members of the SAR Advocacy Team, and had been introduced to me by Rob Quinn and the SAR Network. Drafting Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship applications takes time and concerted effort, but there is no technical reason why the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Action cannot be used to fund scholars at risk in nations outside the EU to come to the EU to undertake research (but not to teach).



Using the MSC Actions for SAR Scholars

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship are very generous, and also include funding to cover conference attendance, housing, subsistence, travel, etc. Hence the grant is sufficient for Fellows to bring family members with them - Dr Kwadwo Appiagyei-Atua brought his two sons with him from Ghana to the U.K. For many scholars, MSC Fellowship are a good way to establish a new career in a European nation state.



Using the MSC Actions for SAR Scholars

The Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships are highly competitive – all applications are assessed by teams of academics drawn from across Europe, and only a small number are chosen each year. The deadline for the next round of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship applications is 9th September 2020.

Further details are available from

<https://ec.europa.eu/research/mariecurieactions/>



Thank you for listening.

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