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An Chomhairle um Thaighde in Éirinn

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# Overview of CARA Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowships in the Humanities and Social Sciences: co-funded by Marie Curie Actions



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## **Introduction**

### **Background**

The IRCHSS CARA Postdoctoral Mobility Fellowship Scheme co-funded by Marie Curie Actions was established on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010 with a duration of 48 months. This was extended to 63 months duration, with an extension of 10 months offered to 13 active Fellows from Cohort 2 who were in a position to take up the extension. The main objective of the CARA Scheme was to encourage international mobility amongst Irish-based Experienced Researchers at the early stage of their experienced researcher career, particularly those researchers who had not had the opportunity to avail of previous international mobility periods during their career.

The scheme was modelled on the Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowship and included an outgoing phase of the award during which time the Fellow was based at an international host institution, thus providing an international dimension to fellows' research experience and overall career development. A mandatory return phase in Ireland allowed fellows to reintegrate fully into Ireland, both utilising and transferring the various skills they acquired during the outgoing phase. A consequent expectation of the scheme was that, by enhancing researchers' CVs with additional mobility experience, fellows would be more attractive to employers.

### **Award Set-up**

The CARA programme was structured to include an "outgoing phase" of up to two years' duration to be held at a host institution of the Fellow's choice in any country outside Ireland, followed by a one year "return phase" at a host institution of their choice in Ireland. Applications were accepted from all disciplines within Humanities and Social Science, as CARA was set up under what was then IRCHSS. There were two separate funding calls (Call 1 and Call 2), resulting in a total of 25 Fellowships, with 9 Fellowships in cohort 1 and 16 Fellowships in cohort 2. As a Marie Curie COFUND scheme, fellowships were co-funded by the EU with 40% of costs provided by the Commission; the total cost of the programme was approximately €6.7M, with a contribution of approximately €2.7M from the EU and €4M from IRCHSS.

## **Changes to the Original Grant Agreement**

### **Change of beneficiary name**

On the 29th March 2012, the Irish Research Council (IRC) came into existence, as a result of a merger of the Irish Research Council for Science, Engineering and Technology (IRCSET) and the Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS). Historically, IRCSET and IRCHSS existed as autonomous councils, with their own separate boards, within the Higher Education Authority (HEA). From a financial accountability perspective, IRCSET and IRCHSS were subject to the governance arrangements of the HEA, and for this reason an amendment request was submitted to and accepted by the Research Executive Agency in Brussels transferring the legal beneficiary name from IRCSET to the HEA.

### **Grant Agreement Extension**

In order to address the potential underspend of €248,199 of the Community Contribution (which was a direct result of the mandatory national pay-cuts applied to all public salaries in Ireland), the Irish Research Council applied to the REA for an extension to the programme. The CARA programme was originally a 48-month programme running from 01/10/2010 to 31/10/2014. The Council applied for an extension to 63 months which would allow the Council to offer active Fellows from Cohort 2 an extension of 10 months. This was due to the recalculated flat rate and absorption of budget which resulted in a left-over of fellow months and budget due to the payment cuts imposed by Irish law and applied since the project start on the fellows' salaries. The fellows that take up the extension will be required to use this extended time to focus on the dissemination and impact of their fellowship research outputs. The REA granted the extension, making CARA a 63-month programme with an end date of 31/07/2015. This means that the award has now finished and the Council is currently working on the final deliverables of the scheme and reporting to the REA.

An updated Annex 1 incorporating both the change of beneficiary name and grant extension was approved with effect from the 04/07/2012.

### **Early Terminations**

The first cohort of 9 Fellows were awarded fellowships of 36 months' duration (consisting of 24 months abroad in an international host institution and 12 months in the Irish home host institution). Following the second Cara call, 16 Fellows were awarded fellowships of 36 months' duration (consisting of 24 months abroad in an international host institution and 12 months in the Irish home host institution).

A total of 9 Fellows requested early termination of their CARA fellowships, however 4 of these finished just one month early, and one Fellow terminated just 6 days early. The reason provided by each Fellow was a job offer, deemed by the Fellow to be an excellent opportunity, with all nine of the Fellows receiving an offer of a permanent lecturing position. Final reports were submitted in each case, documenting their work

progress to date, and including details regarding the proposed dissemination of the completed research. The early terminations were granted to Fellows as one of the primary goals of the CARA programme was to increase the employability of early-career researchers, and the nature of positions that were offered to the Fellows demonstrated the successful impact of the fellowship.

Table 1: Details of the awards that were terminated early.

Cohort	Forename	Surname	Start date	End date	Duration of fellowship (months completed)	Reason
2010	Angela	Byrne	01/10/2010	24/09/2013	35.8	Permanent position at Greenwich
2010	Barry	Cannon	01/10/2010	30/08/2013	34.97	Permanent position at Maynooth, Ireland
2010	Laura	O'Brien	01/10/2010	31/08/2013	35	Permanent position at Sunderland
2011	Adam	Kelly	01/10/2011	30/09/2013	24	Permanent position at York
2011	Esther	Tippmann	01/10/2011	31/08/2014	35	Permanent position at UCD, Ireland
2011	James	Ryan	01/10/2011	31/08/2014	35	Permanent position at Cardiff
2011	Brown	Karen	01/10/2011	01/07/2013	21	Permanent position at St. Andrews
2011	Kevin	O'Sullivan	01/10/2011	01/09/2012	11	Permanent position at NUIG, Ireland
2011	Michael	Daly	01/10/2011	30/09/2012	12	Permanent position at Sterling

- Of 2010 cohort, 3 of 9 (33.3%) did not complete return phase.
- Of 2011 cohort, 6 of 16 (37.5%) did not complete return phase.
- Overall, 9 of 25 (36%) did not complete return phase.

## **Maternity Leave**

The CARA Scheme included funding to cover maternity-leave requests. In order to avail of the maternity leave, Fellows had to contact the Council in advance of the requested leave and send us a copy of their medical certificate. Fellows were eligible to apply for up to 26 weeks' maternity leave. In total, 2 Fellows availed of maternity leave during their fellowship. 1 Fellow returned to their fellowship once the period of maternity leave was over, the other is still on maternity leave.

## **Follow-on Positions**

Out of 25 Fellowships, all but one are now finished. The one exception is one Fellow who took maternity leave one month before the end of the fellowship. The individual follow-on positions of the 25 Fellows are compiled in Appendix I, with a summary of follow-on positions in the table below.

The majority of Fellows secured permanent lecturing positions, many of which were of a prestigious nature. 14 Fellows secured permanent research positions which, typically, is a significant goal and milestone for academic researchers. There are 9 Fellows currently working on contract research positions and 2 Fellows who are currently looking for employment.

Table 2: Summary of the types of follow-on positions taken up by CARA Fellows immediately after the end of their fellowship.

Follow-on Position	Number of Fellows
<b>Permanent Research Position</b>	14
<b>Contract Research Position</b>	9
<b>Industry Position</b>	0
<b>Research Management</b>	0
<b>Job seeking</b>	2

Table 3: Summary of follow-on positions taken up by CARA Fellows according to geographical profile

EU	
Country	Number of Fellows
Ireland	10
England	9
Scotland	2
Wales	1
Germany	1

### **From CARA to CAROLINE**

Based on the demonstrated success of CARA and INSPIRE (a different previous COFUND that was purely for STEM researchers), the Irish Research Council submitted an application for a Research Fellowship programme to the 2016 EU Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions COFUND strand, which has recently been retained for funding.

The CAROLINE Fellowship Programme ('CAROLINE': Collaborative Research Fellowships for a Responsive & Innovative Europe) will provide a unique opportunity for researchers to broaden their skills and competencies within a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or international organisation (IO) and to conduct research that is highly relevant to civil society. Proposals will be invited across all disciplines that fit with the overarching theme of global sustainable development, as set out under the United Nations 2030 Agenda for shared economic prosperity, social development, and environmental protection. This differs from the CARA Scheme where applications were invited for research projects of any topic or discipline, so long as the project could be categorized within the broad area of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

CAROLINE will have an overall duration of 60 months and expects to fund 50 experienced researchers across two competitive Calls for Proposals for International Fellowships (three-year duration) and Irish Fellowships (two-year duration). Again, this differs from the CARA scheme where all Fellowships consisted of three years with a two year outgoing period in any country followed by one return year back in Ireland. As the CAROLINE Programme places a strong emphasis on research that is timely and relevant in the wider European and international context, it is intended to

fund 30 International Fellowships and 20 Irish Fellowships overall. In practical terms, the successful applicant researcher will be awarded an employment contract with a Beneficiary Host Organisation, which must be an IRC-recognised Research Performing Organisation (RPO) in Ireland. Both types of Fellowships will follow the H2020 eligibility rules on mobility and country participation for Marie Skłodowska Curie Actions.

Based on observations and feedback from the CARA Fellows, the following changes will be implemented for the CAROLINE Scheme.

- To ensure more time between the award acceptance and the start date of the award due to the complexities of setting up the fellowship (Partnership Agreements, etc.) and moving abroad (particularly for those who were moving with their partner/family).
- To include funding to cover the purchase of health insurance during the outgoing phase where necessary.
- To ensure calls offer a choice of Irish or International Fellowship with both options retaining a mobility element.
- Fellows are to be provided with improved information on the financial breakdown of the fellowship award, so as to set more realistic financial expectations.
- Fellows will be more actively encouraged to make use of the EURAXESS-Ireland office for assistance with moving abroad.
- To ensure that while on secondment or based in international institutions/organisations, that Fellows will be given training and personal development opportunities that aligns with their research and career development goals.

## **Final Remarks**

The primary goal of the CARA programme was to provide mobility experience to early career researchers, thus increasing the diversity of their research experience and their overall employability. Looking at Table 4 below, one can see that, since 2009, a total of 29 Marie Curie International Outgoing Fellowships were awarded to Ireland, while the CARA programme provided 25 Fellows with a similar mobility experience during the same time period, clearly demonstrating a significant impact on mobility for early career researchers in Ireland. In addition, the CARA programme contributed to the success of the subsequent ELEVATE programme which, in its first call in 2013, made 15 mobility awards, enhancing the mobility of early career researchers in Ireland.

Separately, another goal of the CARA programme was to increase the employability of early career researchers. The positive effects of the programme on the career

development of our CARA Fellows can be clearly observed by looking at the follow-on positions the Fellows secured immediately after finishing their fellowship. The majority of Fellows are currently employed in either permanent or contract research positions, many of which are based in prestigious institutions or organisations.

Thus, in terms of enhancing the mobility and employability of early career researchers in Ireland, CARA may be considered to have left a significant, valuable and lasting imprint on the Irish research landscape.

Table 4: Number of Irish International Outgoing Fellowship proposals evaluated and the number of successful awards. Figures provided by the Irish Universities Association.

International Outgoing Fellowships - Ireland	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Evaluated	3	9	16	25	23	26	25
Selected	1	2	5	4	8	4	5
Success rate	33.3%	22.2%	31.3%	16.0%	34.8%	15.4%	20.0%

Appendix I

List of positions taken up by INSPIRE Fellows immediately following the end of their fellowship

CARA Cohort 1	
Name	Follow-on Position
Angela Byrne	Lecturing position at the University of Greenwich, England
Barry Cannon	Lecturing position at NUI Maynooth, Ireland
John Cunningham	Research associate at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland and at the University of Exeter, England
Carrie Griffin	9 month Teaching Fellowship at the University of Bristol, England
Shane McCorristine	Wellcome Postdoctoral Fellowship, University of Leicester, England
Laura O'Brien	Lecturing position at the University of Sunderland, England
Justin Tonra	University Fellow at NUI Galway, Ireland
Catherine Ware	2 year lecturing position at the University of Edinburgh, Scotland
Liam Weeks	Lecturing position at University College Cork, Ireland
CARA Cohort 2	
Name	Follow-on Position
Karen Brown	Lecturing position at the University of St. Andrews, Scotland
Edward Collins	University College Dublin, Ireland
Peter Crooks	Assistant Professor, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland
Niamh Cullen	Lecturing position at the University of Southampton, England
Michael Daly	Senior lecturing position at the University of Sterling, England
Conal Duddy	Temporary lecturing position at NUI Galway, Ireland
Susan Grant	Lecturing position at Liverpool John Moores University, England

<b>Adam Kelly</b>	Lecturing position at the University of York, England
<b>Cathal Kilcline</b>	Lecturing position at NUI Galway, Ireland
<b>Kathleen Middleton</b>	Job seeking
<b>Kevin O'Sullivan</b>	Lecturing position at NUI Galway, Ireland
<b>Giorgos Papantoniou</b>	3 year Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Bonn, Germany
<b>James Ryan</b>	Lecturing position at Cardiff University, Wales
<b>Chiara Tedaldi</b>	Job seeking
<b>Esther Tippmann</b>	Lecturing position at University College Dublin, Ireland
<b>Patrick Walsh</b>	Part-time lecturing position at NUI Maynooth, Ireland