

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions 2015 – COFUND AWARDS

Three outstanding researchers rewarded

Luxembourg, 11 December 2015

Interpreting whistled languages through cognitive science, analysing big data for health purposes and developing innovative treatments for osteoporosis, these are 3 challenges addressed by the winners of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) 2015 – COFUND awards. The winners were announced to an international audience last night at the gala dinner that took place in the magnificent setting of the Cercle Cité in Luxembourg City. Three outstanding researchers, Dr Julien Meyer, Dr Aiden Doherty and Dr David Hoey, who were funded by the COFUND scheme, were selected amongst the most promising scientists and honoured for their excellent research during the Awards Ceremony.

The prizes were jointly remitted by Claudie Haigneré, astronaut and former French Minister for Research and for European Affairs; Martine Reicherts, Director General of DG Education and Culture of the European Commission, and Marc Schiltz, Secretary General of the Luxembourg National Research Fund, in the presence of Luxembourg Secretary of State for Higher Education and Research Marc Hansen and of a gathering of experts and stakeholders in the field of research. A monetary prize of 1000€ complements each award.

Dr Julien Meyer, the leading expert in the area of whistled languages has recently joined the CNRS GIPSA Laboratory in Grenoble, France having worked for years in Amazonia in Brazil. Dr Meyer began his research on languages in 2002, when he entered the linguistic doctoral program at Lyon 2 in the area of Cognitive Sciences.

During the COFUND phase at the Lyon's Collegium, he wrote a book: «Whistled languages - A worldwide inquiry about whistled speech», which is based on an impressive first-hand experience of whistled languages in various parts of the world (France, Spain, Greece, Turkey, Thailand, Laos, Mexico, Brazil, Morocco, ...) and is now considered to be the reference book of the domain. He launched several international collaborations, including some between the Linguistics division of the Museu Goeldi, his former Brazilian host institution and several research institutions in France, all the while being very active with publishing articles, participating in conferences and giving invited talks.

In the aftermath of his COFUND fellowship Dr Meyer was granted an Individual Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship that enabled him to work on the Iconicity and Ecology of languages.

Thanks to his original approach to tackle different issues related to different forms of speech in a large diversity of languages in Europe, Asia and South America he anchored his studies in a cognitive perspective. His work shows that whistled languages do indeed reflect the phonology—the basic sound elements—of spoken language. His first papers on iconic transformations of singing with musical instruments in the Amazon region open new perspectives on the fascinating topic of music-language relations in human communication. With Dr Moore, he recently, co-authored a paper on ‘The study of tone and related phenomena in the Gaviao of Rondônia tone language’ which added a solid international dimension to his steadily growing reputation as a leading young scholar.

Julien Meyer has more recently worked on analyzing spoken and whistled speech with Siberian Yupik speakers and traditional whistlers in the Moroccan Atlas region. He is also developing long term projects of documentation of several endangered languages.

The EU-funded research has enabled Dr Meyer to become one of the world's leading expert in his field and the results of his research might, in the future, well lead to innovation in fields such as telecommunication or voice transmission, and have a major impact on the preservation of our traditional linguistic heritage worldwide.

Dr Aiden Doherty is a senior research fellow at the University of Oxford. Following his MSCA COFUND fellowship at Oxford University, Dr Doherty has established himself as a research leader in the analysis of sensor data to understand human behaviour.

His research interest is in the development of computational methods to extract meaningful health information from complex and noisy sensor data in very large health studies. Being at the intersection of medical sciences and computing, his research interests focus on extracting lifestyle health behaviours, and the social and environmental context in which they occur, from accelerometers and wearable cameras. This builds on experience at Microsoft Research, Dublin City University (both in computing departments) and the University of Oxford (population health and biomedical engineering). Dr Doherty has over 50 peer-reviewed publications and is on the UK Biobank expert working group on processing accelerometer data.

In addition to his Marie Skłodowska-Curie fellowship, Dr Doherty has won 2 highly competitive awards from the Irish Research Council and from the British Heart Foundation for Research Excellence. As Principal investigator he had obtained funding of circa half a million Euros, including an Oxford-Stanford Big Data in Health Initiative seed grant, to pursue his research associated with the extraction of preliminary physical activity information from 100,000 UK Biobank participants.

Dr Doherty's interdisciplinary research is a perfect example of a successful combination of academic and non-academic collaboration, which is promoted and encouraged in the MSCA schemes. His research might help more clearly and precisely understand lifestyle health behaviours and how they are associated with health outcomes such as cardiovascular disease.

Dr David Hoey is an Associate Professor in Biomedical Engineering at the Trinity College Dublin of the University of Dublin. He held his COFUND postdoctoral fellowship at Columbia University in 2009-2011, working with Professor Chris Jacobs and renowned leaders in Mechanobiology, where he was able to develop a completely new set of skills and expertise in the area of Cell and Molecular Biomechanics. His COFUND RESPIRE international mobility fellowship was then completed at the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, under Professor Fergal O'Brien tutelage, where Dr Hoey went on to develop more translational, therapeutic applications in the field of tissue engineering and regenerative medicine.

Dr Hoey pursues cutting-edge fundamental research into developing innovative treatments for bone-loss diseases such as osteoporosis. He received several professional awards and honours related to his research at Columbia University, including the "New Investigator Recognition Award" of the Orthopaedic Research Society, and several prestigious invitations. Dr Hoey is also a recipient of a European Research Council Starting Grant.

The results of the research carried out by Dr. Hoey during his post-doctoral fellowship form a relevant contribution to the emerging field of research in skeletal stem cell mechano-sensing and-transduction that is related to the development of innovative therapeutic approaches. As a result of the COFUND fellowship, he wrote 10 peer reviewed publications as well as a book chapter and 26 proceedings abstracts. Now at the head of his own research team Dr Hoey is now conducting ground breaking research that will have a meaningful impact on human health.

The MSCA is a European Union programme promoting the mobility and career development for researchers, more [info](#)

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