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Reform of Academy of Sciences of Albania and Youth[*]

Abstract

During the last two years the Albanian Government and the Parliament of Albania, aiming the strengthening the Academy of Sciences of Albania and its important role in science development and its application in different fields of life in Albania, undertook a reform based on a new Law approved by the Parliament. The new Law on the Academy of Sciences, besides the sanction of its mission and functions, intends to renovate the composition of the Assembly of the Academy of Sciences of Albania and of its leading structures on the basis of a democratic process. Actually, the first phase has been completed and new Academicians have been selected less than 75 years old; meanwhile the average age for the members of the Assembly of Academy is 62 years.

One of the main problems in the scientific research system in Albania is the increasing of the number of the young researcher's.

Official statistics for human resources in science and technology in Albania for R&D employees and researchers do not equate to Full Time Equivalent (FTE) as defined in the OECD's Frascati manual. The National Statistical Institute has not provided the statistics for R&D&I.

[*] The paper is printed as submitted.

Especially in the higher education sector, researchers are only partly engaged in full-time R&D activities.

Researchers in Albania are allocated in:

- research institutes/centers of universities,
- Academy of Sciences,
- research institutes and agencies and centers of technological transfer/incubators of the ministries,
- R&D units in the private sectors of the industry: multinational companies computer sciences, food production, technology, civil engineering ect.), small and medium enterprises,
- NGO research institutes and research centers.

From 1990 human resources in science and technology drastically decreased. Various surveys show that during 1990-1999, approximately 40% of the professors and research scientists of the universities and science institutions in the country have emigrated. According a survey in 1999, of 300 academics that received Ph. D-s in the West during the '80 – '90, revealed that 67% had emigrated.

Emigrants include highly educated and qualified people from all walks of life, who were formed in Albania and some of them, in particular during the '80 – '90, were educated and trained in the universities of Western Europe or the USA.

The difficult economic and social situation, the lack of appreciation of academic work and the poor facilities for scientific work combined with the allure of the outside world are all strong reasons for specialists to leave. Current legislation in Albania poses no obstacles to emigration.

These emigrants are mostly young and male: 51% of them are under 40 years old and approximately 67% are males. Unlike the mass emigration discussed earlier, the majorities of highly educated emigrants (67%) have left with their families, have clear goals and aim to create stable, well-integrated lives in the host country.

However, the continuous brain drain poses a severe threat to this system. Driving forces for the brain drain are seen in the deteriorated economic living conditions, the lack of state-of-the-art infrastructure and funds that constitute

serious obstacles for research, and restrictive visa regulations that hinder scientific exchange and temporary employment abroad.

Some of the highly educated people return after their studies and others may consider it.

The government has set the issue of human capital as the highest priority directly related to the process of the transformation of brain drain.

The brain drain it is a reality in our country, but it is nedded to take measures to decrease, and to produce the National Strategy for Migration, in order to achieve an effective engagement of the Albanian Diaspora in the development processes,

Main ASA priority of ASA is the contribution to the youth:

- In teaching and scientific research activity to the higher education,
- With high contribution in drawing the legal acts of higher education and science,
- With participation in important national organisms of higher education and science,
- Through different publications,
- In drawing national programs for research and development (NPRD),
- In managing and developing NPRD projects,
- In coordinating the development of projects of different levels with the participation of the researchers from universities,
- In conceiving and coordinating the cooperation between scientific institutions with private business for:
  - *transferring and application of innovative technologies in production,*
  - *establishing nucleus of research-development in institutions of private business,*
  - *increasing capacities of agencies of technology transfer in different fields of production,*
  - *stimulating innovative acts and their application in producing practice, etc.*
- In increasing the capacities of scientific research institutions and proposal to create new scientific institutions,
- In monitoring and studying of scientific research the potential, evidencing phenomena, problems and required recommendations for improving the actual situation,

- Studies and contributions in improving the human resources,
- Participation of researchers in programs and projects that ASA has with other Academies, IAP, TWAS, the Network of Academies of Europe, etc.

The ASA develops these research programs and projects with participation of all the universities in priority programs of IAP, such as:

- *Science Education*
- *Access to Scientific Information*
- *Capacity Building for Young Academies*
- *Genetic Modification Organisms (GMOs)*
- *Biosecurity*
- *Health Education of Women*
- *Water*

In the framework of ASA reform according the new law, 20 new Academicians were selected according to a transparent and democratic procedure in order to renovate the Assembly after the retirement of Academicians over 75 years old.

The Selection Commission consisted of 9 renowned science personalities, of which 5 were foreigners. During the process of the selection of candidatures, IAP objectives regarding to gender and young scientist involvement were taken into consideration. With the election of the regular members of the Assembly of ASA, the average age decreased from 72 to 62 years old. The expectation for the average age will be younger after the selection, that will take place soon, of associated members of ASA, in accordance to which will be complete the required 45 members of the Assembly.

In the new situation of ASA it is needed continuously to improve the image of science and to attract new generations to a career in science.

To improve the scientific research in Albania it is needed to provide promising scientists in Albania with research facilities; For that it is more effective to facilitate contacts and encourage cooperation between individual scientists in side and out side of the country institutions.

Academy and Politics