

ACADEMIA ROMANA

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General

The Romanian Academy (*Academia Română*) was founded in April 1866 as The Romanian Literary Society. The following year it began its activities, but was now called The Romanian Academic Society. In 1879, by means of special legislation, it was promulgated as a national institution with the current name of *Academia Română* - the Romanian Academy.

From the very beginning the newly founded institution was a national, encyclopaedic and active society. It was:

- *National*, because it was representative of the culture of not only the territory of what was then Romania, but also those territories under foreign domination by the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman, and Russian Empires. Hence, the 21 founding members were scholars and literati, not only from Wallachia and Moldavia, but also from Transylvania, Banat, Bukovine, Bessarabia (today the Republic of Moldavia) and the Balkan Peninsula.
- *Encyclopedic*, since its preoccupations embraced all domains of the arts, letters, and sciences.
- An *active society*, because the Romanian Academy was conceived by its founders as a forum of national recognition, but at the same time as an *active* centre of scientific research and literary and artistic creation.

In nearly a century and a half, the Academy experienced both splendid and dark periods. Since the fall of the communist regime, the Academy has known a period of restoration to and reinstatement in the vocation, dignity, and fundamental role that the institution had cultivated from its very beginning, and of which it had been abusively stripped. The Law regulating the Romanian Academy, accepted in December 2001, starts with the following statement:

“The Romanian Academy is the highest national forum of scientific and cultural recognition, which unites personalities from home and abroad having outstanding achievements in science, letters, arts, and other spiritual fields.”

Structure

The central facilities of the Romanian Academy are housed in a century-old building in Bucharest, where the management and administration staff are also housed and where the General Assembly holds its meetings. The structures of the Romanian Academy cover the entire country and include all scientific, artistic and literary fields. Besides the facilities in Bucharest, there are three branches of the Academy in Romania's main cultural and higher education centres (Iasi, Cluj-Napoca, and Timisoara).

The members of the Academy are active participants in the 14 specialised sections: philology and literature; history and archaeology; mathematics; physics; chemistry; biology; geonomic sciences; engineering; agriculture and forestry; medicine; economy, law and sociology; philosophy, theology, psychology, and pedagogy; arts, architecture, and audio-video media; information science and technology.

The sections co-ordinate 66 research institutes and centres throughout the country that focus their activity on specialised domains. The Academy network also includes a large Library of the Romanian Academy, the Academy Publishing House, an astronomical observatory, geodynamic observatories and monitoring stations, biological reservations, memorial houses,

and museums. In addition, the scientific activity is carried out in national committees, specialised commissions, and working groups.

Membership

In accordance with its bylaws, the Romanian Academy has 181 acting members (academicians and corresponding members), and 135 honorary members (Romanians and foreign citizens), all highly esteemed intellectuals. Taking into account a total national population of about 23 million, membership selection is therefore quite strict. New members should be younger than 65 and are elected by the General Assembly; they must demonstrate outstanding performance in a scientific, artistic or literary field. The same body elects new, full members from the body of acting members.

Leadership of the Romanian Academy lies primarily with its General Assembly, which meets whenever it is necessary to examine, discuss and make decisions, elect new members, and approve upcoming projects. Between sessions, the Academy is under the directorship of the Presidium, comprised of the president, the four vice-presidents, and the secretary general of the Academy, as well as of the presidents of the 14 sections and of the three regional branches.

Between two sessions of the Presidium, the management and the executive power belong to the Board of the Presidium, which includes the president, the four vice-presidents and the secretary general. They are elected for a period of four years and can be re-elected only once. The Presidium presents its annual report to the General Assembly, which also votes for the following year's research plan.

The Mission and Tasks of the Romanian Academy

As a symbol of national unity and spirituality, the Romanian Academy has to initiate, perform, and encourage works that express our intellectual vocation and creative force.

The *traditional task* was, and still is, that of being the highest scientific and cultural forum of Romanian society, and one of the nation's principal institutions, due primarily to its members' esteem and prestige. As conceived by its founders, the Academy is meant to be an instrument of moral and intellectual cohesion - not only for the country's citizens, but also for the approximately 10 million Romanians living abroad.

The *active task*, as already stated, is furthering basic and advanced scientific research in all fields. Under the guidance of the Academy members, approximately 3500 individuals involved in research, carry out programmes and projects intended to develop essential objectives, and meet the requirements of contemporary society. The main orientations will be dealt with below.

Last but not the least, there is its *advisory and expertise-sharing task* for the benefit of central and local administrative bodies, the Government, the Parliament, National Agencies, consulting boards, and others. Fundamental programmes concerning the country's strategy regarding integration into the European Union, the advent of the information society, the transition to a market economy etc., were among the recent objectives of scientists' endeavour within the Academy framework.

There are interdependence and interaction with a synergetic character among the above-mentioned Academy tasks, and the outcome of one stimulates the proper development and accomplishment of all the others.

Scientific Research

The specific role of the Romanian Academy is to carry out basic and advanced priority research, taking the broad national interest into account. Fundamental programmes, mobilising several institutes each, include the Thesaurus Dictionary of the Romanian Language, the Treatise on the History of the Romanian People, the Dictionary of the Romanian Literature, the Evaluation of the Present Status of the Romanian Economy, the advent in our country of the Information Society - a Society of Knowledge, and others.

The scientists' objective is to enhance their activities to the level required by world standards and by the country's needs. Two Academy institutes were designated as centres of excellence of the European Community: the Simion Stoilow Institute of Mathematics and the Nicolae Simionescu Institute of Cellular Biology and Pathology. Many other institutes and centres are of outstanding quality and include the institutes of chemistry, geography, archaeology, artificial intelligence, virology, the National Institute of Economic Research, the Institute for Research into the Quality of Life, the Emil Racovitza Institute of Spaeology, and others.

Among the most interesting and successful research projects are the following:

- The international observation and study of the 1999 total solar eclipse, taking advantage of the fact that Bucharest was the only European capital situated on the middle line of the total coverage strip.
- The monitoring of geodynamic activity in a region with a high incidence of earthquakes by a network of observatories and stations.
- The biospaeological studies in the Dobrudja karst ecosystem, which revealed many new species adapted to hypoxic conditions.
- Interdisciplinary research concerning linguistic engineering or the processing of natural speech.
- Fuzzy sets and applications in logic and economics.
- The chemistry of macromolecules and of supramolecular species.
- The tribology (study of friction) of non-conventional materials.
- Research on AIDS and hepatitis, and antiviral chemotherapy.
- The study of specific features, maintenance, storage, and protection of Romanian vineyards and wines.
- Mathematical modelling of the macroeconomic processes in the present Romanian economy.
- Human development and quality of life during the economic and social transition in Romania.
- Studies of diseases of the cardiovascular system, the main cause of mortality in both the Romanian population and world-wide.

The Romanian Academy has played a pioneering role in the country by introducing the "competitive grant system" and the annual evaluation of research institutes, enabling the management to support those who perform well and assist those who are lagging.

Cultural Institutions

Several institutions, which are essential for the realisation of the Academy's goals, are worth mentioning. The first is the large library housing over 10 million books and periodicals, as well as invaluable collections of manuscripts, historic documents, drawings and engravings,

photographs, maps, musical scores, coins and medals, and many other collections and archives. The library is open to the public.

A new, modern wing for the Library was commissioned last year, - the largest capital expenditure for cultural purposes in a decade.

The Romanian Academy Publishing House publishes scientific books and periodicals - almost a hundred titles - mostly in foreign languages. Moreover, publications such as the *Annals of the Romanian Academy*, the *Proceedings of the Romanian Academy*, the *Annuary of the Romanian Academy*, and the monthly journal "Academica" are the media through which research results and information on the Academy's activity are disseminated.

The foundations under the aegis of the Romanian Academy are also noteworthy. The M. H. Elias Family Foundation was created by a Romanian businessman who bequeathed his fortune to the Romanian Academy for both scientific and humanitarian purposes in 1923. In the spirit of this tradition, the National Foundation for Science and Art was established in 1999 as a centre of high intellectual endeavour, fertile dialogue, and support of the Romanian culture.

Grants and Awards

The Romanian Academy carries on the tradition of sustaining the recognition and rewarding of outstanding performances by scientists, artists and literati who are not Academy members, but have made eminent contributions to Romanian intellectual life and cultural progress. The Romanian Academy Awards are thus annually granted for outstanding works and exceptional lifelong achievements. There are 70 such awards - bearing the names of major Romanian cultural figures - although not all are granted in a given year. They are granted only once in a lifetime and only to non-members.

Prestigious scholars and cultural personalities, both at home and abroad, who contribute to the mission of the Academy, or the development of its scientific relationships are awarded the *Honorary Diploma of the Romanian Academy (Honoris Causa)* and the *Diploma of Academic Merit*. Moreover, the Romanian Academy, together with the National Foundation for Science and Art bestows two classes of honorary awards: the *Cultural Distinction* diploma for an active presence in Romanian intellectual life and for contributions to Academy activities, as well as the *Jubilee Medal*, issued on the occasion of the 135th anniversary of the Academy.

For the first time in the country's history, the Romanian Academy management has succeeded in introducing competitive financing based on grants. The grant system was set up in 1995 after which the system was generalised and utilised by the Ministry of Education and Research in close co-operation with and applying similar criteria as the Academy. At present the total sum of the funds available for Academy grants is rather small, but it is strongly contested and successful applications are only about 20% of all those submitted. The Academy grant system is open to scientists from all research and education institutions in the country, whether academic or not. Another "first" is the *ex-post* evaluation according to which the output of the allocated grants is later monitored.

The Academy and Young Scientists

Attracting young and bright research people into the Academy network is a priority, but difficult problem in the light of the importance of further education and the struggle to combat the "brain drain" phenomenon with a "brain gain".

On the positive side, the Academy has regained the right to organise post-graduate studies and Ph.D. programmes. Thus, each year, many young scientists become doctors in all fields of

science, under the guidance of prestigious senior scientists and members of the Academy. Under Academy bylaws, only Ph.D.s can apply for senior research fellow positions. Summer schools are also regularly organised.

On the negative side, young scientists' salary is rather poor, and the number of those seeking greener pastures in the business sector or abroad is high. A sociological research programme, carried out during the nineties, dealt with the youth's motivation, especially that of young scientists. Thereafter, some measures were taken, but the lack of funding prevented impressive results. The subject is therefore still very high on the management agenda.

International Co-operation and European Integration

Scientific research, especially basic research, is a social activity that is deeply integrated on a global level, and the international community of scientists is an adequately structured forum that ultimately guarantees that individuals and their works have access to the scientific body of knowledge. Unlike other activities, basic research either has to reach world class or has no credence at all.

The Romanian Academy aims at disseminating research results in order to increase the visibility of Romanian science and scientists, as well as knowledge of the people, language, history, and culture. Another objective is to provide Romanian scientists with access to high-level research equipment and facilities, and to carry out advanced research based on international co-operation.

International relationships occur at two levels: under central co-ordination of the Academy, or directly between research units and scientists abroad. Thus, there are 35 bilateral inter-academic agreements between the Romanian Academy and varied learned societies in 25 countries of the world, as well as a substantial participation in the activities of international bodies, such as: ALLEA, UNESCO, and another 29 international scientific and professional organisations.

As a result of this multi- and bilateral co-operation, the joint publication of a significant number of books and papers in scientific periodicals is noteworthy. More than ever, international co-operation plays an important role in the fulfilment of the institutes' research programmes.

The above-mentioned bilateral inter-academic agreements play a significant role in fostering the mobility of our scientists, as well as in allowing foreign scientists to visit our research institutes and participate in common projects.

Financing

According to the Statute of the Romanian Academy, funds for the Academy and its network of research and cultural units come from the state budget and may be supplemented by other extra-budgetary funds from research contracts, grants, sales of publications, consulting and educational activity, scientific and cultural events, sponsorships etc. The Academy may also benefit from the income yielded by its various possessions, mostly real estate, which is at present being returned, after being confiscated under the communist governments.

The transition from a centralised to a free market economic system has necessitated an austere budgetary policy, and the Academy has to actively struggle and lobby for funds. The only solution on the short and medium term is diversification of the financing sources and increased effectiveness in respect of expenditures.

The Future

The present strategic goal of the Romanian Academy is to enhance its relevance for the development of the country, as well as to increase the presence, visibility, and contribution of the Romanian intelligentsia in the global scientific and cultural endeavour. There are reasons to believe that these aims will be reached, since the Romanian Academy:

- is an adequate institution for multi- and interdisciplinary approaches, since it includes highly qualified representatives of the basic sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, and medicine), social sciences (economics, sociology, history, and law), as well as of philosophy, letters, and arts;
- is well connected with European and global learned bodies, with similar academies from other countries, and its Institutes collaborate directly with research institutes and scientists abroad;
- promotes the policy of on-going evaluation of results, competitiveness, and freedom of creation;
- is not only a centre of research and of preservation of national culture, but also a space for continuous education of the youth.