

## **ROLE OF THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES OF ALBANIA ON THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESS OF ALBANIA**

The General Assembly was held on 12-13 April, in the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Netherlands, in Amsterdam, where the headquarters of European Federation of National Academies of Sciences and Humanities (ALLEA) are situated. This Assembly was attended by the 54 highest representatives of the European Academies. I availed myself of this occasion to interview the Academician, Prof. Dr. Dipl. Eng. Salvatore Bushati, General Scientific Secretary of Academy of Sciences of Albania.

*Mr. Bushati, we have already read the Report on the activity of the Academy of Sciences for 2010, where you have recently presented the balance of your one-year work. In fact, we have noticed more achievements compared to 2009. In this respect, I would like to know the contribution that the activity of Academy of Sciences of Albania (ASA) has given to the European Integration process of Albania.*

To fulfill its mission, in accordance with the Strategy of Research, Technological Development and Innovations, as well as European Standards, ASA has always aimed to successfully implement its main functions regarding the observance of its obligations to the European Integration, especially in the area of science. *In this framework, the major activities of the Academy are focused on:*

- establishment of an appropriate infrastructure and strengthening and consolidation of its capacities to increase its role in the development of the country;
- cooperation with the government institutions to identify the issues regarding the commitment of ASA to fulfill the objectives of the Government;
- consultation and the necessary expertise for policymaking and decision-making institutions;
- cooperation with research and education institutions, within and outside the country, to conduct studies in various areas of science and technology;
- proposal of new research and study areas, in accordance with the necessities of the economical and social development of the country;
- publication of periodicals and other works of high scientific level;
- organization of scientific congresses and conferences at national and international level;
- promotion and support of perfection of new researchers in sciences, especially at national level, to reach the highest levels of research and to establish and support its structures of representation;
- awarding of scientific awards, etc.

*To reach the objectives of Integration, could you please tell us, how have you used your experiences of EU?*

A special attention has been given to study the EU analysis, regarding the developments of science and technology (S&T) in the Western Balkan countries, as well as to the situation of scientific research here in Albania, the measures that should be taken to

intensify the work on mitigating the flaws in S&T, such as: (i) prevalence of the public sector in S&T over the private one; (ii) lack of integration among programs of research and other policies; (iii) weak absorption of funds; (iv) insufficient engagement of the private sector in S&T, or lack of promotion of achievements carry out in science and technology; (v) lack of stimulating mechanisms to increase the international cooperation; (vi) development and application of strategies and laws in S&T; etc.

Regarding this issue, ASA has taken into account the basic document, the National Strategy of Research, Technological Development and Innovations) and other strategies of Government, recommendation of ALLEA, ICSU, IAP, as well as of other international institutions, always considering the creative application in conformity with the possibilities and real conditions of our country, and also of its economical development in general.

ASA is a member of the network of experts of NCP at FP7, and it gives its contribution in different programs, but on the other hand, it serves as an informative link of the scientific community, civil society, policy-makers, decision-makers and Albanian and foreign businesses, which conduct their activity in Albania.

***Which are the most prominent activities in the research area?***

The scientific research activity has been mainly conducted in the areas of Social and Albanological Sciences as well as the National and Technical Sciences.

Thus, **in the area of Albanology**, were included three branches: linguistics, history and heritage of material and spiritual culture. Regarding the possible conditions on expansion and deepening of research, we are in front of the creation of a new generation of researchers in the fields of Albanology.

ASA is focused on addressing the research in the scientific issue of national importance, to highlight the identity traditions and values of the nation in the areas of history and culture. These values help us to integrate decently in the EU with our identity as a nation. Of great importance is the expansion of the three abovementioned areas of scientific research in all Albanian territories:

**In the area of linguistics**, in the agenda are included the problems of the integrated Albanian language, for the application of the norm and the perfection of the standard; **In the field of history**, coverage of areas and periods with ideological distortions of the past, **works with resumptive character**, research of foreign archives on Albanian territories in centuries, which greatly helps for the education of the young professionals; **In the field of cultural heritage**, activities to identify and to document the material and verbal heritage throughout the Albanian territories in centuries, publication in Albanian and especially in foreign languages, by increasing the cooperation among Albanian and foreign researchers according to their fields, mainly taking into account the similarities and distinctions in the region; all these have as their major aim – the contribution to establish a qualitative civil society, with democratic mentality, able to face the challenges of Albania integration to the EU family, growth of the quality of life, etc.

The priorities of natural and technical sciences are mainly directed in accordance with the National Strategy of Research, Technologies and Innovations and Government oriented studies in areas such as information and communication technology, health and primary service, regulation of the water regime in lakes, rivers and lagoons, use of renewable energy, evaluation, protection and rehabilitation of natural ecosystems, biodiversity and quality of food, transfer and application of new technologies in various areas having as priority those of the cultural heritage, etc.

***Does ASA have at its disposal the necessary capacities to conduct its activity appropriately?***

The results obtained show that we actually have the possible capacities, but we continue to make efforts to increase and strengthen the existing ones. Thus, with the support of the Project of the World Academies Network was conducted the strengthening of the capacities of ASA, able to counsel the government and the civil society, as a necessity for the development of the country, in accordance with the priorities of the Inter Academy Panel, Network of the Academies of Sciences of Europe (ALLEA), focusing on strengthening its counseling capacities for scientific research and development to reach the indices of the European membership.

***How do you evaluate the cooperation of ASA?***

I would like to emphasize that the focus of its activity has been mainly the increase of national and international cooperation, signing of agreements and protocols with research, scientific and university institutions, as well as the decent presentation of ASA in international meetings. These relations serve mainly to the transfer of European and international experiences in all fields of development here in Albania.

One of its special objectives is the cooperation with abroad in support of relations, recognition of the integration of Albania to the EU and its links throughout the world through the qualitative increase of cooperation in the areas of scientific research, social and natural – technical sciences with the active participation in the partnership in 5 areas of the initiative Program of European Research Area, “ERA”, which consist on: (i) international cooperation in S&T; (ii) intensification of partnership in research; (iii) transfer of technologies; (iv) researches in infrastructure; (v) newest developments in science; etc.

In addition, considerable efforts have been made regarding ASA participation in the EU Framework Programs, or other programs of research character, where ASA is represented as coordinator, or gives its contribution at expert level.

During 2010, ASA has initiated several links with important institutions at European and world wide level:

- besides international prestigious institutions, ASA cooperates continually and is regularly counseled by ALLEA, ICSU, and is represented in the UNESCO International Committee of Science with its headquarters in Paris;

- regarding the reformation process of ASA, IAP and TWAS offer their support with consults, grants, and experts to establish and strengthen the capacities in infrastructure, etc;
- ASA is member of the International Association of Studies of South-Eastern Europe, and hosts its presidency for the moment; it is also a member of the Union of European Agrarian Academies;
- ASA has its own selected members in the European Academy of Sciences, in the Academy of Sciences and Arts in Switzerland, the Academy of Sciences and Arts of Monte Negro, etc;
- ASA gives its valuable contribution as member of the Executive Committee of the International Association of Biological Oceanography;
- ASA has signed the declaration of the International Program on studying the acidification of oceanic waters and decrease of pollution from the carbon dioxide in space, etc.

***Prof. Bushati, we have often heard you using in your interviews the terms “product of scientific research, business and innovation”. What could you say in this respect?***

Strengthening of interrelations between science and business for its direct contributions in research and development, has been considered as an important ASA objective regarding the implementation of the scientific, technological and innovative product in developing the business in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) and beyond.

This fact has been taken into consideration especially regarding the proposal of the partnership in the framework of projects applied up to now, as regarding the project to support Albanian SME-s, to become competitive in the European market; the project on stimulating farmers to cultivate rare autochthonous fruit species, as an implementation of eco-technologies to use the fruit species with nutritive and environmental qualities; advanced technologies of viticulture and wine, etc.

One of the main priorities of the scientific research is the connection and implementation of the research product in business, in conformity with the Lisbon Convention, according to which, the aim of NSRTDI shall be the reformation of the financial system towards mechanisms of the market economy. Establishment of cooperation mechanisms between research and industry through the joint application in research and development programs shall be the basic aspect of ASA activity. Alternative positive tendencies have been showed up recently to reinforce the innovation of SME-s. This fact has been taken into consideration especially regarding the proposal of the partnership in the framework of government projects.

Increasing capacities of scientific research in business shall be the promoter of more reliable investments in the private sector. Business contribution in research is the major challenge regarding the sound and reliable development of science, technological development and innovation in Albania. Promotion of the vital role of the private sector regarding the development of NSRTDI shall be regarded as a *genius* of innovation. To

establish the favorable environment of generating innovation, it is crucial to have a good combination of government policies with the business strategies.

***Which are the main mechanisms used to conduct ASA activities?***

ASA activities have been conducted by presenting projects, organizing conferences and periodical and monograph publication, both within and outside the country. Thus, there are developed: Council of Ministers Projects; projects supported by the National Program on Research and Development (NPRD), National Agency of Research, Technologies and Information (ARTI) and by the Protocols of Bilateral S&T Cooperation Programs, as well as by other programs; projects in the framework of the Agreement on Research, Scientific and Artistic Cooperation between ASA and Academy of Sciences and Arts of Kosovo; projects supported by international organisms and programs (FP7, UNESCO, WBC-INCO.NET), etc.

The outcomes of the scientific work of academicians within and outside the country have been presented in national and international conferences, as well as in the scientific publications.

***Does ASA give any special contribution to the high education?***

Taking into consideration the activity conducted throughout 2010, we note that the Academy has given a continuous contribution especially in cooperation with universities and institutions of high education, public and private; all academicians give a considerable contribution in teaching, doctorates, textbooks, curricula, etc. ASA has good cooperation relations with the Albanian Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), as well as with the Agency of Research, Technological Development & Innovations. In addition, ASA participates in many academic forums and important activities such as also the filling in of Questionnaires on the SAA Process to become a member of EU and many activities to fulfill the requests required for this process.

***What do you think about the importance of ALLEA?***

I think that for ASA and for the other European Academies and beyond, ALLEA plays a special role to complete its mission of a great benefit to ERA.

ALLEA plays a significant role regarding the position and responsibilities it has with the structures of EU (D&G Research and very important programs in the European area and beyond research and development, a mission which ALLEA completes successfully even for the fact that as head of this organism is appointed a selected specialist such as Rudiger Klein. Considering these facts, I would like to say that I am very optimistic about the successful future of ALLEA.

On the other hand, I think that the research structures within EU, should consider ALLEA with a special interest, should support it even financially as an expertise and counseling structure; ALLEA should be seen as a linking bridge and representative of the voice of

the scientific community throughout ERA. These opinions were expressed simultaneously during several discussions of the General Assembly of ALLEA in KNAW (April, 12-13).

I would like to avail myself of this opportunity to thank KNAW for the support it always gives to us to cope with the difficulties of the transition phase, by accepting that the secretariat of ALLEA has its own headquarters near KNAW.

***Prof. Bushati, I am interested to know more regarding the activity that ASA has planned in conducting its mission in 2011.***

**Shortly, ASA priorities for this year according to the issues in the primary areas are as follows:**

- activities in the areas of education and science, water, energy, civil emergencies, agriculture and food, biotechnologies and bio-security, biodiversity, health and quality of living, information and communication technologies, environment, linguistics, history, cultural heritage, sociology, economy, finance and demographic issues, civil emergencies, reformation and functioning of the National Academic Committee of Albanian language, connection with the universities of the country (public and private) for strengthening of mutual links between teaching and scientific research, always for a reliable development of the country;
- young researchers shall be stimulated by ASA in the future, through involving them in cooperation with teaching actors of all levels and participation in joint activities (projects, conferences, seminars, joint tables, etc.);
- strengthening of connections and implementation of the research product in business, in conformity with the Lisbon Convention, according to which the reform of NSRTDI shall aim at reforming the financial system towards the mechanisms of the market economy;
- increasing of scientific research capacities in business shall be a promoter of more effective and reliable investments in the private sector; contribution of the business in the research area is one of the main challenges of a sound and reliable development of science, technological development and innovation in Albania; promotion of the vital role of the private sector in development of RTD&I within the country shall be regarded as a *genius* of innovation; a good combination of government policies with the business strategies is crucial in creating a favorable environment to generate innovation;
- special attention shall be paid to nondiscrimination and gender equality, a phenomenon which needs a lot of work and a wide involvement of the civil society;
- giving contributions to further improve legislation on scientific research and its management with efficiency is considered as an important priority too.
- establishing a constructive and continuous dialogue with government organisms especially for the gradual growth of funds designated for research and development, so that regarding this indices our country can progress along with the other countries of EU, as well as for well-administration and increase of autonomy of projects from bureaucracy of financial system, approaching as much as possible to the practices of the EU. Policies of R&D should change from the “policies of providing funds”, to the policies of “stimulating science, technology and innovation”;

- the publication of works of a special scientific value of the Academicians and outstanding scholars that conduct their activity within and outside the country.

Considering its priorities, ASA aims at having great achievements, high deserved prestige in the scientific community, civil society and beyond. The scientific research must contribute towards improving policy-making and decision-making institutions, as well as the civil society, domestic and foreign business, etc. to increase the Albanian quality society. ASA should be as well the driving force, where it shall play the fundamental role to stimulate development of the country in all directions.

I believe that ASA must have ALLEA regular support to successfully achieve its priorities.

***Thank you very much Prof. Bushati. We wish you success in collaboration with ALLEA to fulfill your important mission for R&D of your country.***