

## **EuroScience stresses need for intensified consultation of Russian Academy of Sciences and the scientific community in general on reforms of the Academy**

Like several other European countries, Russia badly needs to revitalize its science and innovation system. It must offer positions, opportunities, modern institutions and supportive measures to productive scientists, not least, to the new generations of young researchers and potential innovators, and encourage international cooperation on a massive scale. It is obvious that the Russian Academy of Sciences has, over the past decades, not been active in pursuing such reforms of its own structures, let alone of institutions for Russian science and higher education in general. The newly elected president, Professor Fortov, certainly seems to appreciate the need for reforms. It is, however, rather disturbing that the Russian government has caught the Academy, its members and Russian scientists in general by surprise by presenting a bill overnight to the Russian Duma which would impose far reaching changes on the Academy. Two of the Bill's readings have been held the first week of July, and the bill passed. A third final reading is scheduled for the fall. The initial proposals would have the Academy lose control of its property, the proceeds of which have been vital for its survival especially during the 1990's: Its institutes would be devolved and reviewed. As an interview with Professor Fortov in ITAR-TASS of 8 July shows, his intervention has, however, already resulted in modifications in the bill presented for the second reading.

Not all of these and other reforms may be negative; some are probably very necessary, such as reviewing the Academy's institutes for quality and relevance in the light of modern systems of science and innovation. But EuroScience hopes that, in future, consultation of the Academy, its members and indeed Russian scientists in general will be taking place. Many of them will have to be the active drivers of change towards revitalized institutions, and it would only be natural to tap into their creativity and challenge their readiness for change. These transformations will be difficult and painful, as the integration of the research institutions of the former DDR into the overall German research system has shown. But they will be impossible if the scientific community is not heavily involved.

EuroScience supports all Russian scientists who feel the need for changes and want to be engaged in discussing and develop new ways for Russian science and innovation. According to the Moscow Times of 5 July, Education and Science minister Livanov has indicated that truly fundamental questions regarding the organization and financing of scientific research in Russia would begin to be discussed soon. That will be good news if it entails an open and transparent debate in which the Russian scientific community is fully engaged, and if the bill now waiting in the Duma for its third reading is postponed and modified to reflect the outcomes of such discussions.

EuroScience emphasizes that the Russian school is an integral and essential part of European science, and that its vitality is of the utmost importance to all our researchers.

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