

Integration - an option for the survival of research and researchers in Romania

Roxana Bojariu

<http://bojariu.tripod.com/ciberplai.htm>

Science is culture. The delicate interplay between individual and social constraints, which is the cultural approach, seems to be a better solution than the pure socially (e.g. termites) or individually (e.g. orangutans) constrained systems. When we speak about fundamental problems in our scientific community there are cultural problems/failures we are discussing. A major drawback of our cultural environment is the lack of continuity, which forces individuals to start building over and over again in the absence of long-lasting schools/structures. Manole legend says that after the great monastery was finished, Negru Voda the ruler condemned the architect to death to prevent other beautiful monasteries to be built. The Manole syndrome makes structural know-how be lost and each time individually re-discovered instead of preserving it in scholar structures. Functional scholar structures enable the beneficial action of a spiritual-ordered field of the entire society and transferring the structuring power of the creative people to all members of the cultural system. This is how survival and evolution work in human society.

In our transition (hopefully) story, the system administrator acting as the legendary ruler is represented by the ensemble of values that we follow, whether we like them or not: arbitrarily acting, egoism, intellectual dishonesty etc. The individual facing a system like this, either gains social recognition and influence the society following wrong rules or is isolated and its creative power remains lost for other members of the cultural system. The social experiment performed on our society after the World War II seems to affect its survival and evolution potential through the scientific and academic community that are responsible for the functioning of scholar structures. Is it possible to carry out competitive science in Romania under these conditions? Yes, it is possible, at least theoretically. Fortunately our system is not closed with the entropic death as final destination. A certain openness we are experiencing now gives us the opportunity to import the "continuity" from our cultural family (European cultures) with which Romanian society evolved more or less synchronically before World War II.

There are several levels of openness in the system: institutional, civic, individual. The institutional openness is associated with the enlargements of occidental structures and it is especially due to the negotiations relative to Romanian accession in the European Union. The 17th negotiation file dealt with science and research and the (negotiators) sides successfully agreed on its issues in 1999. Are the Romanian research and researchers in a better position from institutional point of view? The Romanian government promised a non-centralized system for financing national research and development (R&D) activities but in 2002 the Governmental Ordinance (O.G. 57) introduced a "national management center" which is supposed to manage all national programs. Priorities stated by the Romanian Government in the 17th negotiation file such as a framework for assessment and promoting the excellence and better connections between universities, other R&D centers and industry are not functioning in reality and even worse, new legislative rules have changed the agreed solutions. For instance, O.G. 57/2002 states competition as one of the non-transparent ways to gain financial support for national research projects. As for the outlook of R&D evolution for 2000-2006, now, at the half way, the figures from the 17th file seem

to be unrealistic. The financial resources for R&D become smaller each year instead of growing up to 1% from the Gross Domestic Product (G.D.P.) in 2007 (or 150 Euro per capita) as in the negotiation file prognosis. The number of researchers is less even though the outlook stated a number of 20 researchers/10.000 inhabitants in 2007. The encouragement of young scientist's return from abroad, another priority, is only in the negotiation file, no coherent framework has been created to work in this direction. The negotiation file stipulated that the institutions responsible for implementation of R&D policies are National Agency for Science, Technology and Invention (ANȘTI), Ministry of Education and Romanian Academy. The lack of continuity is present at all levels in the system: two of the highly responsible institutions no longer exist. Ministry of Education became Ministry of Education and Research and ANȘTI vanished after the General Elections in 2000.

My scientific experience at individual level began with a Go West fellowship of the 4th Framework financed by the European Commission. It was a cultural choke: new values, new professional rules of conduct, higher respect for the individual, a more effective bureaucracy, all rising from strong scholar structures. These structures are not perfect but they are perfectible. They have evolutionary potential and cultural continuity. A project in a Human Capital and Mobility network of the 4th Framework was another opportunity. Although this project encouraged the collaboration between institutions, the level of action was merely the individual one. Beginning with the information about the call for proposal and ending with the financial reports, all efforts were at individual level, sometimes against the direction things were going in the system. The 5th Framework was, in my opinion, less effective in helping the scientists from the Central and Eastern Europe get synchronized with their western colleagues although on our institutional level the first signs of openness have appeared. The 6th Framework brings good news in this respect: increased mobility for researchers. This may be a way of forcing further change from the individual level to the institutional. In my opinion, there are fewer chances of having effective changes emerging only at the institutional level toward the individual. In this respect, the new tools (NoE & IP) seem to be too big for helping the scientists act in the fragile institutional level in Romania. A question remains to be answered. Is it possible to carry out competitive science in Romania now? Yes, but in certain conditions: active participation in internationally supported R&D programs such as the 6th Framework - a question of survival now; the existence of a national research area compatible with European Research Area on both institutional level (Romanian Academy, Ministry of Education and Research, R&D centers) and individual level; enhanced networking capabilities in nongovernmental voluntarily actions (e.g. Ad Astra project, <http://www.ad-astra.ro>) to force governmental organization for further institutional openness.

The opening over the space of the European Union meant for us, at the beginning of the 90's, the chance of relancing an area of research that lagged behind as a consequence of scientific isolation. Formative opportunities have been always as important as the informative ones and a cultural shift to synchronize us with the European structure is needed.