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**Comparing National Academies of  
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The Case of the Romanian  
Academy of Sciences**

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## **Comparing National Academies of Sciences in Central and Eastern Europe: The Case of the Romanian Academy of Sciences<sup>2</sup>**

### **General perception and position of the Academy**

A national symbol of culture since its establishment in 1866, the Romanian Academy identifies itself and continues to be seen as the heart of Romanian intellectuals, an institution that gathers together the preeminent personalities of the nation's intellectual life, a group engaged in reflection and action towards general progress in science and culture. The Romanian Academy is a scientific authority and a forum of scientific and cultural consecration. It is a public stature that the institution acquired over time and maintained by high standards.

In line with its status, the Romanian Academy is a national institution of public interest, a research institution in key areas of science and an institution of higher professional qualifications, independent in its work. According to a survey conducted by the Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy (an independent opinion research institute), the Romanian Academy ranks third in public confidence at 68%, behind only two fundamental Romanian institutions: the Army and the Church. The research was conducted on 20 November 2014, using a representative sample of 1,338 respondents, aged 18 years and over.

### **Milestones of the institutional transition**

In Romania, the period that followed the fall of the communist regime meant for the Romanian Academy a period of restoration and a reinstatement of the vocation and fundamental role the institution had cultivated from its very beginning and of which it had been stripped.

Through the law decree of 5 January 1990, regarding its organization and operation, the Romanian Academy recovered not only its former name but also its status as "the highest scientific authority in the country, bringing together the worthiest personalities in science, technology, education, culture and art in Romania, as representing the creative spirituality of the nation". At the same time, the law recognized the Academy's prerogatives as an independent institution, financed by the state budget and governed by the General Assembly, its acting and associate members, as well as its right to own the network of "science facilities for advanced and fundamental research".

As early as 22 January of the same year, the Academy elected new acting members, a prerogative it had been denied for 15 years, since 1974. The next step was the election of a new administration of the Academy through secret ballot (for the first time in 42 years!). The Academy recognized the value of uninterrupted membership for all its members who

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had been excluded for political reasons by the communist dictatorship in 1948. Moreover, the associate members of the Romanian Academy who had lost their status during the totalitarian regime because they had permanently left the country were also reinstated. Great personalities of Romanian cultural life who had been set aside as politically incorrect during communist rule and had died were granted posthumous membership of the Academy. Internationally renowned scholars, among them Romanian natives living abroad, were elected as new honorary members.

The scientific network of institutes that had been dismantled after 1969 was put back together again, as the 63 institutes, centres and other research facilities of the Academy throughout the country came once more under its direction. Post-communist transformations led to the Romanian Academy being run on a democratic basis. One of the major changes for individual researchers was the possibility to travel abroad, to attend international conferences, to cooperate with foreign researchers and to participate in international research projects.

Currently PhD study within the Romanian Academy is being reorganized as a "School of Advanced Studies of the Romanian Academy" in five areas: science, life sciences, medical and agricultural humanities, economics, social and legal studies and engineering sciences. The PhD title granted by the Romanian Academy is very similar in terms of values and procedure for attainment to the PhD title granted by Romanian universities. However, the research topics are more or less from fundamental research areas compared to the research activity developed in the universities, where the research activity is supposed to be more applied.

The main role of the Romanian Academy is to cultivate Romanian language and literature, to establish binding rules for spelling the Romanian language and to foster the study of Romanian national history and research in major scientific areas. The main responsibilities of Romanian Academy are as follows:

- To promote science and culture in all research areas.
- To take care of and to promote the Romanian language and to establish mandatory spelling rules.
- To manage the cultural property of national heritage that is owned or administered by it.
- To organize scientific and cultural events, foster higher quality scientific research and professional qualifications, as well as graduate and doctoral courses, in collaboration with the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation.
- To co-ordinate institutes and scientific research centres subordinate to it.
- To publish scientific works, literature, works of art and periodical publications.
- To award diplomas and prizes for exceptional achievements in science, literature and the arts.
- To grant scholarships, on a competitive basis, for training in Romania or abroad.
- To approve draft laws concerning the activity of the Romanian Academy.

- Potentially to develop draft legislation in its field of activity, proposed to the Government by the corresponding ministry.
- To coordinate the Academy di Romania, from Rome and the Venice Cultural Centre.
- To coordinate its foundations.

The Romanian Academy grants the PhD title. The length of doctoral studies is three years plus an extra two years. A doctoral student is assigned, in terms of rights and obligations, to a research assistant or university assistant. The PhD degree attained at the Romanian Academy is as high as a PhD degree awarded by a university and the values and attainment procedure are very similar. PhD students are integrated in the “academic ladder”. Specific scientific competences within curricular programmes are quantified according to study credits of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) type, which define workload and individual learning and provide intra- and inter-institutional and international mobility. The PhD entrance examination procedure mainly consists of the following aspects:

- The organization of the admission competition is undertaken by the Academy’s sections.
- The entrance examination includes tests specific to doctoral studies and a language proficiency exam.
- Admission exams are constituted according to the specificity of each research area and consist of an assessment of knowledge, based on a written or oral examination, a presentation and a discussion of the thematic research project.
- Enrolment in the doctoral entrance examination can be in the same field in which candidate obtained their bachelor's and master's degrees, or in related research areas.
- Successful candidates will be assigned to a scientific PhD leader by the department board, depending on the direction of the proposed research.
- The Romanian Academy has awarded remunerations (internal scholarships) for doctoral study with good results.

The procedure is similar to the PhD admission procedure used by universities.

Doctoral study programmes are subject to periodic internal and external evaluation at intervals of five years according to the methodology of the Romanian Academy and the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS).

The Romanian Academy organizes postdoctoral research studies and habilitation competitions for doctoral study supervisors in the Romanian Academy.

The Romanian Academy is an important research centre in the country, providing significant research results, together with some public universities such as: the Polytechnica University of Bucharest, Babeş-Bolyai University, the Institute of Atomic Physics, the University of Bucharest, the Politehnica University of Timișoara, the Gheorghe Asachi Technical University of Iași, the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca, Alexandru Ioan Cuza University, the University of Craiova, the Transilvania University of Brașov, the Carol Davila University of Medicine and Pharmacy, the Iuliu Hațieganu University of Medicine and Pharmacy Cluj-Napoca and the Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies.

In the Scimago Institutions Rankings (SCOPUS-Elsevier) for 2013, which evaluated approximately 3,300 institutions worldwide in terms of the number of publications, number

of citations, amount of international collaboration and leadership excellence in publishing between 2006 and 2010, the Romanian Academy was ranked 798 and the Polytechnica University of Bucharest was ranked 546. This classification does not take into account the size of the institutions/academies or the number affiliated researchers.

### **Research institution network**

The Romanian Academy is the only institution in Romania which, by statute, supports fundamental research, covering a segment of research (pure) apparently without immediate application, but which does in fact form a solid basis for applied research in the future. The Romanian Academy is also the only institution which sets the rules of spelling for the Romanian language.

The Romanian Academy has 66 institutes and research centres, in which 1,844 certified researchers operate. Of these, 1,467 hold a PhD degree, 241 are doctoral supervisors and 644 are PhD students. The institutes and research centres vary in size: from 208 certified researchers (National Institute of Economic Research) to only 5 researchers (Institute of History of Religions). Having attained their PhDs, many doctoral students continue their activity in the Romanian Academy's research institutes or in universities as part-time or full-time employers.

The supreme governing body of the Romanian Academy is the General Assembly. It is a unique body and consists of the Romanian Academy's members, corresponding (associate) members and honorary members. The **General Assembly** of the Romanian Academy has the following main tasks:

- a) To establish guidelines for the entire activity of the Romanian Academy.
- b) To approve the Statute of the Romanian Academy and draft laws concerning the Academy.
- c) To approve the distribution of the total number of full Academy members and correspondents (associate members).
- d) To elect the members of the Romanian Academy.
- e) To elect, from among the full members of the Academy, the President, four Vice-Presidents and one General Secretary, who make up the Presidium Bureau; two of these should be from humanities areas.
- f) To decide on or to validate the decisions of the Presidium concerning the heritage of the Romanian Academy.
- g) To approve the annual report, the research programmes, the evaluation of the Academy's research institutes and their business plans for the next year and the draft budget for income and expenses.
- h) To approve the report, the budget for income and expenses, the statutes and the regulations of operation and the programme of activities of Romanian Academy foundations.

- i) To establish working groups aiming to solve problems related to the activity of the Romanian Academy. Working groups present their findings to the Presidium Office or, where appropriate, to the Presidium or General Assembly.
- j) To present the annual awards.

Between the two meetings of the General Assembly, the governing body is the **Presidium of the Romanian Academy**. This comprises the President, Vice-Presidents, the General Secretary and the presidents of the Academy's subsidiaries. The Presidium is legally constituted in the presence of two thirds of its members; the decisions are taken by consensus or by vote, by a simple majority of all its members. In the absence of a president of a division or subsidiary, they may appoint a deputy or representative for the Presidium meeting. The Presidium of the Romanian Academy organizes, directs and coordinates the entire activity of the Academy and has the following main functions:

- a) To submit annual reports on the Romanian Academy's activity to the General Assembly and the activity programmes for the coming year.
- b) To decide on convening the General Meeting.
- c) To decide on the heritage of the Romanian Academy.
- d) To approve the establishment or dissolution of research units, subject to approval by the General Assembly.
- e) To approve the number of staff employed by each of Romanian Academy's units.
- f) To approve the research programmes of the Romanian Academy and changes made by establishments during the year.
- g) To foster the efficient development of research programmes in the Romanian Academy's institutes.
- h) To approve the operating rules for the working staff of the Romanian Academy.
- i) To approve the appointment and the dismissal of general managers and managers of subordinate units.
- j) To coordinate the scientific institutes of the Romanian Academy in Italy and appoint and dismiss their directors.
- k) To approve the editorial plan of the Romanian Academy Publishing House.
- l) To supervise Romanian Academy periodicals.
- m) To establish scientific relationships with foreign academies and institutions and decide on the affiliation of the Romanian Academy with international scientific bodies.
- n) To establish, based on the Sections' proposal, the annual awards of the Romanian Academy and approve the proposals for prizes.
- o) To approve the organization of scientific events with international participation.
- p) To establish national committees, commissions and working groups of the Romanian Academy.
- q) To examine and endorse the candidates proposed by the Presidium Office section and conclusions concerning the election of full members, correspondents (associate members) and honorary members, decide the number of positions and nominate the candidates who will be subject to a secret vote of the General Assembly; for the

position of a full member or corresponding (associate) member, one or more candidates may compete.

- r) To approve funding obligations for international organizations with which the Romanian Academy is affiliated.
- s) To ratify the decisions of the Presidium Bureau regarding the granting of honorary diplomas, academic merit, cultural distinctions and other distinctions of the Romanian Academy conferred on cultural and scientific personalities at home and abroad.
- t) To approve the receipt of the benefits of the Romanian Academy in terms of sponsorships, donations or other liberalities under the law and to harness private property belonging to the Academy.

### **Funds:**

The Romanian Academy's research budget in 2013 came from three sources as follows: 53% from the state budget, 24% from national competitive funding, 23% from European structural funds.

In 2013, the average expenditure per researcher employed by the Romanian Academy was approximately 20,000 euros per annum.

The Romanian Academy is not seen as an important actor in terms of distributing research funds compared to other research institutions or universities. Doctoral grants, for example, are more or less the same as the doctoral grants for other institutions.

### **Assuring quality**

The Romanian Academy has been involved in a series of programmes of special importance for the future development of Romanian society, such as:

- the project "Evaluation of the national economy" (ESEN I), preparing the development strategy of Romania;
- a new project aiming to evaluate the state of the national economy (ESEN II), aiming to adapt Romanian legislation to the legislation of the European Union;
- the project "Elements of development strategies and raising the competitiveness of the Romanian economy from the perspective of the European Union" (ESEN III);
- assessment of the social status of Romania (ESSOR);
- the Information Society Programme;
- the development of rural communities to be integrated into the European Union;
- Romania's transition to the euro monetary system;
- legal aspects related to the international background and Romania's adherence to the European Union with medium- and long-term impact on the whole of Romanian society.

The Romanian Academy participates in international research cooperation:

- The Academy is affiliated to 30 international organizations in areas of science, including the international Committee on Space Research (COSPAR) and international unions for physics, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, biochemistry, history and philosophy of

science, economic history, geography, geophysics and geodesy, geosphere-biosphere, libraries. etc.).

- It holds an important place in international relations, in particular bilateral cooperation which promotes the exchange of researchers. The main purpose of the academic exchange activities is to undertake collaborative research projects.
- There are Memoranda of Cooperation signed with the Hungarian Academy of Science and with the Moldavia Academy of Science, available between 2015 and 2017.

### **Academic membership**

Academic membership is covered by the regulations for receiving Romanian Academy membership. By law and status, the Romanian Academy can have a maximum of 181 full members and correspondents and 135 honorary members, of whom no more than 40 can be from other countries. The number of full members cannot exceed the number of correspondents. Currently, the Romanian Academy has 77 full members, 80 corresponding members (total 157), 86 honorary members and 31 foreign honorary members (total 118). The number of actual Romanian Academy members is less than the legal number because some have died over time.

According to the statute of the Romanian Academy, “The national or international reputation of the candidate is an important factor in the acceptance of an application. The only criteria for acceptance as a member of the Romanian Academy are: excellence in research and creation, the impact of his/her work in the research field, the originality of contributions”.

People with public positions in state institutions and party leaders cannot be candidates for election as members of the Romanian Academy during their mandate.

The procedure for the acceptance of new membership is as follows:

- Documents requested: one recommendation from a member of the Romanian Academy and/or competent institution is required; memorandum of activity, curriculum vitae, list of publications, a selection of 12 significant works (most important) chosen by the candidate, other relevant documents.
- Sections make a preliminary assessment of candidate files and establish their eligibility.
- Potential candidates may be invited to an interview with the section to present their work, achievements and prospects for creative activity in their own domain.
- A secret ballot is organized in Sections, the Presidium and General Assembly, as follows:
  - At the **Section** level:
    - all existing recommendations in the **Section** portfolio will be subject to a secret vote in the first round, thus establishing a “shortlist” of candidates;
    - in the second round, only those candidates on the shortlist will be subject to a secret vote;
    - the section may submit two proposals for each vacancy to the Presidium.
  - Section proposals shall be submitted to the Bureau of the Romanian Academy Presidium. The information will be published on the Internet site of the Academy

15 days before the General Assembly and in the Academy journal to ensure full transparency.

- The nominations validated by the Presidium of the Academy will be submitted to the General Assembly. To be elected as a member (or corresponding holder) of the Romanian Academy, a candidate has to gain two thirds of the votes, in terms of the statutory quorum, applying the Statute.

Although the procedure is very specific, the criteria “excellence in research and creation, the impact of his/her work in the research field, the originality of contributions” are subjective judgements, open to interpretation.

There is no age limit for becoming a member of the Romanian Academy.

### ***Remuneration***

- Romanian Academy members receive a monthly gross income as follows:
  - a) Full members: RON 3000 (EUR 700);
  - b) Corresponding (associate) members and honorary members residing in Romania: RON 2500 (EUR 580).
- The presidents of scientific divisions and subsidiaries of the Romanian Academy may have a gross income augmented by up to 20%.
- Romanian Academy members receive rights under the law applicable to officials and staff employed in similar functions for journeys for work, abroad or in Romania.
- Romanian Academy members receive free domestic transportation by rail on any type of train, first class. The full cost of the tickets is covered by the budget of the Romanian Academy.

### ***Common status for an Academy researcher***

Units with legal personality operate subordinate to the Romanian Academy, including: territorial branches, organized in major scientific and cultural centres of the country, the Library Academy, the Academy Publishing House, the House of Scientists and the Academy journal.

Scientific research institutes can have subunits in university cities and may sign, independently, research contracts with legal entities, the proceeds of which remain entirely at their disposal.

- The Romanian Academy has its own staff, with a maximum of 126 positions.
- The personnel within the proper working system of the Romanian Academy and its subordinate units shall be subject to the applicable public sector employees, granting a bonus of 25% of national importance on top of the basic salary.
- Many researchers employed by the research institutes are subordinated to the Romanian Academy. Most of them are full-time employers and hold long-term positions. Some of them are employed on a project basis and a few hold part-time posts, usually having another full-time job, especially at universities.

**Non-employed members** of the Academy are honorary members, living outside Romania.

Honorary members are Romanian citizens and foreigners who have distinguished themselves through outstanding achievements in the sciences, letters and arts and are the nation's leading figures and personalities who support the development of the Romanian Academy.

Motivating factors for researchers to *be employed by* the Academy are:

- prestige,
- increased visibility,
- financial benefits.

## References

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