

All European Academies



H.E. Igor Lukšić, Prime Minister
Karađorđeva bb
81000 Podgorica
Montenegro

Amsterdam, 1 December 2011
Ref: L-1274/sec

Your Excellency,

ALLEA has been reliably informed that there is a plan to adopt a new Law governing the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts. It is our understanding that one aspect of this new Law would be to introduce a procedure for membership of the Academy which is completely at variance with the practice in other European countries. It is a distinguishing feature of membership of a National Academy throughout the Western world and beyond that it is a distinction conferred by election, and only after the most rigorous peer review of the scientific or artistic achievements of the candidate.

We wish to draw your attention to the possible implications of the new Law. Should it introduce membership procedures which are based on anything other than election on the strength of scientific or artistic achievement, this would undermine the standing of the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts in the broad international family of National Academies; it would certainly have a negative effect on cooperation between MASA and other Academies, and might even lead to the decision to terminate its membership of ALLEA. Any sign that the scientific integrity and autonomy of the premier scientific institution in Montenegro is subject to political pressures would merit the strong disapproval of the international scientific community.

The *raison d'être* of a National Academy is to function as the conscience of science in society, from a position of political, economic and ideological independence, and with the authority of that excellence that is the hallmark of the best scientists in the country. Once its independence is diminished, and its claim to scientific excellence is tarnished, an Academy loses its credibility not only in nationwide debates on the future of science and technology, but also in global scientific exchanges.

Your Excellency, as the European Federation of 53 National Academies in 40 European countries, ALLEA stands ready to share with your government examples of best practice from Europe and elsewhere in the world. It is our conviction that both government and society at large can benefit from the unique services that an independent National Academy of Sciences can provide, driven as it is by excellence and a profound commitment to serve the scientific, technological and cultural progress of the nation. We therefore ask you to re-examine the solution that you are currently proposing in the new Law on the Montenegrin Academy of Sciences and Arts in respect of membership procedures and the status of current members. The international standing of your National Academy, and its active participation in the development of science and science policy in Europe, depend upon its maintaining its autonomy and its scientific integrity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jüri Engelbrecht', written in a cursive style.

Jüri Engelbrecht
President ALLEA

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicholas Mann', written in a cursive style.

Nicholas Mann
Vice-President ALLEA