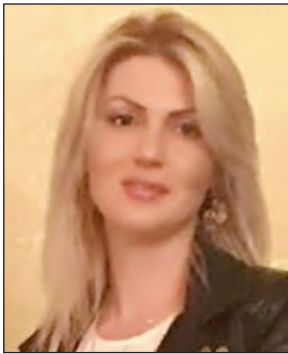




THE ROLE OF SCIENCE DIPLOMACY CASE OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA



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‘The man is the most important value for our country’.

– Serzh Sargsyan, The President of the Republic of Armenia

Building an efficient research system is a strategic goal for the Armenian authorities. Armenia has a number of assets, including a solid science base, a large Armenian Diaspora and traditional national values emphasizing education and skills.

The first legislative act relating to science and technology was the Law on Scientific and Technological Activity (2000). It defined key concepts concerning the conduct of research and related organizations.

In 2007, the Government adopted a key policy resolution on establishing the State Committee of Science (SCS). While being a committee within the Ministry of Education and Science, the SCS was empowered with wide-ranging responsibilities as the

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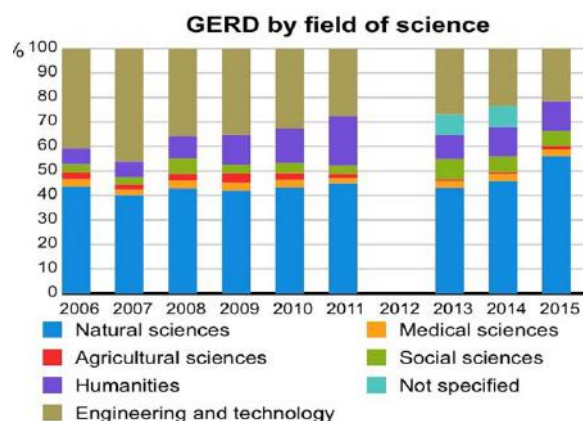
leading public agency for the governance of science, including drafting of legislation, rules and regulations of the organization and funding of science. The SCS is also the leading agency for the development and implementation of research programmes in Armenia.

The State Committee of Science prepared three key documents which were subsequently adopted by the government, and one of them was the Strategy for the Development of Science 2011–2020, which envisaged a competitive knowledge-based economy drawing on basic and applied research. The Action Plan seeks to translate this vision into operational programmes and instruments supporting research in the country. The Strategy for the Development of Science 2011–2020 envisions that “by 2020, Armenia will be a country with a knowledge-based economy, and it will be competitive within the European Research Area with its level of basic and applied research”.

The following targets have been formulated:

- Creation of a system capable of sustaining development of science and technology;
- Development of scientific potential, modernization of scientific infrastructure;
- Promotion of basic and applied research;
- Creation of a synergistic system of education, science and innovation; and
- Becoming a prime location for scientific specialization in the European Research Area
- Based on this strategy, the Action Plan has been approved by the government defining following targets.
- Improve S&T management system and create the requisite condition for sustainable development;
- Involve more young, talented people in education and research, while upgrading research infrastructure;
- Create the requisite conditions for the development of an integrated national innovation system; and
- Enhance international co-operation in research and development.

General Expenditure on Research and Development



Nonetheless, there are still a number of hurdles to overcome in building the national innovation system. The most important among them is the poor linkages between universities, research institutions and the business sector. This is partly a legacy of the country’s Soviet past, when the policy focus was on developing linkages across the Soviet economy rather than within Armenia. Research institutes and industry were part of value chains within a large market that disintegrated with the Soviet Union. Since two decades on, domestic businesses are yet to become effective sources of demand for innovation.

Armenia is implementing Science diplomacy actively by representing itself and its interests, addressing global issues and enhancing cooperation with other countries and within a number of international organizations and initiatives.

On 19 May 2016, Carlos Moedas, European Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, and Mr Levon Mkrtchyan, Armenian Minister for Education and Science, signed an agreement in Brussels associating Armenia to Horizon 2020. The agreement would allow researchers and innovators from Armenia to participate in Horizon 2020 under the same conditions as their counterparts from EU member-states and other associated countries.

With a budget of €77 billion for 2014-2020, Horizon 2020 is the largest multinational programme dedicated to research and innovation. Until signing, Armenia participated in Horizon 2020 as a third country. Association covers years from 2016-2020, and opens up new opportunities to the country's universities, research institutions and enterprises.

In the Seventh Framework Programme (2013-17), which preceded Horizon 2020, Armenian organizations participated in 35 signed projects. In Horizon 2020, they already have five projects.

The EU is strongly supporting Armenia and allocated between €140 and 170 million *via* the Single Support Framework (SSF) for 2014-2017. The focus of the assistance is on private sector development, public administration reform, and justice. In addition, support is being provided for the implementation of EU-Armenia agreements (such as Horizon 2020) and for civil society.

Armenia is also a member of the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), along with Albania, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Ukraine and other countries. This organization was founded in 1992, shortly after the disintegration of the USSR, to develop prosperity and security within the region. One of the BSEC's strategic goals is to deepen cooperation with the European Union. Armenia does not have an association agreement with the European Union but is nevertheless eligible to apply for research funding within the European Union's seven-year framework programmes.

The European Union has sought to enhance involvement of countries from the region in these programmes. In cooperation with the BSEC, the European Union's Networking on Science and Technology in the Black Sea Region project (2009-2012) was instrumental in funding a number of cross-border co-operative projects, notably in clean and environmentally sound technologies. BSEC's Third Action Plan on Science and Technology 2014-2018 acknowledges that considerable efforts have been devoted to setting up a Black Sea Research Programme, involving both BSEC and European Union members but also that, "in a period of scarce public funding, the

research projects the Project Development Fund could support will decrease and, as a result, its impact will be limited"¹.

Armenia has been a member of the Eurasian Economic Union since October 2014. This body was founded in May 2014 by Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. As cooperation among the member states in science and technology is already considerable and well-codified in legal texts, the Eurasian Economic Union is presumed to have a limited additional impact on co-operation among public laboratories or academia but it may encourage research links among businesses and scientific mobility, since it includes provision for the free circulation of labour and unified patent regulations.

Armenia hosts a branch of the International Science and Technology Center (ISTC). The ISTC branches are also hosted by other parties in agreement: Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. ISTC was established in 1992 by the European Union, Japan, the Russian Federation and the USA to engage weapon-scientists in civilian research projects and to foster technology transfer. The headquarters of the ISTC were relocated to Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan in June 2014, three years after the Russian Federation announced its withdrawal from the centre.

Armenia is also a member of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe and the World Trade Organization.

Conclusion

Armenia has gained a lot in such a short period of time; nevertheless, there are still many challenges and goals which are to be achieved on domestic, bilateral and multilateral levels.

In this regard we can claim that Science diplomacy and international scientific cooperation are no longer interesting additions or are at the margins of our core policy. On the contrary, they are today a mandatory and critical part of our day-to-day work.

Endnote

¹ Third BSEC Action Plan on Cooperation in Science and Technology 2014-2018. Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (2014).