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**Comparing National Academies of
Sciences in Central and Eastern Europe:
Research Careers in the Polish Academy
of Sciences – National Topography**

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Comparing National Academies of Sciences in Central and Eastern Europe: Research Careers in the Polish Academy of Sciences – National Topography²

1. History and general perception of the Academy

The Polish Academy of Sciences (*Polska Akademia Nauk*, abbreviated PAN) was founded in 1952. It was established as a result of the consolidation of earlier learned societies, including the Polish Academy of Learning (*Polska Akademia Umiejętności*) and the Warsaw Scientific Society (*Towarzystwo Naukowe Warszawskie*). The structure of the Academy is twofold. It acts as an elected corporation of leading scientists and researchers (members) and as such has become a key scientific advisory body. At the same time, it coordinates the work of 79 research institutes grouped into 5 faculties, currently employing over 5,500 academic staff in total.

The Polish Academy of Sciences is seen as a prestigious research institution in terms of research and expertise; however, it is not a popular one in public opinion or regarding its lobbying power. Professor Mirosława Marody, the only woman ever to have held the position of Vice-President of PAN, stresses the need to rebuild the scientific prestige of the Academy because of the “progressive decline in the importance of the Academy within the scope of science policy of the country, marginalizing its position and reducing the financial and organizational autonomy” (Marody, cited in *Jaka Polska...*, 2015: 4). In the same vein, Professor Jerzy Duszyński (elected President of PAN in March 2015), emphasizes the importance of “reinforcing the sense that PAN is an organization that is essential to the structure of Polish science, active in fields that matter to society, well managed, and influential” (Duszyński, cited in *Jaka Polska...*, 2015: 2).

The Academy has undergone many changes over the years in line with the reforms of higher education policy and reflecting the increasing democratization processes. Nevertheless, its organizational structure has remained unchanged since the Socialist period. What has changed, however, is the process of appointing members of the Academy and electing its governing bodies. Currently, it has a more democratic character. Researchers can become members of the Academy through the recommendations of three existing members of the Academy or five scientists unaffiliated with the Academy but having made outstanding scientific achievements. Earlier, in the Socialist period, Academy members were appointed by the President of PAN.

The current efforts of PAN are focused on obtaining grants from EU scientific funds and increasing the role of the Academy in public discourse.

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2. Structure and employment in the Polish Academy of Sciences

The Academy comprises seven territorial branches, with head offices in Katowice, Gdańsk, Lublin, Poznań, Łódź, Wrocław and Kraków. They integrate the local scientific communities and act as representatives of the Academy.

The Academy is a leading research institution in Poland as it employs the most qualified and best recognized researchers. In 2013, the Polish Ministry of Science experts (Committee for Evaluation of Research) investigated and compared the academic achievements of departments and scientific and research institutes of Polish universities. As part of that assessment, scientific institutions were awarded scores based on four criteria (Ministry of Science and Higher Education 2013):

- 1) scientific and creative achievements;
- 2) scientific potential;
- 3) tangible results of scientific activity;
- 4) other effects of scientific activity.

Out of the 963 institutions evaluated, 37 were awarded the highest rating (A+). Of these, the majority were Polish Academy of Sciences institutes (12 institutions), followed by the University of Warsaw (6), Jagiellonian University (4), the University of Wrocław (2) and Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) (1).

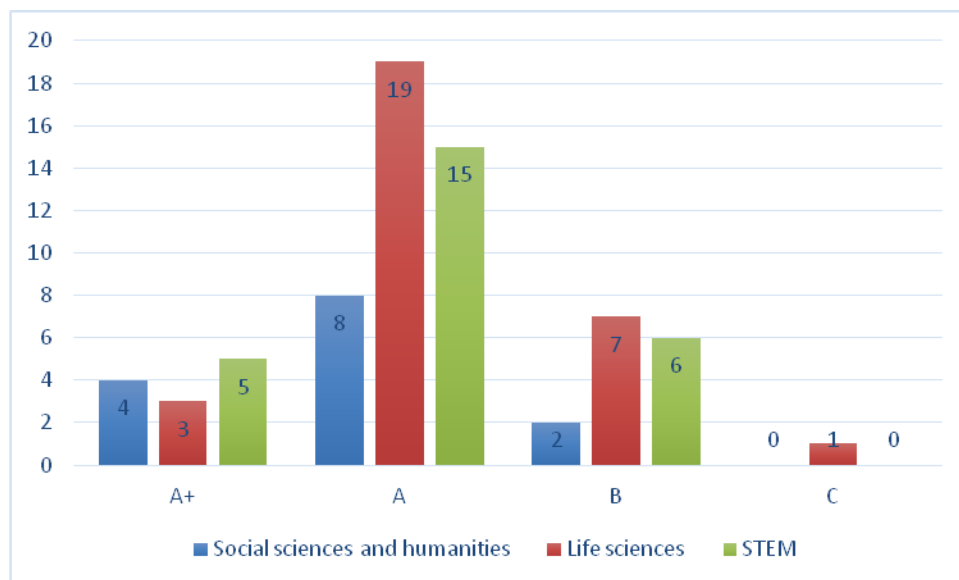


Figure 1. Distribution of ratings of Polish Academy of Sciences institutes in 2013. Source: *Wizytówki polskiej nauki* (Ministry of Science and Higher Education 2013).

The Academy's research institutes receive financing depending on the assessment class (A+, A, B, C). The institutes evaluated as "C" are penalized with respect to state budget funding.

Generally, the more external grants an institute receives and the higher the scientific output volume, the more funds it receives from the budget. Many international studies in Poland (e.g. PISA, advanced genetic testing, etc.) are also being conducted within the Academy.

According to Article 78 of the Act on the Polish Academy of Sciences (2010), PAN's activity is funded from the state budget and other sources. Academy research activities funded by the state are classified under "Science" and recognized in a dedicated part of the state budget (Section 67). The President of the Academy of Sciences is endowed with the powers and carries out the tasks to implement the budget. In terms of budget management quality control, the President reports to the Minister of Science and Higher Education (Najwyższa Izba Kontroli 2012).

The Academy does not exercise any control over researchers outside its own institutional structure. There is cooperation (e.g. within research projects or teaching) with other research institutes and universities.

2.1. Membership

The composition of the Academy is divided into five departments, grouping scientists according to research topics. Members of the National Academy (numbering no more than 350 in total, a figure not including foreign members) are divided into two groups: ordinary members and corresponding members. Currently, there are 529 members of the Polish Academy of Sciences, of whom 330 are domestic (as of 25 October 2014). Membership of the Academy is a position granted for life and upon reaching 70 years old, incumbent researchers receive senior member status.

Members of the Academy are chosen by the General Assembly from among the most eminent Polish and foreign researchers (on the personal recommendation of three different Academy members or five other prominent scientists). Every member receives a monthly salary, provided independently of the income from other sources. The current remuneration is 2,271 zlotys (around 500 euros) for ordinary members, while corresponding members receive 1,689 zlotys (around 400 euros) (Ministry of Science and Higher Education 2010). These emoluments are not taken into account in determining the amount of pension, nor do they affect the suspension or reduction of a pension.

In terms of status, there is a significant difference between members of the Academy and researchers merely employed by the Academy. The first group comprises well-established, experienced, renowned, usually senior academics. Their membership of the Academy, both ordinary and corresponding, is first of all an honorary position, denoting their high academic status and recognition by other Polish academics. Technically speaking, they are not employed by the Academy, but they receive a remuneration related to their membership. The second group constitutes of "ordinary" researchers, whose only distinctive feature is the lack of teaching duties.

2.2. Employment

In 2011, the total staff of the Academy comprised 6,806 employees, of whom 4,830 held research positions (GUS 2012). In 2011, 80% of expenditure in research institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences concerned basic research, 8.7% concerned applied research and 11.3% was spent on research and development.

Most of the researchers working for the Academy are employed on a full-time basis. Until very recently, it was not uncommon for a researcher to hold two (or sometimes even more) full-time positions: one in the Academy institute and another in a private university or other non-public institution of higher education. The ongoing reform, which has been implemented throughout the last few years by two consecutive Ministers of Science and Higher Education, Barbara Kudrycka and Lena Kolarska-Bobińska, from the current government's leading party the Civic Platform (PO), aimed to eliminate such situations, introducing the "one person – one full-time position" rule.

Directors of institutes within PAN are chosen through open competitions and are then appointed, usually for a period of four years, by the president of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The exact requirements may differ, but generally a prospective director needs to hold a certain academic degree (typically the degree of *doktor habilitowany*, i.e. an intermediate degree between a doctorate and the scientific title of a professor) and have substantial administrative/managerial experience (usually a few years spent in a managerial position in the Academy, i.e. as a Dean, is enough). A director of the research institute does not have to be – and usually is not – a member of the Academy.

There are two main motivations for being employed by the Academy. One is, without doubt, the prestige of the Academy. In general, Academy institutes are decent academic organizations, which – especially taking into account Central-Eastern European standards – provide satisfactory conditions for conducting high-quality research. The second motivation relates to the specific situation of the researchers in the Academy, as they do not have to teach, in contrast to their peers in university positions. Devoting all their working time to scientific activities facilitates the provision of high-quality research.

2.3. Research careers

The Academy confers academic degrees and titles that enjoy the same prestige as those awarded by universities. It is perceived as the primary institution for academic research, at least in certain areas or disciplines. This unique status is first of all related to the specific circumstances of Academy researchers. Academy institutes are purely research institutions; they do not have students, with the exception of a (usually rather low) number of PhD students. Furthermore, according to doctoral study participants (Gazeta.pl 2008), the laboratories of the Polish Academy of Sciences are better equipped than university ones. It is

also easier for early-stage researchers to start an international career thanks to the numerous research contacts of the Academy.

Most institutes of the Academy have the right to confer doctoral and higher academic degrees. Institutes of the Polish Academy of Sciences have the right to educate students up to the doctoral level. Under present law, many private universities under the auspices of the Academy were established in the 1990s (e.g. the School of Computer Science and Management, the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, the College of Sciences).

The Academy does not confer any other academic qualifications beyond those which are generally granted within the higher education system. Degrees and titles are granted by PAN in the same way as the universities, i.e. by secret voting. Since 2015, a new transitive system for granting habilitation has been in effect, involving external reviewers unrelated to the institution at which the habilitation procedure is carried out.

2.4. Financing

In 2014, PAN's total net income amounted to 103.8 million PLN. The single most significant source of funding was the state budget, with statutory grants totalling 77.8 million PLN, of which 73.8 million was dedicated to current operations. The remaining income was generated by sales of products, services and materials. This picture has remained roughly unchanged throughout recent years (see Figure 2).

At the end of 2014, the total value of PAN's assets, both tangible and intangible, amounted to 690.7 million PLN. The majority of this was accounted for by property, i.e. land and buildings. This figure has been declining steadily for several years, falling from over 1 billion PLN at the end of 2011 and 780.3 million PLN at the end of 2013.

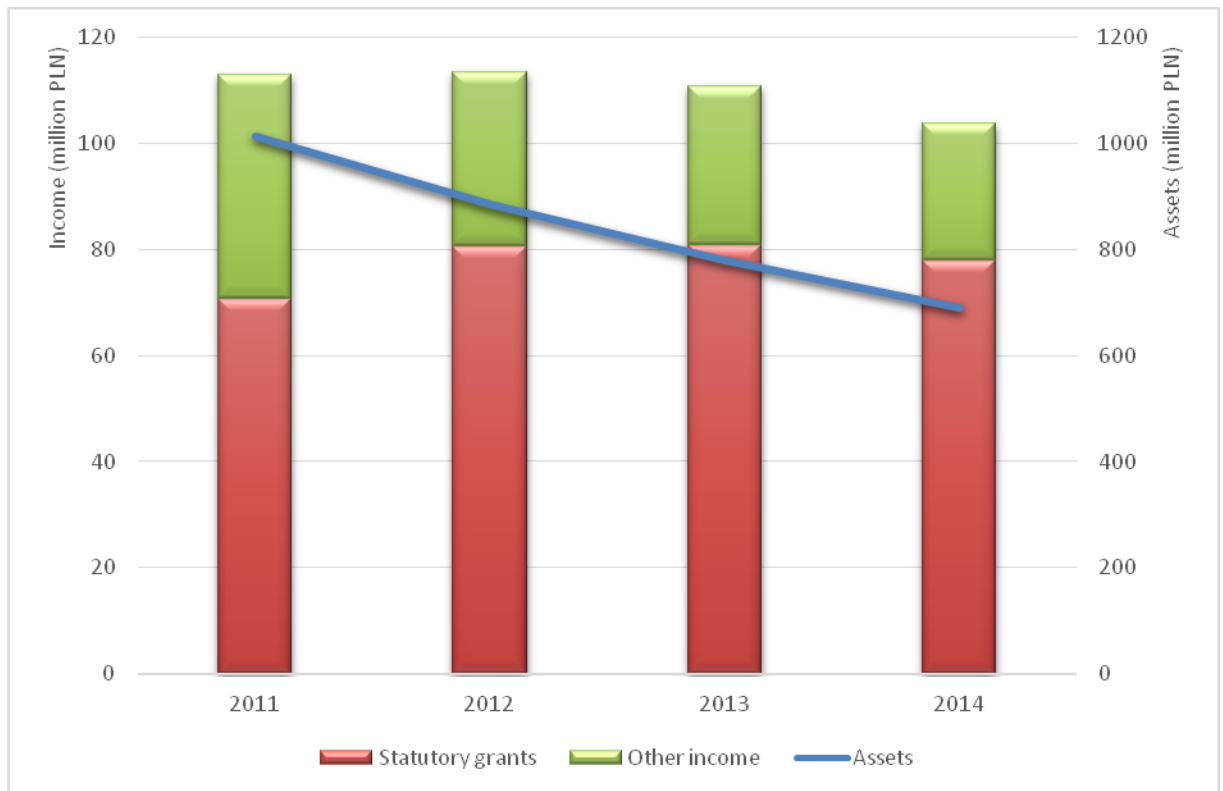


Figure 2. Funding of PAN, 2011–2014. Source: PAN financial statements (Polska Akademia Nauk 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, own compilation).

The Academy's expenditures of budgetary funds can be divided into three categories. The first one is financing PAN as a corporation of scientists; this includes the functioning of its main organs (the Presidium, faculties, regional branches, committees, etc.) In 2014, these expenses amounted to 16.6 million PLN. The second category (37.5 million PLN in 2014) comprises PAN's secondary scientific centres and other organizational units, including its libraries, museums, archives and foreign centres. The remaining funds (26.5 million PLN) covered maintaining the Academy's administrative offices, foreign cooperation, activities for the popularization of science, investments and other areas.

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