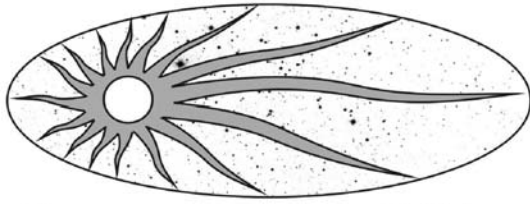


The Society of Astronomers of Serbia



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PRESENTATION OF SOCIETY OF ASTRONOMERS OF SERBIA

The Society of Astronomers of Serbia (SAS) was founded in 1981. In the period 1949 - 1980 there was a Society of Mathematicians, Physicists and Astronomers of Yugoslavia. In 1980 this Society was transformed into a union of societies of mathematicians, physicists and astronomers. Taking into account that Belgrade, as the capital, was the only city to have a big and professional astronomical observatory in Yugoslavia most of Yugoslav astronomers of that time were located in it. Because of this in the eighties Serbia was the only Yugoslav republic to have a separate astronomical society.

The Belgrade Astronomical Observatory was founded in 1887. Till 1924 it existed as an astronomical and meteorological observatory to become astronomical only after that time. Casually in 2007 the Observatory had three jubilees: 150 years from the birth of its founder, Milan Nedeljković (1857 - 1950), 120 years from the foundation and 75 years from the erection of its new buildings at a new location where the Observatory now is. The reason for moving the Observatory was the purchase of new instruments (all refractors) after the First World War immediately as war reparations. This place is at about 250 m above the sea level, now practically within the city. Till the nineties the observational activity of the Belgrade Observatory was rather intense, to decline strongly afterwards. The reason is the equipment, by that time already out of date, and the growth of the city. On the other hand the work in interpretation and theory became very intense. At present the Observatory staff contains about 50 persons, out of them 37 astronomers. In order to renew the observations a mountain station (more than 900 m above the sea level), supplied with modern equipment, is being built (expected to be finished by 2010). The Observatory is the host institution for SAS since the Society has no special rooms. Besides, at the University of Belgrade since 1962 there has been an astronomy department. At present it has a staff of ten persons, all engaged in university teaching. The courses for students - astronomy and astrophysics - have a duration of five years and they follow the Bologna Declaration. Another astronomy department was founded recently in Novi Sad where the courses also follow the Bologna Declaration. Some subjects from astronomy and/or astrophysics are also taught at other universities.

In the nineties the activity of SAS ceased. It was renewed in 1999. At present it has almost 70 registered members. The vast majority of them (50) are from two institutions: Astronomical Observatory in Belgrade and Faculty of Mathematics to which the Belgrade Astronomy Department belongs. The process of disintegration of the former Yugoslavia is well known, it was finished in 2006 only when Montenegro separated from Serbia. Serbia, now as a separate country, has a population of 7.5 million (this is according to the last census which could not include Kosovo and Metohija where the population is estimated to

2 million so that Serbia as a whole would have about 9.5 million inhabitants). The strong concentration of SAS members towards Belgrade is not surprising. Such concentrations are typical for the Serbia of nowadays, to be said that Belgrade with a population of almost 2 million people has no counterparts in Serbia.

SAS is a non-profitable organisation. It has a Main Board of eight members. The board is presided by the SAS President who is elected at an SAS Assembly together with Board members and other organs. The assemblies take place every three years during National Conferences (the next will take place this autumn). SAS is no official organiser of a National Conference, traditionally this is done either by the Belgrade Observatory or by the Astronomy Department of Belgrade University. A similar situation is with the Serbian Astronomical Journal; it is published twice a year with these two institutions as co-publishers. SAS has no prizes or grants; there are prizes awarded every year by the Observatory. In Serbia astronomy since 1990 does not exist as a special subject in schools of under-university level except some special schools (the best example Mathematical High School in Belgrade). SAS makes efforts to change this situation and to promote astronomy in schools. The public outreach is also important among SAS activities, especially with regard to the International Year of Astronomy 2009. SAS has founded a National Olympiad Committee engaged in organisation of participating of Serbian students in International Astronomy Olympiads. This activity has been very successful, for instance at the last International Astronomy Olympiad (last autumn, Crimea) the team of Serbia with seven diplomas (each participant one diploma) was the most successful among the European nations. In the field of job market SAS has had no activities.

As a sister society in Serbia one certainly can mention the National Physical Society. The two societies are closely interconnected. SAS has no affiliated societies in Serbia. On the other hand beyond Kosovo and Metohija we have more than ten registered and active amateur societies having astronomy in the framework of their activity. The SAS policy is to maintain as close as possible relations with them.

SAS is listed as an affiliated society of EAS. There are 18 SAS members who are also EAS members. Unfortunately, other international activities like "Astronomy and Astrophysics", ESA, ESO, etc have not involved SAS, i. e. Serbia in general.