

THE EURO-ASIAN ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

In a certain sense, the Euro-Asian Astronomical Society (EAAS) continues traditions of the Russian Astronomical Society, which existed in 1890–1932. Then, like many professional societies of the Soviet Union, it had to discontinue its activity. Beginning with late 1980s, many new professional societies of USSR scientists emerged due to "perestroika" enthusiasm. The EAAS is one of very few that are still active, showing the real necessity of such a society.

The EAAS was established in April, 1990 as the Soviet Astronomical Society. It outlived the Soviet Union. Currently, it is officially registered, according to laws of the Russian Federation, as a non-profit international organization. The registered name in Russian means simply "Astronomical Society", the official English name is Euro-Asian Astronomical Society. The EAAS is active on the territory of Russia, of virtually all CIS countries, Baltic countries (mainly Latvia and Estonia), has members in many countries outside this region (in the USA, Israel, and other countries).

By Russian laws, an international organization registered in Russia must have official representatives (organizations) at least in one other country. Though our activity outside Russia is considerable, we have representatives documented in accordance with the Russian law only in Latvia and Serbia so far. The process of creating official bodies representing the EAAS in Ukraine and Moldova is under way. Several structural bodies exist in Russia (regional: Moscow, Urals, etc.; affiliated societies: Association of Planetaria, Moscow Society of Amateur Astronomers, etc.).

The membership in the EAAS is individual. It is open to professional astronomers – unless specially decided by the EAAS Congress, to those having professional astronomical publications. The current membership list contains about 800 members from 31 countries (more than a half from Russia). Like the EAS has recently done, we are facing the necessity to expel those not participating in any EAAS activities and not paying membership fees, required from everyone except several honor members.

Membership fees are currently the main source of financial income. In earlier years, several grant holders of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) used the EAAS accounts for their grant bookkeeping and paid us a small amount of money (smaller than their own institute would have wanted) for that, but currently this is no longer possible because of bureaucratic restrictions. From time to time, we get sponsor money. It is possible for the EAAS to win a special RFBR grant for organizing a scientific meeting, which is often done. INTAS grants were won for JENAM-2000 and one of other EAAS congresses.

In 1992, in the time of greatly reduced funding of Russian science, the EAAS initiated a program called "Survival of Astronomy in Russia in 1992". The program was able to get funding from the Russian Ministry of Science, the distribution of grants was operated by the EAAS. 36 institutions were supported, all of them survived at that time. Later on (1994–2002), this program was continued as the Federal Scientific and Technological Program "Astronomy", with EAAS participation. At least partially due to these efforts, we can boast a rather stable job market in astronomy, a growing number of positions for post-graduate students in some places, new jobs at universities of several countries of the CIS.

In early 1990s, the EAAS won governmental grants and used them to arrange production of astronomical plates in Russia and their distribution among observatories in Russia and the CIS and for several other projects, mainly related to astronomical infrastructure.

According to the EAAS Statutes, the main decisions of the EAAS life are taken at the EAAS Congresses. They are usually held once in three years. The next, 9th Congress will take place in 2008. Between Congresses, the EAAS Board meets at least twice per year. Congresses elect the Board and three Co-Chairpersons and are always accompanied with scientific conferences. Currently, the Co-Chairpersons of the EAAS are Mikhail Ryabov (Odessa, Ukraine), Lidiya Rykhlova and Nikolai Samus (Moscow, Russia). We have an International Bureau headed by N. Bochkarev, a many-year former Co-Chairman of the EAAS.

The EAAS keeps necessary links to official structures. The Scientific Council on Astronomy of the Russian Academy of Sciences (chairman Prof. N.S. Kardashev, EAAS member) is involved in continuous contacts and cooperation with the EAAS. In 1992, the Russian Ministry of Science invited the EAAS to take part in the work on Megaprojects in Astronomy, the EAAS was the sole representative of the former Soviet Union at the "Forum on Megaprojects" arranged by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. As a result, it was possible to get some state financial support for unique scientific equipment in Russia, Ukraine, and other countries.

Links with astronomical institutes and observatories are excellent and versatile. The Sternberg Astronomical Institute (Moscow University) provided the Society with an office rent-free. The Institute's Director, Prof. A.M. Cherepashchuk, is a member of the EAAS Board. In the turmoil of the 1990s, the EAAS helped several institutes in Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, etc. to defend their real estate and even existence.

EAAS activities are in many different fields. Conferences belong to their most important kinds. Every year, we are organizers or co-organizers of 5–15 national or international conferences. As an example, here is an incomplete list of events of 2007:

- the 36th Winter Students' School "Physics of Space", Yekaterinburg (Russia), February;
- the international conference "Current Problems of Astronomy" in Odessa (Ukraine) – the Tsesevich Centenary Conference, August;
- the 7th Gamow School on Astrophysics, Cosmology, Radio Astronomy and Astrobiology, Odessa (Ukraine), August;
- the All-Russian Astronomical Conference in Kazan (Russia), September;
- the conference "First Objects in the Universe", Moscow (Russia), December.

The EAAS initiated or co-sponsored interdisciplinary activities in several fields (archeoastronomy, Antarctic astronomy, etc.).

The EAAS is attentive to problems of astronomical education. The current situation with astronomy in Russian high schools is rather unfavorable, astronomy is taught only in some regions and in some schools. The introduction of the "Bologna Process" in our universities causes some specific problems because of changes in the traditional system of astronomical education (5–6 years in a university, with astronomy from the first year). The EAAS actively contacts governmental bodies, lobbying decisions in interests of the astronomical community in the field of education. To improve the situation with astronomy in secondary schools, the EAAS arranged special free seminars at the Sternberg Institute for school teachers and planetaria lecturers in 2006 and 2007, with lectures delivered by well-known Russian professors of astronomy.

The EAAS belongs to organizers of Russian and International Astronomical Olympiads for Schoolchildren. Young astronomer schools at major observatories in Russia, Ukraine, and other countries are regularly organized with the participation of the EAAS. There exist special non-profit astronomical schools for children in Moscow and Kazan.

Also an important activity field of the EAAS are publications. The professional journal of the EAAS "Astronomical and Astrophysical Transactions", established in the earliest period of the Society, currently has to change its publisher. In the past, the AApTr published proceedings of two JENAMs. Our electronic newsletter "Astrocourier" is sent to astronomers by e-mail, it is an important source of information on news and events for the community.

Other publications of the EAAS appeared in the past or not on a regular basis. EAAS officers regularly give interviews and write articles for mass media. The EAAS has a web site at <http://www.sai.msu.ru/EAAS/> (mainly in Russian, but with a certain amount of information in English).

For many years, the EAAS is making effort in order to enable CIS and Baltic astronomical institutions to acquire subscriptions to main Russian-language astronomical journals for very reduced prices (the regular prices have increased manifold during the recent

years; alas, the same is also valid for reduced prices). In the beginning, we were able to provide subscriptions to astronomers of comparatively poorer countries free of charge, currently this is no longer possible.

The EAAS founded a club for astronomers, called Club "AstrO". For 15 years, the club arranges first-class cultural events for astronomers: concerts, musical seminars, etc. The concerts during JENAM-2000 were organized by the Club "AstrO". It has strong links to the Russian Mozart Society and other musical clubs and societies. Since 1995, the EAAS awards EAAS medals and, sometimes, small prizes for significant personal contributions to astronomy.

We have stable links to sister societies. Presidents of several astronomical societies of former Soviet republics either currently are or were members of the EAAS Board (today the Board has representatives of Russia, Ukraine, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Estonia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Serbia). The very active Ukrainian Astronomical Association invited EAAS representatives to meetings of its Bureau, arranged a number of meetings in co-sponsorship with the EAAS.

The EAAS also has links (affiliated membership, continuing co-operation...) to the United Physical Society of Russia, American Astronomical Society, American Association for the Advancement of Science, EuroScience, UNESCO, etc.

Several former Soviet republics had no own astronomical societies and were not represented in the IAU with their National Members. The EAAS promotes creation of national societies (such a process is currently under way in Moldova) or regional societies. In several cases, we helped astronomers from countries without national IAU membership to become individual members of the IAU.

The Russian National Committee of Astronomers (the National Member of the IAU for Russia) and the Scientific Council on Astronomy of the Russian Academy of Sciences invited the EAAS to the Russia's organizing committee of the International Year of Astronomy announced by the United Nations for 2009.

For the IAU, the EAAS conducts monitoring of the current state of astronomy in Russia and CIS. Two surveys were prepared and published. Contacts with several IAU Commissions are supported.

Our EAS contacts have mainly the following form:

- direct contacts with EAS officers through our co-chairpersons and International Bureau, participation in the EAS Council Meetings;
- JENAM participation and JENAM organization (in the case of JENAM-2000 in Moscow, the largest one by the number of participants);
- assistance in transferring membership fees to astronomers not able to do it because of poorly developed bank systems and/or unfavorable laws in some CIS countries;
- providing the EAS with requested information;
- informing our community about future and past EAS events in "Astrocourier", "Astronomical and Astrophysical Transactions", at our web site.

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