

ARGENTINE SCIENCE IN DIRE STRAITS

Two months after the current government took office, Argentina's science and technology system is adrift. The management areas of some of the main institutions that make up the national scientific network have not been appointed, and where the appointments have been made, the officials do not seem to have enough information to define what structural policy lines are envisioned by the current government.

This uncertain situation affects the continuity of well-established programs and processes, both those funded entirely by local sources such as CONICET (National Council for Science and Technology), but also those funded by international organizations such as the Inter American Development Bank and administered by ANPCyT (National Agency for the Promotion of Science and Technology), and even the joint projects and agreements with foreign institutions (such as MathAmSud, Max Planck Laboratories, etc.) face an imprecise fate.

Day-to-day operational issues multiply in this vague context. In the case of the ANPCyT, the release of funds, even to ongoing projects, is being held up under the pretext that there are no designated authorities. From the point of view of the research institutes, day-to-day running of business is jeopardized by the planned cost cuts as it is rumored that the budget will be identical to last year's without taking into account the cumulative inflation that turned out to be higher than 210% during 2023, and even that small amount has not been transferred to the institutes yet.

Of course, from a more structural point of view, sustaining this ambiguous position will undoubtedly have devastating consequences for our science and technology system. This is a system that relies on a large number of institutional actors including, besides those already mentioned, many others related to Energy, Agricultural and Industrial Technology or Space Activities not to mention the pivotal role of public and private universities that offer facilities for laboratories and research institutes, partially covering in many cases the salaries of researchers and administrative personnel.

We believe that sustaining a robust national scientific and technical system is essential to guarantee the strategic positioning of our country, and should be above any political ideology. In fact such an agreement seemed to have been reached when both chambers of Congress voted unanimously last October, right after election day, to pass the 2030 National Science and Technology plan. The enforcement of this plan, and that of the 2021 Science and Technology law, also voted unanimously by Congress, are now uncertain.

We understand that although our national science and technology system can be improved, it has an enormous added value, even if only in human capital. The impact it has on the productive sector can be measured in different ways. In the case of mathematics, it can be seen through cooperation agreements for solving technological or industrial problems raised by public and private companies. Also from our universities, through the outstanding education received by our students. This is only possible with a teaching staff active in the production of knowledge and capable of perpetuating new generations of scientists and a highly skilled workforce, who frequently find jobs in technological companies long before graduation. In this sense, as is well known, all knowledge is heir to a tradition. Preserving what has been built is indispensable to sustain a possible future.

Understanding the delicate economic situation of our country, we consider that the lack of clear rules and fluid

dialogue between the government and the main actors of the science and technology system do not help to find better alternatives that go beyond the mere indiscriminate cutback of expenses that, on the other hand, hide an enormous collateral cost in the medium and long term.

We remain hopeful that rationality will prevail in the end and that channels such as this one will allow us to make our voice heard by the authorities in order to initiate a fruitful collaboration to address Argentina's difficult situation.

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