
The General Meeting of the Russian Academy of Sciences

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Address of Academician V. Ya. Panchenko

I was asked to answer questions related to the charter and financing of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFBR) in the current year. Many, unfortunately, became hostages of disinformation that appeared in some mass media. The point is that it was necessary to change the foundation's charter due to changes in legislation. In the fall of last year, the commission for the development of a new draft charter was established; then the draft was sent to all members of the foundation for their remarks and suggestions, which was according to the charter provisions. Absolutely all remarks were collected, and, for the first time, a draft charter emerged. Some mass media started to discuss proactively this particular draft.

In reality, a meeting of the foundation board, which consists of almost 30 members, generalized all proposals. The proposals were also discussed with the RFBR leadership and representatives of expert councils; after this the draft charter was approved, and now we should send it to the Russian government for further consideration.

Very soon it will be in the public domain. I would like to assure my colleagues and all members of the General Meeting that this is probably one of the most transparent and democratic charters of scientific societies in the world. It preserves all the best practices laid by the founding fathers, and the main changes are aimed at improving transparency and the awareness of society of what the RFBR is doing.

Note that last year the financing of the foundation started only in May, and now it is also delayed. This is due to the fact that the country's budgetary law of 2007 did not envisage foundations, and today, unfortunately, all state foundations are operating by temporary schemes. Every year the legislative body (Duma, Federation Council) makes a decision and allocates money to the foundations, including the RFBR, as especially important establishments. However, there is hope that, upon the completion of the complex legislative process at the Duma, the foundations will be able to work on a permanent basis.

The financing of the RFBR scientific activity must start after May 25. Currently, 80% of the research institutes, universities, and other organizations that are grant holders under the decision of the last meeting of the foundation board are receiving contracts for these grants, and, as money arrives, all financial papers for the above funds will be ready.

In general, as I said, the RFBR activity is characterized by openness and transparency. Specific activities of the foundation, competitions, various innovations, and programs that are cofinanced by the regions and ministries are presented on our website.

After Panchenko's address, the question was asked about the change in the foundation's leadership. He said that the foundation always practiced staff turnover; i.e., the positions of the chair, deputy chair, learned secretary, and council members of the foundation can be occupied for no more than two five-year periods.

The second question was the following: It is true that the foundation will mainly support grants that meet the five priority directions chosen? RAS President Academician **Yu.S. Osipov** responded to it saying that this statement was out of the question and that such statements were disseminated by unscrupulous mass media.

As for financing, Osipov added that the Academy seconds an increase in the RFBR state funding, because this would mean general support for basic science in the country. The idea of the RFBR belongs to the Academy of Sciences, and the first man who proposed it back in Soviet times was Leonid V. Keldysh. The foundation's organizer was Andrei A. Gonchar, who did a great deal for the creation of the charter. Then the foundation was headed by V.E. Fortov and M.V. Alfimov—all of them are members of the Academy. Osipov also noted that the foundation is, without exaggeration, a brainchild of the Academy of Sciences, and we are interested in its good work.