

To the

Prime Minister and the Chair of Parliament of Bulgaria

Gentlemen,

during the final meeting of the European Science Foundation Forward Look project:

### **Mathematics and Industry**

in Brussels on 2nd December I was informed by an esteemed colleague from Sofia that you are proposing to reduce drastically the public support of Science. Already when I visited on the occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the Union of Bulgarian Mathematicians in 1998 I was shocked by the fact that young mathematicians, after a receiving an excellent mathematical education, prefer to leave the country rather seeing a future to do science and education in Bulgaria.

This year the Union of Bulgarian Mathematicians invited the European Mathematical Society, EMS, to Sofia, 10-11 July, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of EMS. This event was under the Patronage of the Mayor of Sofia, Mrs. Jordanka Fandakova. The Mayor gave a very supportive speech for mathematics. The following conference on **Mathematics in Industry** was under the Patronage of the Minister of Economics, Energy and Tourism, Mr. Traycho Traykov. Hence it did look like the government is supportive to basic science and its application. Unfortunately I got the impression that many Bulgarian colleagues are actually working in western institutions as they find better conditions. On the positive side I saw very promising presentations from colleagues from the University of Sofia on new educational tracks such as a Master Program for Computational and Mathematical Modeling.

After all of this, let me focus on the basics. I completely support the letter written by my colleague Juerg Froehlich. Hence I do not repeat it. However I would like to add. For countries and societies in Europe it is extremely important that we make use of our human capital. We can not compete with cheap labor from developing countries. We have to make use of the culture of excellent higher education. Switzerland is using successfully exactly this fact. Bulgaria has an excellent educational system for mathematics. The problem is that one has to give a prospective to the young ones that their future can be in science. In general high school students make their decision for the future at age approximately 16. They will finish the Ph.D. about a dozen years later. Hence politics must show continuity over an even larger period of time as they need job opportunities after finishing. With your drastic reduction you kill a complete generation. Once a culture of Science is killed it is extremely difficult to build it up again.

Hence I do ask you to revert your budget for 2011 and increase the support to science even more than previous years. The young generation will be thankful for such a decision.

Rolf Jeltsch

Zurich, 20 December 2010

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