

The first ten years of the Academy

Prof. **Dražen Aničić**, Ph.D.

For the first ten years, the Academy was run by two presidents and two general secretaries. For the first four years, the president was Josip Božičević, and the general secretary was Juraj Božičević. For the next six years, the Academy was led by President Juraj Božičević and Secretary General Dražen Aničić. When it first started, there were no permanent employees, no offices or PCs; one had to get around the facility by using the same tools they used at their own jobs. There were only two seals and a Statute in the Academy. The Croatian Academy of Engineering was established on January 19, 1993 at the founding assembly, which was attended by fourteen full university professors. They were Dražen Aničić, Branko Bonefačić, Josip Božičević, Juraj Božičević, Leo Budin, Husein Džanić, Zijad Haznadar, Marin Hraste, Mirko Krpan, Darko Maljković, Ivo Marković, Tomislav Mlinarić, Osman Muftić and Ivo Soljačić.



Josip Božičević, president 1993 – 1997



Juraj Božičević, president 1997 – 2003

Following the assembly and two open invitations to faculties and institutes, the Academy quickly increased to about 100 members. Ten years later, it had 218 members divided into eight categories. The Statute was amended to add honorary members, emeritus members, friend members, and corresponding members to the categories of full and extraordinary members, associate members, and supporting

members. There were now thirteen departments instead of the previous eight. The first rule limited membership to 30 full members, 42 extraordinary members, and 70 associate members. Due to the fact that it was not possible to include excellent scientists from all technical and biotechnological disciplines in this number, the Ordinance was amended to include 120 full and extraordinary members and 100 associate members. The status of emeritus member was introduced for all members who turn 70 in order to free up a specific number of departmental seats so that by accepting younger specialists, the Academy would remain active and working and not an honorary organization, *a council of the wise*. The Academy had 218 individual members after its first ten years, including 47 regular and 52 extraordinary members, 75 associate members, 13 honorary members, 18 emeritus members, and 13 friend members. Additionally, 40 supporting members-faculties, institutes, and work organizations-supported the work of the Academy.

The Academy was granted permanent and free-of-charge office space at Hercegovačka street 111 in the area of the former local community in July 1999, thanks to the generosity of the City of Zagreb. The office space allocated was only 9 m², but that was enough to accommodate the publications and archives of the time, and there were also two nice meeting rooms, one with 60 seats and the other with 150.

With increased activity came more work, so in November 1999 a professor of sociology was hired on a full-time basis as a business secretary. She handled the majority of the Academy's administrative duties and written communications with its members, associates, and partners. Additionally, a personal computer was acquired, laying the foundations for a thriving business.

The Academy released two publications in the first four years of operation: a year-book with member papers and the proceedings of its first conference. In the next six years, eighteen publications were published, six of them in cooperation with the Croatian Systems Society. Over 3,000 pages of texts were published in the first ten years; approximately 440 authors, or a much larger group of authors than Academy members, contributed to their creation.

After undergoing the verification process, the Academy was granted membership in the CAETS (International Council of Academies of Engineering and Technological Sciences) in 1999. The heads of academies of engineering from countries with a longer history (Sweden, Finland, Great Britain, the United States, and Australia) as well as from countries with a shorter history (China, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Ireland, Korea) met with the Academy's leadership for the first time in Helsinki. It was an opportunity to reflect on one's existence purpose and learn about the issues dealt with by other academies in the area.

In the mid-1990s, the Academy encountered some difficulties in its activities. The Croatian Parliament rejected the Academy's request based on the law, as well as the request of the Croatian Academy of Medical Sciences, to keep its original name and determined the current name, i.e. *the use of Croatia in the genitive case*. Because of this, the acronym HATZ was kept, and the name Croatian Academy of Engineering was created.

Even former employees of the then Ministry of Science and Technology did not have a high opinion of the Academy at that time. On the basis of the Scientific Research Activities Act, the Academy filed an application for entry in the register of scientific associations in June 1996. There is silence on the part of the administration and instead of a decision on whether or not to accept the application, a completely incoherent and unfounded response was delivered. After three and a half years of correspondence and *outwitting* the state administration, the Ministry finally issued a certificate of registration of the Academy in the Register of Scientific Associations in January 2000.

In several cases, the same Ministry did not respond at all to grant applications for printing scientific publications or organizing conferences. The Academy is given symbolic sums for regular activities that do not even cover the cost of postage. The big project to write an English-Croatian technical dictionary cannot be tackled because ministry officials do not have the courage to reject the proposal and have remained silent for several years. Even though they themselves have difficulties in business, supporting members provide the Academy with invaluable financial and moral support.

Collaboration with the business community is conducted along the line of scientists-entrepreneurs in a discussion cycle titled "Products and Production in Croatia - What Will Croatia Live On?" in an effort to combat the country's growing deindustrialization and disregard for production. Sixteen discussions covered topics such as energy, shipbuilding, the food and metal industries, construction, chemicals, textiles, wood, and graphics. However, the subjects of these discussions – the policy makers – rarely attend such meetings. The results of these meetings do not reach decision-makers.

The internal life of the Academy is realised through the organisation of Academy Conferences, which are developed and organised by the departments of the Academy and in which current events in the fields of science, technology and economics are discussed. Members were encouraged to engage in interdisciplinary conversations. After about 30 meetings and the decreasing number of participants, it was found that there was no interest in such discussions because members were limited to their narrow professional sphere and were not interested in the problems of others. Consequently, the organisation of new meetings was abandoned.

Standing Committees, eight of which were established with the goal of establishing a broad working platform, bringing together members and employees of business and state administration, and initiating cooperation with external factors (industry, cities, institutes, other academies, Croatian scientists abroad), have not even begun working for several years after their establishment. The appointed chairmen of these committees only attended presidency meetings on rare occasions.

The Academy's leadership was dissatisfied with the work of the departments. Their secretaries were expected to initiate the work. Instead of departments becoming the centres of the Academy's activities, launching new initiatives to address specific issues in the profession, science, and industry, the Academy's activities were mostly manifested through the work of the Presidency or even the narrow leadership itself. In many interventions, the departments were primarily concerned with the admission of new members and had difficulty meeting their other obligations (sending contributions for the Yearbook and Bulletin). The departmental meetings held 2-3 times a year were clearly not enough to get the work going.

Some members still saw their election to the Academy as recognition for their previous work rather than as an incentive to devote some of their time to Academy activities.

The guiding principle was that the Academy, as an association of outstanding scientists in the technical and biotechnological sciences, should act in the future in such a way that it is constantly present in the decision-making of the state leadership on fundamental questions of engineering and technology, and that it is widely recognized as a place for discussion of the most important issues of the present and future.

This was also written when the Academy was handed over to the new management for the second decade of activity and the new century twenty years ago:

By cooperating with organizations and specialists in the social, economic, natural and medical fields, Academy, as one of the places of concentrated and excellent technological and biotechnological knowledge, must constantly strive to be at the centre of an interdisciplinary approach to solving current problems in Croatia.

If Academy is made up of scientists who have a little more vision than the average person and who work primarily in universities, then it ought to take an active part in reforming the universities and bringing them in line with European solutions.

Membership in this Academy is not only a recognition of the chosen ones, but also a commitment to active work, because the main difference between this Academy and the Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts is that it gathers scientists who are at the top of their professional and scientific careers. Therefore, its members should be more involved in the future projects of the Academy than before. Their participation