

The challengers of an astronomer being a journalist

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Abstract. As the weakness of Russian astronomers in observational astronomy became chronic Russia should enter European Southern Observatory. But the Russian government is still not providing any financing of the entrance of Russia to ESO. The author states this situation as an example of his experience of work as an astronomer and as a journalist at the same time.

Keywords. Telescopes, notices, miscellaneous

The Russian science is underfunded that's why a lot of young researchers have the general challenge: **to be a scientist in Russia and to survive**. Russian astronomy has yet had a good reputation but the majority of its successes were made in USSR. 6-meter Russian telescope BTA in Special Astrophysical Observatory of the Russian Academy of Sciences (SAO RAS) was the largest telescope in the world in 1975-1993. It is the opinion of the head of SAO RAS Yuriy Balega: “We won't be able to conduct astrophysical research on high level with modern instruments soon. Russian astronomers should enter ESO because our weakness in observational astronomy became chronic” (http://www.gazeta.ru/science/2012/02/23_a_4010781.shtml).

The author works at the same time as an astronomer and as a journalist. Being involved in media he has got **the possibility to speak with famous scientists**. In 2010 he made the controversial interview with the president of Russian Academy of Sciences Yuriy Osipov about the very low citation rate for articles published in Russian-language science journals (<http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v464/n7286/full/464141b.html>).

In 2011 Mr. Osipov talked about the entry of Russia to ESO with prime-minister Vladimir Putin who supported it and ordered to create a working group for this. But at the beginning of 2012 there were still no news about Russia and ESO. The author's next challenge was **to find out news about it**. So he interviewed Mikhail Kovalchuk, the secretary of scientific board under the president of Russia. Kovalchuk told: “You, Russian astronomers, are just asking for money. The time of pinches is finished. Nobody will give you money just for fun. You should present the special program and vision which would be understood by people which take decisions and which are interested in the future of country” (http://www.gazeta.ru/science/2012/02/07_a_3991449.shtml).

The fee for Russia to enter ESO is about 150 million Euros. Russia bears about 250 million Euros of the construction cost of X-ray Free-Electron Laser (<http://www.xfel.eu/overview/in.brief/>). Future stadium of the football club Zenit St. Petersburg (<http://www.kommersant.ru/doc-y/2029104>) costs about one billion Euros, similar to the 39-meter E-ELT which will be built by ESO's members. USA, Chile, Korea and Australia are building the 24.5-meter GMT. USA, Canada, Japan, China and India are going to build the 30-meter TMT. But Russia now (at the middle of 2012) is not going to participate in building of any extremely large telescope. **Trying to change this situation** is the challenge for me as an astronomer and a journalist.

The author thanks “Gazeta.Ru”, Rashid Sunyaev, ESO and his wife Olga Alekseeva.