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# Baltic Nations Move to End Soviet-Era Separation of Research and Education

TALLINN, ESTONIA

DURING THE HALF-CENTURY that the Baltic States were part of the Soviet Union, research and education were separated. Under the Soviet model, the universities provided education, and the research institutes—most of them part of the Academy of Sciences in each republic—carried out research.

But now, six years after regaining their independence, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have begun integrating the research institutes into the universities. As in other former Soviet republics and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, education leaders in the Baltics are convinced that research should be an integral part of the universities. They see it playing an important role in the training of graduate students and in improving the quality of the faculty.

Western experts and grant-making agencies have pressed for the change. But making it happen it is not always easy.

The parliaments in all three Baltic countries have stripped their once-powerful academies of science of their research institutes. The academies now mainly serve to advise the governments on science policy.

All three countries are in the process of deciding which institutes will be attached to universities and which will be maintained as independent entities.

The Latvian government, wanting to resolve the matter quickly, decided last year that all of the country's 27 research institutes must become part of a university by the end of 1997.

About six of the institutes already have become parts of universities. Talis Millers, president of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, says the first to be merged, the Institute of Molecular Biology, joined the University of Latvia without problems. But when the university took over the Institute of History, the experience was "very negative," he says. It cost the jobs of many historians, on the staff of the institute as well as on the university's faculty.

"One year is too short," says Dr. Millers, a professor of inorganic chemistry at the University of Technology in Riga. He has appealed to the government to extend the merger period to three years, mainly to avoid abrupt, large-scale layoffs. The institutes today employ about 2,000 researchers, down from 7,000 five years ago.

In Estonia, Tallinn Technical University, in the capital, has begun to take over the operations of the Institute of Cybernetics, the country's main computer-science center, in anticipation of government approval. "We want to acquire the academic potential there," says the university's rector, Olav Aarna.

### CYBERNETICS INSTITUTE IS SPLIT

The Institute of Cybernetics is being split into a basic-research division, which is to join the university, and an applied-research and product-design unit, which will be a government-owned company.

Ülo Jaaksoo, the institute's director, says that with its staff reduced to 160 researchers from 550 in 1989, joining the university makes sense. Researchers will get more-secure university jobs, and graduate students have more opportunities.

But in some other cases in Estonia, the institutes have resisted such moves.

Peeter Tulviste, the rector at Tartu, sa his university wants to take over a numb of leading research institutes, but he wo ries that their staff members, after beir separated from students for so long, w not be willing or able to teach.

Lithuania commissioned the Norwegi Research Council to study the merger is sue and suggest a course of action. Th panel recently recommended that th country's 29 research institutes quickly b made part of its university system, but o position to such a move exists within bot the research institutes and the universities The institutes are calling for legislation th would guarantee their autonomy and ider tity after they are merged with universities

Benediktas Juodka sees the proble from both sides. A professor of molecul biology and vice-rector for research at th University of Vilnius, he also is presiden of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences He favors a "go-slow approach."

"Many research institutes are against in tegration," says Dr. Juodka. "They are afraid the universities will eat them up."

—BURTON BOLLAG