

Russian Academy of Sciences to Be Overhauled

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An overhaul of the Russian Academy of Sciences, which will see its members stripped of the right to manage its property, has been announced by the government.

"It's important to allow the scholars to focus on science and research and spare them the irrelevant function of managing real estate and communal utilities," Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Thursday.

A new government agency will now manage the academy's property, which includes sprawling real estate inherited from Soviet times, Education and Science Minister Dmitry Livanov said.

Leasing out real estate was a major factor in ensuring the academy's survival in the 1990s, when Russian science suffered severe underfunding and a massive brain drain.

State funding for the academy has risen from 6.1 billion rubles (\$185 million) in 2000 to 65 billion rubles (\$2 billion) last year, according to the academy's figures, but there has been no major increase in funding since 2008.

Monthly stipends for academy members will be hiked to 100,000 rubles, Livanov said. Stipends now stand between 10,000 and 50,000 rubles.

The academy, founded by Tsar Peter the Great in 1724, will also be merged with state academies for agriculture and medicine, Livanov said. Three other state academies for architecture, education and fine arts will be stripped of their autonomy and become directly state-run.

The academy was not consulted by the reform's authors, a source at the academy said. The presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences set up a closed session Thursday for reasons that were not clear.

The reform announcement follows a spate of recent government criticism of the academy, which it has accused of ineffectiveness. Critics have called it a "gerontocracy," and Livanov described it in March as "unsustainable and with no future." Academy leadership refuted allegations of ineffectiveness and had Livanov apologize for his statement.

A bill on the reform will be filed next week with the State Duma, a spokeswoman for Medvedev said.

The Duma may be able to fast-track the bill before the end of its spring session on July 14, said Education Committee head Vyacheslav Nikonov.

The Russian Academy of Sciences elected a new president in May, replacing mathematician Yury Osipov, 76, in the job since 1991, with physicist Vladimir Fortov, 67.

Fortov said after the elections that the academy needed to keep its real estate, which was formally owned by the state, but also promised to bring new blood into the organization and cut excessive paperwork that hampered researchers' studies.

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