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LEGAL STATUS OF YOUNG SCIENTISTS IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

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The subject. The article presents a comprehensive analysis of the legal status of young scientists in the Russian Federation, taking into account the needs of the Russian scientific society for the reproduction of the scientific knowledge.
The purpose of the research is to confirm or to reject the hypothesis of the necessity of the specific legal status of the young scientists in Russian academic law.
Methodology. The formal legal method, the method of comparative legal analysis and method of systemic approach were used in the article.
The main results. The research proves that the modern Russian academic community is in need of the young scientists due to the aging of the community. According to statistics, the lack of social guarantees and the low prestige of the academic profession result in a low percentage of PhD graduates in the recent years. The study concludes that there is no systematic approach to the definition of the status of a young scientist in the current Russian law. Although attempts to formalize the legal status of the young scientists have been made, they have so far not led to significant results. The authors conclude that the current legislation governing the legal status of young scientists should be harmonised. Analysis of the current legislation on the legal status of young scientists also reveals a number of complex issues. Social guarantees for young scientists, presented in the form of social housing, affect only a small proportion of the scientific community, while there are no laws granting preferential loans for young scientific workers. The participation of young scientists in grant support competitions is complicated due to the lack of a unified approach. Specific problems are faced by female scientists. A partial solution to the problem of the low prestige of the profession for both scientific and pedagogic workers, according to the authors of the article, lies in the foundation of a unified federal system of guarantied wages for such workers.

Conclusions. Researchers conclude that a consistent approach to the legal status of young scientists and social guarantees, according to such status, can ensure the stable growth of young people in the sphere of scientific activity. In order to enhance the prestige of the profession of scientist among young people and to prevent the lack of scientific and pedagogical workers, researchers consider it necessary to take a number of measures, such as legal enshrinement of the status of a young scientists, development of a system of social guarantees, search for a new ways to measure the scientific activity of employees, formation of a stable system of postgraduate studies and creation of comfortable working conditions for young scientists.

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1. Introduction to the Problem

One of the major challenges facing Russian science today is the recruitment and retention of young scientists. Statistical data reveals a decline in the number of scientific personnel and researchers over the years. For instance, the number of scientific personnel dropped from 887,729 in 2000 to 682,464 in 2019, while the number of researchers decreased from 425,954 to 348,221 during the same period. Additionally, the number of scientists under the age of 29 declined significantly from 71,100 in 2010 to 58,500 in 2019 [1, p.50-53].

Moreover, there is an imbalance in the distribution of research capabilities across the country, with Moscow and St. Petersburg accounting for 54% of the total number of researchers in 2017. This discrepancy becomes even more pronounced when comparing the number of scientists per 10,000 people between the capitals and the regions, with a difference of over six times. The existing model for dissertation preparation and defense fails to meet the demand for researchers in the provinces, where dissertation councils have become scarce. This shortage of qualified scientific personnel in the regions will likely have negative consequences in the near future.

Graduate enrollment and defended dissertations also highlight a lack of interest in research among young people. In 2000, there were 117,714 graduate students, with 7,503 successfully defending their dissertations. By 2019, the number of graduate students had decreased by 33,000, with only 1,629 successfully defending their dissertations. This fivefold reduction can be attributed to factors such as stricter dissertation requirements, a decrease in the number of dissertation councils, a negative atmosphere during dissertation defenses, and a decline in the material and social status of graduate students. Consequently, many young researchers view the prospect of defending a dissertation with apathy or skepticism [2, p.259-260].

While the government reports an increase in the number of young scientists under 39 in the past five years, constituting more than 40% of the total number of researchers on average, and more than 50% of sociological study respondents would like their children to become researchers, these figures do not indicate a substantial shift in policy or its efficacy in attracting young individuals to the field of science. On the contrary, several critical trends are evident:

- lack of a clear state science and technology policy, particularly concerning young scientists;
- low economic and social status of graduate students, and a decreased prestige of the scientist's profession;
- absence of incentives for research work, with emphasis placed on scientometric indicators for evaluating a scientist's professionalism [3, p.234];
- bureaucratization of the dissertation defense process, reduced number of dissertation councils, and ongoing reform of the state scientific attestation system [4];
- concentration of scientific and pedagogical personnel in central, economically developed regions;
- steep decline in the number of young researchers under the age of 29, leading to an aging of Russian science and a decrease in the overall number of scientists.

If these current trends persist, society may face a crisis in the production of scientific knowledge in the medium term. The NTR Strategy and the national project "Science" aim to increase the proportion of young researchers to 48% by 2024. However, without providing a special status for young scientists, it is unlikely that this goal can be achieved. Unfortunately, limited works exist in legal literature that explore the legal status of young scientists. While some authors have touched upon the subject of the legal status of scientists, such as Yu. M. Plusnin, who analyzed the crisis within modern scientific society [5], Yu. V. Stepanenko, who studied the boundaries of academic freedom for scientists [6], and N. V. Chernykh, who examined the role of private investment in science development [7], a comprehensive exploration of the legal status of young scientists remains lacking.

The legal status of scientific workers, including those from the Russian Academy of

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Sciences, universities, state research organizations, and other legal entities, has been analyzed by D.A. Bocharnikov [10]. Additionally, foreign researchers, such as C. Zirkle [11] and W. Hayek [12], have contributed to the understanding of scientific workers' legal status. The forms of scientific collectives have been studied by M.S. Nikiforov [13] and D. Shpopper [14], while scholars like I.A. Shishkanova [15], O.A. Shevchenko and D.I. Vorontsov [16], A.O. Chetverikov [17], and T.I. Volkova [18] have researched the socio-economic status of scientists.

Although few works have focused on the issues concerning the legal status of young scientists, it is worth highlighting the research conducted by O. Yu. Osipova [19] and L. Yu. Chernomorskaya [20]. In more recent studies, I.E. Ilyina, E.N. Zharova, and N.N. Koroleva have examined foreign practices for supporting young researchers and their potential application in Russia [21]. Additionally, L.S. Ruban conducted a comparative analysis of the Russian and Western systems of education and scientific personnel preparation [22], further contributing to the understanding of this topic.

2. Issues with Finding a Legal Basis.

The issue of attracting young talent to the field of science can be solved by the development and implementation of a government program aimed at supporting young scientists, drawing from both global and national experiences. To establish a comprehensive support system, it is imperative to have a clear legal framework. Currently, different legal documents inconsistently define the term "young scientist," varying in age criteria and the groups of individuals included. For instance, the Presidential Board for Grants in the Russian Federation classifies candidates under 35 and doctors under 40 as young scientists, while the national project "Science" includes all scientists up to the age of 39. Furthermore, competition documentation from science support funds refers to various categories up to 39 years old, such as students, postgraduates, and scientists, as young scientists.

Characteristics of young scientists and the support measures available to them are spread across federal and regional legislation. The conflicting definitions make it evident that a unified concept of "young scientist" is necessary[1].

In recent years, there have been attempts to provide a legislative definition for "young scientist." In 2020, a corresponding bill was introduced to the State Duma of the Russian Federation. It proposed the following definition for "young scientist": an employee of an educational or scientific organization who holds a candidate of sciences degree up to the age of 35 or a doctor of sciences degree up to the age of 40, or a postgraduate, researcher, or teacher in higher education up to the age of 30 without a scientific degree[2].

In 2021, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of Russia developed two bills in relation to supporting young scientists, thus demonstrating the current relevance of attracting youth to science for the state's scientific and technical policy. The latest bill proposes including individuals up to 35 years old who are scientific workers of scientific organizations, scientific and pedagogical workers of organizations implementing educational activities based on higher education programs and additional professional programs, as well as scientific workers of other organizations conducting scientific and (or) scientific and technological activities as young scientists[3]. The support measures included for young scientists encompass scholarships, grants, awards, social payments for housing acquisition, and other forms of state support that specific authorities can provide. A category of young scientists – doctors

[1] At one point, one of the authors of the paper suggested formation of a support system for young scientists and developed a draft law of the Altai Krai "On additional measures of state support for young scientists in the Altai Krai": Vasilyev A.A. Draft law of the Altai Krai "On state support for young scientists in the Altai Krai". Legal thought in education, science and practice. - 2014. - No. 2. - Pp. 30-31.

[2] Bill No. 898664-7 "On Amendments to the Federal Law "On Science and State Scientific and Technical Policy". System of legislative activity support. URL: https://sozd.duma.gov.ru/bill/898664-7 (access date: 18.02.2022).

[3] Bill "On Amendments to Chapter II of the Federal Law "On Science and State Scientific and Technical Policy". Federal portal of draft regulatory legal acts. URL: https://regulation.gov.ru/projects#npa=123529 (access date: 19.02.2022).

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of sciences under the age of 45 is distinguished, albeit without specifying support measures or rationale for segregation.

The definition of "young scientist" proposed in this bill differs from the terms used in other legislative acts. If the bill is enacted, it will be necessary to reconcile these acts with the new law. Additionally, questions arise regarding the national project "Science and Universities," which considers researchers up to 39 years old as young scientists, requiring a different interpretation of the term "young scientist".

3. Housing Provision Issues for Young Scientists

Various measures aimed at improving the housing conditions of young scientists are consolidated only at the level of federal subordinate legislative acts. One of these is a social benefit for housing purchase, obtained under the state program "Ensuring accessible and comfortable housing and utilities for the citizens of the Russian Federation" in accordance with the resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 30, 2017, No. 1710[4] and the resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 17, 2010, No. 1050[5]. An apparent drawback of the program is that it only applies to scientists working within the system of the Ministry of Science and Education of Russia, leaving employees in private educational institutions without an opportunity to receive this benefit. Another flaw is the mandatory requirement for the scientist to conform to the stipulated requirements of Article 51 of the Housing Code of the Russian Federation, providing no support for those who do not meet these criteria but still seek to improve their living conditions.

At the federal level, there have been proposals to expand the system of preferential mortgage to young scientists. For example, in May 2021, a relevant proposal was brought to the government by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation, followed with a similar initiative by the governor of the Novosibirsk Oblast, A.A. Travnikov. Implementing these proposals into regulatory legal form would contribute to the resolution of the housing issue and improve the social standing of young scientists.

Of particular interest are the financial support programs for young scientists implemented in China, where young researchers receive a 15 to 20-year installment plan when paying 20% of the apartment cost. Grant programs facilitate the education of outstanding young scientists in developed countries, while the problem of such scientists not returning to China is trying to be solved through measures supporting their startups, offering high salary levels surpassing standard professorial salaries by 2 to 10 times, and housing cost compensations [21, pp. 360-361].

4. Initiatives Supporting Young Researchers and Youth Laboratories

Efforts to support young scientists via grant programs, scholarships, and internships have generally been successful. The Ministry of Science and Education of the Russian Federation, in conjunction with the Presidential Grants Council of the Russian Federation, host annual competitions for grants and scholarships designed exclusively for young scientists. These competitions are open to candidates of science who are under 35 and doctors of science who are under 40. Special scholarship competitions are arranged for graduate students conducting research in pivotal areas of economic modernization. These initiatives provide an avenue for these students to become part of a “scientific reserve”.

Other organizations also offer grant systems for young research scientists. The Russian Science Foundation, for instance, offers particular competitions aimed at promoting the research of

[4] Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 30, 2017 No. 1710 "On Approval of the State Program of the Russian Federation "Providing Affordable and Comfortable Housing and Communal Services to Citizens of the Russian Federation". Official Legal Information Internet Portal. URL: http://www.pravo.gov.ru.

[5] Resolution of the Government of the Russian Federation of December 17, 2010 No. 1050 "On the Implementation of Certain Measures of the State Program of the Russian Federation "Providing Affordable and Comfortable Housing and Communal Services to Citizens of the Russian Federation". Official Legal Information Internet Portal. URL: http://www.pravo.gov.ru.

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young scientists. To be eligible for a grant, each team must have a specified percentage of young scientists with varying age limits based on their role in the research project. The Russian Foundation for Basic Research also extends its support to younger scientists by allotting a certain portion of their budget specifically for them.

In the regions, accelerators could be set up with the capacity to provide comprehensive support to young scientists with winning projects. Some of these startups, like "Promobot", developed by a student of Perm State Technical University following the "Big Reconnaissance" university competition, become commercially successful, bolstering their region's economy [23, p. 225-226]. Young scientists in the region recognize the effectiveness of both regional and federal programs operating there [24].

On a local level, organizations affiliated with the Ministry of Science and Education of Russia organize their own competitions. For example, Altai State University holds grant and internship competitions exclusively for young scientists. These are open to graduate students, young scientific and pedagogical workers under 35, and doctors of science under 40.

Moreover, under the national project: "Science and Universities", 500 youth laboratories were established between 2018 to 2021 where over 60% of lab members and the manager were scientists younger than 39. This provides young researchers concrete opportunities to assume leadership roles.

However, the diversity of proposed grants, aimed at stimulating the creative activity of scientific staff, faces the problem of inconsistency in the requirements imposed on applicants. We believe that a unified approach to classifying specialists as "young scientists" is a task in which federal legislation is should play a pivotal part.

5. Career Prospects of Young Scientists: Guarantees of Employment and Increasing Competitiveness.

It seems possible to establish legal guarantees for young scientists that ensure their stable employment. Some foreign legislations already have such measures - for instance, an Italian law, dated December 30, 2010, offers temporary employment for young researchers once they complete their doctoral studies, giving graduates the chance to demonstrate their competence[6].

The system for awarding degrees in Western countries, particularly the USA, is also noteworthy. The typical period for dissertation completion in the USA spans six to eight years [22, p. 421]. In Russia, if the dissertation defense occurs at the end of the postgraduate studies, the timelines are approximately similar. However, the defense procedure in the USA is carried out not by a dissertation council, but by an academic committee within the university itself. Therefore, we consider the reduction in the number of dissertation councils to be a serious problem for the Russian scientific community.

The convoluted matter of defining a scientist's status in the scientific world using scientometric indicators should not be overlooked either. These indicators may not always accurately reflect the latest knowledge. Considering the length of an researcher's career, there are many opportunities to manipulate one's h-index through formal co-authorship and similar mechanisms. Young researchers are forced to resort to mass publishing of works for a fee, which negatively affects both the quality of the works and the academic motivation of the scientist. This is supported by foreign studies - for example, research on the execution of quantitative performance indicators in Sweden revealed that a high number of publications do not necessarily guarantee superior quality [25]. In this regard, the initiative of the National Electronic Library to introduce new indicators for evaluating the scientific competency of researchers, such as measuring the percentile in the core of the Russian Science Citation Index, is interesting. The latest researches note the high potential of this instrument [26]. Transitioning from using the Hirsch index to new tools can strengthen the positions of young researchers, but it is important to approach this issue thoughtfully,

[6] Legge 30 dicembre 2010, n. 240. Università degli Studi della Tuscia. URL: https://www.unitus.it/public/contenuti/ExJSite/Legge%20240%20del%202010.pdf (accessed on 19.02.2022).

without making decisions that could discriminate against older colleagues.

Young female scientists face specific problems, as their scientific career often coincides with the period of forming a family and bearing children, which can temporarily slow down the academic progress of these researchers [27, p. 89-91]. The lack of guarantees for the families of young scientists can lead to a loss of desire to return to scientific activities.

Self-governing organizations of scientists can play a significant role in improving the prestige of scientific activities. In the Russian Federation, such organizations operate at the regional level, but for example, in Kazakhstan, the Union of Scientists operates at the republican level [28]. The creation of Young Scientists Councils in scientific and educational institutions is a positive phenomenon, as they often collaborate with similar Councils in the regions - for example, the Young Scientists Council of the Ural Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences coordinates its activities with the regional Council of Young Scientists and Specialists of the Perm Krai [29, p. 128]. This interaction contributes to strengthening the ties of young scientists with the profession and conveying their initiatives to the authorities.

Mentioned challenges mainly pertain to young scientists' research activities. However, a significant number of young scientists are also engaged in teaching, and the desire to achieve high scientometric indicators, despite the recognition of students' performance as a criterion for assessing academic and teaching staff [30, p. 20], can affect the quality of educational services. In this regard, it can be proposed to provide additional bonuses to researchers for publishing monographs and educational publications, which are currently less advantageous in terms of scientometrics than scientific articles.

In addition to expanding the system of stimulating measures, it is necessary to reconsider and increase the basic salaries of young scientific employees. Recognizing the complexity of the issue, we believe that the most effective solution, capable of stopping the outflow of young scientists to the most economically advantageous regions, would be to introduce a unified system of remuneration for scientific personnel, regardless of regional specificities.

6. Conclusion

A sequential approach to determining the legal status of young scientists and the provision of social guarantees are capable of ensuring the influx of young people into the field of scientific activity. In order to increase the prestige of the scientist profession among youth, prevent aging of the scientific and pedagogical personnel, it is deemed necessary to take a number of measures, among which:

1. Establishment of the concept of a "young scientist", criteria for its definition, and the main directions of social support at the federal law level.

2. Increasing the prestige of the scientist profession by developing a system of social incentives with simplified procedures for obtaining them, increasing the level of material support for young employees through their involvement in grants paid by budgetary and extra-budgetary funds.

3. Gradual transition from bibliometric methods of evaluating the work of scientists to methods allowing to assess the quality of published scientific articles, constant search for other ways of measuring the scientific activity of employees of scientific organizations.

4. Increasing the guaranteed part of the salary of scientific personnel, including young scientists, by forming a unified system of remuneration for scientific workers.

5. Formation of a stable system of defending dissertations so that graduate students have the opportunity to defend them in the regions where they were educated.

6. Creating comfortable working conditions for young scientists, including scientific teams led by young candidates and doctors of sciences, youth laboratories with clear requirements for the percentage of young scientists in their composition, councils of young scientists, and science-intensive clusters.

Scientific and technological advancements can be effectively pursued when the legal and social status of scientists is enhanced. The starting point for these processes should be the legislative introduction of the term "scientist" to denote the

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category of citizens that becomes the main productive force of society in the era of knowledge. All of the above necessitates the urgent legislative consolidation of criteria for determining young scientists and the unification of disparate subordinate acts currently regulating the provision of social guarantees and benefits to them.

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