



The statement issued by 'homecoming brains'



The scientists' open letter to the Minister of Education

28 March 2013

Fourteen scientists, who had left their countries as part of the “**drain brain**” and have now **returned home**, including two researchers of the **International School for Advanced Studies (SISSA)** of Trieste, wrote an open letter to Minister Francesco Profumo asking for a rational approach and a definite time frame regarding the procedures to continue research work in Italy. Due to bureaucracy defects and slow assessment processes, in fact, they risk ending up without a job and being forced back abroad.

“We have returned to Italy to give our contribution to research and to the development of our country, and to give back at least partially what we have received at no cost during many years of study”, wrote the fourteen 'homecoming brains' who have signed the letter to the Minister of



Education, Universities and Research **Francesco Profumo**.

In the letter, the signatories speak out against the delays and illogicalities observed in the renewal procedure of the 2008/2009 "Rientro dei Cervelli" program ("Return of the Brains" or "Brain-Gain" program). The program had been conceived at the time to contain the dangerous "drain brain" phenomenon. Our most brilliant scientific minds were (and still are today) obliged to look for job positions outside Italy in consideration of the limited opportunities offered by our country, both regarding the resources allocated for research and the researchers' professional opportunities.

"The appeal is only the umpteenth, disquieting indication of Italy's inability to endorse a true scientific policy worth of a developed country," underlines SISSA Director Guido Martinelli, who adds to it: "It is fundamental to give stability to the researchers' position, or else not only the so-called 'drain brain' professionals will never return home, but they will also contribute to representing Italy as a country that is unable to honor its commitments."

The return programs, now called "Rita Levi Montalcini" scholarships, which have been recurrently coming under the media spotlight as an example of the Ministry's commitment to advance academic excellence, are affected by bureaucratic contradictions that risk frustrating the huge financial investment made by our country.

In particular, the fourteen signatories denounce the absurd rule that actually slows down, and almost brings to a halt, the assessment procedure for the renewal of the four-year contracts assigned by the 2008/2009 announcement. The researchers now risk not being able to obtain the renewal in Italy, as well as not being able to look for a new position abroad in time.

"I would like to emphasize that we are not asking for our position to become stable 'by force of law', something that all us signatories deem wrong and contrary to the principles of the promotion of excellence," explains Andrea Gambassi, a physicist at SISSA. "What we are asking is for the assessment of our suitability to be carried out within a definite time frame and following a rational procedure, thus enabling us to plan our future," a right all citizens should be entitled to.

Link: [Letter to the Minister](#) (in Italian)

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