

Dear Members,

*I greatly appreciated the invitation by the Editorial Board of our Journal to greet you as new president of SIEV. I could not deny that the unquestionable pleasure is accompanied by a little apprehension, as it will not be easy to honour the presidency, held for so many years by Stefano Stanghellini.*

*Stefano, President of our Society since its foundation, has considerably contributed to the growth of our discipline, both from the scientific point of view and in terms of the presence of the evaluation subjects in the academic courses in Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering and Architecture. Therefore, on behalf of the whole SIEV I would like to thank him for the work done and for the future support that he promised to give to our activities.*

*In recent years, the scientific community of SIEV has achieved excellent results in research, both from the quantitative and the qualitative point of view. First, the scientific publications have evolved, by fully entering in the international scene. Currently, most of the research is published in top ranking international Journals, indexed by the main bibliographic databases (ISI and Scopus). At the same time, there is also an authoritative presence at national level, through the Journal "Valori e Valutazioni", that is also indexed by Scopus.*

*The quality of the publications has considerably grown. The evaluation of the quality of research (VQR) of the "ICAR/22 - Appraisal" scientific sector, carried out by the Italian Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (ANVUR) with reference to the period 2011-2014, has highlighted the triplication of English language publications. Moreover, the papers published in Journals for which a revision phase is mandatory have increased up to 37% compared to the results of the previous period 2004-2010. Consequently, there has been a sharp rise in the average score (+33%) of the publications and of those judged excellent (+160%) or good (+56%).*

*However, in the last 10 years the professors of the scientific sector "ICAR/22 - Appraisal" have decreased (-20%) more than those in the area of Civil Engineering and Architecture" (-16%). Nonetheless, our discipline continues to be the benchmark for economic and evaluative education in the academic courses of Civil Engineering, Environmental Engineering and Architecture, in many of which it is a compulsory subject. These results are related to our ability to develop and protect a disciplinary specificity that has deep roots and is capable of adequately responding to the new demands of economic valuation of private and public assets and to those raised by territorial and infrastructural planning.*

*Recently, in the organization of University teaching,*

*some reforms have been proposed threatening the scientific specificities established by the scientific sectors. The law 240/2010, with the constitution of the "Settori Concorsuali", has forced the aggregation of the scientific sectors on a merely numerical basis. This aggregation has deprived the small sectors and those characterized by specialized scientific competencies of autonomy in the recruitment of academic professors.*

*Now, the Italian academic world has been called to deal with a new reorganization. The National University Council, commissioned by Government, has drafted a proposal to revise the current academic courses, as well as the current classification system for the scientific sectors.*

*The updating of the educational organization according to the "changed cultural and professional needs of the contemporary society" and the homogenization of the scientific knowledge organization with the European systems have been the stated objectives.*

*In synthesis, the proposal provides:*

1. *The simplification of the current classification system of the academic knowledge with the introduction of:*
  - a. *disciplinary groupings, intended as "wide-ranging communities and cultural fields" being functional to the framing of the professor and to the classification of the disciplinary areas of the study courses. The disciplinary grouping should be described by a document, in which the relevant teaching and research aspects will be synthetically indicated, and by one or more appropriate specifications;*
  - b. *research fields aimed at describing the activities. The research fields must be consistent with the European classification system (ERC-European Research Council), which does not always include the topics dealt with by our discipline and will constitute the reference for the evaluation of the research activities and projects. Each research field will be characterized by keywords "representative of the cultural specificities of each study community". The research activity of each professor will be characterized by a main research field and by one or more keywords;*
2. *Overall review of the classification of the academic courses, consistent with the methodology described in the previous point, which should:*
  - a. *introduce an updated content communication model with particular reference to the teaching objectives and the needful teaching activities;*
  - b. *intervene on the qualifying teaching objectives and on the indispensable teaching activities (disciplinary groupings) in the existing classification of the academic courses;*

*c. identify any new classes of academic courses that respond to currently unsatisfied cultural and professional needs.*

Accordingly, the “CUN/08 area – Civil Engineering and Architecture” Committee has drawn up a document, shared by the majority of the scientific sector pointing out the critical aspects in the National University Council proposal emerged in various meetings. In a nutshell, the identified critical aspects have led the CUN/08 area not to share the assumptions and the methodological settings of the ministerial initiative nor, consequently, the model proposed by the CUN.

The perplexities expressed by the “CUN/08 area - Civil Engineering and Architecture” Committee are essentially attributable to the contradiction between the objective of “drastic simplification”, which is a prelude to a trivialization of the teaching paths, and the need to adapt them “to the changed cultural and professional needs of the contemporary society” which, on the other hand, always require more insights. The negative implications of the described simplification would also be amplified by the introduction of a minimum number of professors for the establishment of the disciplinary groupings. In fact, the “CUN/08 area – Civil Engineering and Architecture” Committee has noted that “... as an element of cultural identity, a discipline cannot be evaluated on the basis of its size, especially in a historical moment of sharp investment reductions in the public University and in research. In

other words, a discipline can be numerically small, in the sense that the number of scholars who are scientifically interested in it is limited, but it is strategic for the cultural and economic life of the country. Therefore, its existence must be guaranteed and preserved, regardless of whether it is in the scientific research or in the teaching context and, consequently, within the professions and the skills that are necessary for the life of the country.”

Therefore, the “CUN/08 area – Civil Engineering and Architecture” Committee has observed that if the reorganization is not carried out with the appropriate flexibility, it will lead to the dispersion of specialized knowledge that is essential for the training of future engineers and architects, especially in the professional disciplines.

The critical issues highlighted by the “CUN/08 area – Civil Engineering and Architecture” Committee concern in particular our sector which, although characterized by a limited number of professors, is the bearer of very specific knowledge, capable of integrating profitably with technical knowledge.

In this uncertain framework, the SIEV is urgently called upon to reflect on the consequences that the model of “updating and rationalization” proposed by the CUN could have on the economic and appraisal education of future civil engineers and architects and on the research activities of professors and scholars in the sector.

Paolo Rosato