

340th Meeting of the Research, Development and Innovation Council

The Research, Development and Innovation Council met with international experts and elected members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation

On Friday, 30 November, the Research, Development and Innovation Council (“the Council”) held a regular meeting presided by Prime Minister Andrej Babiš. The members of its International Advisory Panel (“International Council”) attended the meeting for the fifth time. Aside from the International Council’s expert recommendations, the main topics discussed included the election of the Chair of the International Council and the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation, as well as the progress in the implementation of the M17+ methodology. The Council also released exceptional aid amounting to CZK 100 million to support leading projects that narrowly failed to receive prestigious ERC grants.

At the start of the meeting, the councillors heard and thoroughly discussed **the results of the working meeting of the International Council**, members of the RDI Council and representatives of the Czech Science Foundation, and the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, which took place at the Office of the Government on 29 November. Among other things, the participants discussed matters such as flexible funding rules and quality-based evaluation of projects, facilitating work of reviewers and investigators under the Czech Science Foundation, revising the objectives of the activities of the Technology Agency and addressing potential competence overlaps with the Ministry of Industry and Trade, and also the necessary changes in the rules for establishing spin-off companies in the Czech Republic.





Members of International Advisory Panel with the Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and members of the R&D&I Council

In the discussion with members of the International Council, Prime Minister Babiš reaffirmed that **research and development is the Government's foremost priority** and that the Government's goal is to make the Czech Republic an innovation leader by 2030. In this regard, Mr Babiš emphasised the importance of supportive measures, such as creating the infrastructure for spin-off and start-up companies, making adjustments in the funding and evaluation of research, pursuing digitalisation of government, supporting innovation centres of excellence, and granting Czech investment incentives exclusively to companies actively pursuing research and development. Vice-Chair of the R&D&I Council, Mr Karel Havlíček, is preparing a draft of this ambitious plan, which will now be directly coordinated by the Prime Minister.

Based on a secret ballot, the Council proposed and recommended that the Government appoint 12 members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation, including the Chair, for the next term in office. The following people were nominated as members of the Scientific Advisory Board: **Prof. Jaroslav Doležel, Prof. Pavel Exner, Prof. Martin Hartl, Prof. Štěpán Jurajda, Prof. Bengt Nordén, Prof. Jana Roithová, Prof. Helmut Schwarz, Prof. Avner Shaked, Prof. Petr Sommer, Prof. Aleksi Šedo, Prof. František Štěpánek and Prof. Jiří Zeman.**

Prof. Jaroslav Doležel, who has recently been awarded the National Prize "Česká Hlava" of the Czech Government for the year 2018, was nominated as the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation.

At its meetings, the R&D&I Council often discusses the **implementation of the Methodology for Evaluating Research Organisations and Research, Development and Innovation Purpose-tied Aid Programmes (M17+)**. The Council is currently completing the first year of evaluations based on the new methodology. Preliminary scaling of research organisations was approved in respect of five providers, including the segment of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The scaling on a four-degree scale is subject to a trilateral (tripartite) agreement among the representatives of the R&D&I Council, providers of aid, and representatives of Expert Evaluation Panels. Consensus was reached in ongoing discussions of the evaluation results with all the main providers.

The Council also approved extraordinary aid amounting to CZK 100 million for applicants of the prestigious ERC (European Research Council) grants who scored high, but narrowly missed the target to receive European aid. Karel Havlíček, Vice-Chair of the R&D&I Council,

noted: *“This is an exceptional step aimed to at least partially support a number of great projects which have been successful in the European competition in terms of their quality but did not receive grants. The funding will be allocated from the already approved national R&D budget, without the need to increase overall expenditure. After reaching an agreement with the Ministry of Finance, we were able to allocate unused funds from the Czech Science Foundation’s budgetary chapter.”*

Source: R&D&I Council press release, 30 November 2018