**Závěry ze zasedání Mezinárodního poradního orgánu a Rady**

**dne 13. 5. 2024**

Radě pro výzkum, vývoj a inovace (dále jen “Rada”) jsou předloženy závěry z jednání Rady a mezinárodního poradního orgánu Rady (dále jen “ISAB”) ze dne 13. 5. 2024 v Hrzánském paláci. Materiál je zpracovaný Josefem Jiřičným, dr. h. c., Radě předkládá zpravodaj prof. Homola.

**Summary of the meeting of the International Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB) with the Research, Development and Innovation Council (RVVI) of the Czech Republic**

(13th May 2024, Hrzánský Palace)

The meeting of the ISAB and the RVVI was overshadowed by the tragic demise of the board’s Chairman, Professor Josef Michl, a tireless and dedicated scientist, a man of unquestionable integrity, who served as an example to us all and who will be greatly missed. Upon receipt of the news of his passing, the meeting was interrupted to allow the persons present to pay their respects to this outstanding member of our community.

In the absence of the Chairman, the meeting was initiated by the RVI Reporter, Prof. Jiri Homola. In a brief, in camera, meeting, the ISAB discussed and agreed on the agenda. No additional discussion points were raised at this stage.

The ISAB was joined by the members of the RVVI and Mgr. Jana Havlikova, the deputy minister of research, whose presentation introduced the ISAB to the future strategic plans for Czech science, with a particular focus on the proposed changes of Law 130/2002, which has hitherto governed the rules of scientific research in the CR and which was seen by the scientific community in general as one of the major hindrances to progress. The ISAB was very pleased to learn of the numerous planned changes to this law and to note that the new version will include also rules on technology transfer and ethics, for example. The ISAB sees this effort as badly needed and is looking forward to the speedy adoption of this law.

Mgr. Havlikova also informed the ISAB of a new emphasis on institutional evaluation. This effort was generally welcomed by the ISAB. Evaluations are seen as an integral part of the scientific review process, but only if the changes recommended by the evaluation committees are implemented.

The ISAB was pleased with the future plans for Czech science but emphasised the urgent need to bring in new talent – persons of world scientific standing and integrity with proven leadership experience.

The following item on the agenda concerned the update on the implementation of the ISAB recommendations for restructuring of the primary Czech granting agency, GACR. Its current chairman, Prof. Petr Baldrian provided the ISAB with a detailed overview of GACR application and evaluation procedures, which are now closely aligned with those of granting agencies in other European countries. GACR is to be commended for its effort; it adopted a significant number of ISAB recommendations, and Prof. Baldrian provided the ISAB with valid explanations why some of the recommended changes have not been (or could not be) implemented. One of the frustrating points is the reluctance of top Czech scientists to join GACR panels. The ISAB feels that GACR could use its key role in Czech science funding to make this community more aware of the need for top cadre not only in research, but also in research evaluation. The importance of highest quality reviewers, both internal and external, cannot be overemphasized.

GACR should be highly commended for its new programs aimed at supporting young scientists’ postdoctoral stay abroad and their return to the CR. The ISAB welcomed this effort with great enthusiasm, but the discussion revealed that not all institutions provide this young talent with the support required to allow them to flourish in the CR. GACR might need to use its influence to make all research institutions aware of the urgent need to support young scientists.

The Junior Star program represents another example of an excellent GACR scheme that needs support of the institutions to give the young talent perspective for the future, and the EXPRO program is another commendable GACR activity.

The ISAB was very pleased with the progress made by GACR and recommends that its invaluable role in supporting Czech science be strengthened by increased funding.

The ISAB sensed that the changes in procedures and practices in GACR were made possible by the openness of its management to discussions not only with the ISAB, but also with other, primarily international, agencies, such as the ERC. This is a very welcome step. In the future, the ISAB would like to encourage GACR to investigate ways of using its weight to influence science policy in the CR.

The next item on the agenda concerned the AZV, the only granting agency in the CR that supports medical research. As in the case of GACR, the ISAB made number of recommendations to improve its functioning. These were rejected by the then management, however, since the arrival of the new director, Prof. Ondrej Slaby, many of the recommendations were implemented already during his first year in charge, as became apparent from his presentation at this meeting. The ISAB was very impressed with the changes in application and evaluation procedures, but even more so with Prof. Slaby’s efforts to gradually improve the scientific quality of the AZV panel members and to try and instil in the agency an air of positivity and constructive criticism. As recommended by the ISAB, the AZV was able to redefine the genre of “applied science”, which clarifies for the potential applicants which projects are fundable. The AZV now recognizes the importance of supporting both pre-clinical and clinical research that are in the long run equally important for improving the well-being of the general population. The ISAB would like to see substantially more support in hospitals for clinician-scientists, as is the case in the most progressive countries of the world.

The other items on the agenda (trust in science, open science and assessment) were briefly discussed, but the ISAB was of the opinion that these topics are too complex and broad, and that the ISAB was not in a position to provide qualified input without a clear remit.

In summary, this meeting was seen by the ISAB as a significant step towards aligning the working practices of the two above funding agencies with comparable organisations Europe. The ISAB is looking forward to new challenges. It sees the recruitment of world-class leaders of science to top positions in the CR as a clear priority.