

Government Council to grant honorary awards for scientific contribution to addressing COVID-19

The regular meeting of the Research, Development and Innovation Council (the Council) took place on Friday 30 October 2020 in the form of a videoconference – in light of current pandemic measures. The main items of the meeting included support for science and research as part of the National Recovery Plan, the output of the Commission for Climate Action, and a proposal to appoint two members of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation. The Council also proposed bestowing two special awards for scientific contribution in addressing the problem of the COVID-19 epidemic in a global context.

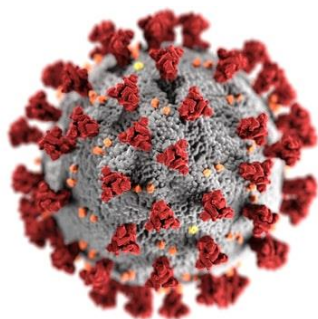


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At the start of the meeting, the Council members once again addressed **support for science and research as part of the economic policy**. The Council received information from Deputy PM Karel Havlíček concerning preparation of the National Recovery Plan and the progress and dates for negotiating the plan with European Commission authorities. *"The Council welcomes and supports the proposal for allocating research funding of CZK 12.5 billion. These European funds should be divided up in a ratio of 2:3 for research in medical fields including virology, and industrial applied research,"* stated the Council's First Deputy Chair Petr Dvořák on the results of talks.

The meeting programme also included nomination of two candidates for the Czech Science Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board. After a secret ballot, the Council proposed appointing as new Scientific Board members **Rudolf Kučera** for the area of the humanities and **Michal Otyepka** for the area of physical science. Rudolf Kučera is the director of the Masaryk Institute and Czech Academy of Sciences Archive, also working at the Charles University Faculty of Social Sciences. Michal Otyepka is deputy director of the Regional Centre of Advanced Technologies and Materials at Palacký University in Olomouc, a national representative at the European Chemical Society, a member of the Czech Learned Society and is one of the few scientists in the Czech Republic to have obtained two ERC grants.

The Council also discussed and approved the selection of figures or organisations whose activities, products or services are helping address issues associated with COVID-19 and proposed that its chairman bestow 2 honorary awards for scientific contribution to addressing the issue of the pandemic. The proposed awards are in the categories of basic research and industrial innovation and will be going to the team of scientists from **the CSA Institute of Organic Chemistry and Biochemistry for their findings published in the top journal Nature Communication**, which indicate new approaches in treating COVID-19, as well as the team from the **Czech Institute of Information Technology, Robotics and Cybernetics at the Czech Technical University for developing the CIIRC RP95-3D protective half-mask**. These special honours will be awarded along with the National Government Award during the Česká hlava (The Czech Mind) gala evening broadcast live on Czech Television.

The Council was furthermore briefed on the **carbon neutrality document** submitted by the Commission for Climate Action. The document reflects the accord between the Czech government and other European states on achieving "climate neutrality" by 2050 pursuant to the requirements of the Paris Agreement.

The Czech Republic faces two important tasks. Over three decades it is imperative to significantly reduce the consumption of fossil fuels (and find other suitable technologies to reduce emissions). It is necessary that in the interim the Czech Republic prepare for the new climate conditions created by the expected global rise of 2° C. The position from the Council's commission breaks down what preparing for climate neutrality will require, how the state, municipalities and businesses should proceed and how they can contribute to a smooth transition. For example, the structure and urban design of municipalities can have a great impact on the intensity of consequences.

The Council also recommended that its chairman appoint Filip Hájek as a full member of the commission, having until now been a permanent guest. Among other things, Filip Hájek is a member of the expert team for environment policy at the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic.

Another of the regular items of Council meetings was **Implementation of the 2017+ Evaluation Methodology**. At its October session, the Council approved publishing of the complete findings at the national level, thereby completing evaluation in the third year according to the valid methodology. The Council also approved the proposals of the Commission for Evaluation of Research Organisations that call on research organisations to correct errors in scientific databases and implement identifiers for their scientists, which significantly help increase the quality of evaluation.

The Council meeting was also attended as any invited guest for the first time by Government Representative for Science and Research in Health Care Ondřej Slabý.

Source: RD&I Council press release | 2 November 2020