

Government Council supports nuclear fusion research

On Friday, 17 December, the Research, Development and Innovation Council (the Council) held its last 2021 meeting at the Straka Academy. The main items on the agenda included support for science and research from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan, the Evaluation Methodology 2017+, and the Issues of Research in Energy and Nuclear Fusion Tokamak (COMPASS - U). The Council also discussed the 'Analysis of the state of research, development and innovation in the Czech Republic and their international comparison in 2020'.



1st Vice-Chairperson of the Council, Pavel Baran, led the December meeting of the Council. Photo: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

To start, the first Vice-Chairman of the Council, Pavel Baran, informed about the working **meeting of the Board members with the newly appointed Minister for Science, Research and Innovation, Helena Langšádlová**, held on 6 December. They discussed the key conceptual issues regarding Czech science and research, mainly in the context of the persisting world pandemic crisis.

A regular item on the Council meeting agenda is the **Implementation of Methodology 2017+** (M17+) for evaluating research organisations and programmes. The main coordinator of the evaluation, Prof. Tomáš Polívka, together with the Chair of the Commission for Evaluation (KHV in Czech), Prof. Štěpán Jurajda, informed the Council members of the progress of this year's tripartite meetings. The meetings are drawing to a close and, in most cases, the providers agreed with the national level evaluation. The M17+ implementation period is ending, the complete evaluation is being closed in two crucial segments (MEYS and the Czech Academy of Sciences). The next step will be an introspective view of the whole system of the Methodology, accompanied by a

reflection on experience to date with the evaluation process. *"Methodology 2017+ anticipates that, after the implementation period ends, an evaluation will be made of how it has been implemented in all segments including the distribution of institutional support,"* Prof. Jurajda summed up.

In another of the regular topics, dealing with support for science and research from the **National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**, the Council members discussed information from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) on publishing a contract notice in research, development and innovation under the EXCELES programme. Representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade informed the Council about the progress in preparing the methodological guidelines for implementing the NRRP, about the establishment and scope of powers of the National Coordination Group for Supporting Industrial Research.

The Council also asked MEYS to clarify in its communication with the academia the pending issues of the EXCELES programme tender documentation and to find a way to establish a binding interpretation of some contentious points in the documentation.

The Council discussed the state of the **project COMPASS-U: Tokamak for top-level research of nuclear fusion** - stating that research oriented on future development of the energy sector is a key priority for the Czech Republic.

The main objective of the project is a significant upgrade of the existing COMPASS tokamak to a unique device presently missing in the European fusion programme and worldwide. The project has been successfully integrated into the international research area in Europe and into the strategic cooperation with the US Department of Energy and their national laboratories.

The Council members proposed that the preparation of the state budget expenditure on research, development and innovation (R&D&I) for 2023 with an outlook for 2024–2025 take into account the financial demands of this project by creating a separate item in the Czech Academy of Sciences budget of institutional support. They also recommended that MEYS reflect this activity in the large research infrastructures.

The Council approved the **'Analysis of the state of research, development and innovation in the Czech Republic and their international comparison in 2020'** which is to be subsequently submitted to the inter-ministerial comment procedure.

The Council also discussed in detail the Opinion of the Ministry of Health on the report of the International Council on the activity of the Czech Health Research Council, and approved the text of the call for proposals of candidates for 1 member of the Board of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic. As part of the debate, the Council approved the Proposed opinion on the Interior Ministry programme called 'Programme of an Open Call in the Security Research 2023–2030 (OPSEC)' and the Schedule of meetings with providers on the preparation of the proposal for state budget expenditure on R&D&I 2023+.

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