

The Government Council insists on its draft science budget for 2022

On Friday, 3 September, a regular in-person meeting of the Research, Development and Innovation Council (the Council) took place again, after the summer pause, in the Straka Academy. The main items on the agenda included a proposal for state budget expenditure on science for 2022+, election of the candidate for the Government's National Award, the Czech Mind 2021 (Česká hlava), and also announcement of this year's laureate of the Council Chairperson's Prize.

At the opening of the meeting, the Council members observed a minute's silence to honour the suddenly deceased Prof. Jaroslav Koča. **Prof. Jaroslav Koča, D.Sc.** chaired the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic since 2020, was at the origin of the Central European Institute of Technology CEITEC, and, among other things, established the National Centre for Biomolecular Research at the Faculty of Science, Masaryk University.



From the 370th meeting of the RDI Council. Photo: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Then, as the first item of the regular meeting, the Vice-Chairperson of the Council and Deputy Prime Minister Karel Havlíček informed about the current version of the proposal for the 2022 State Budget Act with a mid-term outlook for 2023 and 2024, containing a proposal of expenditure on research, experimental development and innovation (R&D&I) for the same period.

The Council members appreciated the fact that, after intensive negotiations of the Council Chairperson, Prime Minister Andrej Babiš, with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Alena Schillerová, the **proposal of the state budget expenditure on R&D&I in 2022 reached CZK 39.35 bil. in a structure proposed by the Council.**

The R&D&I budget was then integrated by the Ministry of Finance, in line with the expenditure outlook contained in the proposal approved by the Council on 28 May 2021. (The original proposal of the Ministry of Finance, discussed by the government on 7 June 2021, was roughly CZK 3.2 bil. lower than the Council proposal.)

"The proposal of expenditure on science and research, submitted to the government for discussion, is a remarkable success of the Council and its Board, supported by ministries responsible for R&D&I. Such result of several-month-long negotiations confirms that science and research are among the top priorities of the government. The budget in this form respects the key importance of research for the development of the Czech Republic,

especially after the COVID-19 pandemic," said First Vice-Chairperson of the Council, Pavel Baran.

In the standard item on **support of science and research from the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP)**, the Council members discussed the current state of the Plan's preparations with representatives of the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, and expressed their gratitude to the negotiation teams. At the beginning of 2022, the Council Board will submit to the Council a proposal of budget measures for the provisional solution of financing a part of the NRRP component 5.2 (applied research) from the state budget.

"The National Recovery and Resilience Plan is entering the final stage of approval at the EU level next week by the ECOFIN Council of Ministers. After that, a financial agreement and an implementation agreement will be signed. Following that, the Czech Republic should receive an advance payment at 13% of the total allocation of the Plan," Silvana Jirotková, Deputy Minister of Industry and Trade, explained the current approval procedures.

A greatly anticipated item of the September meeting is, traditionally, the nomination for the highest scientific award, **the Government's National Award - Česká hlava (Czech Mind)**. As a result of a secret ballot, the Council recommended to the government to grant the award for 2021 to **Prof. Vladimír Kučera, D.Sc.**, for his globally significant contribution to the automatic control theory, among other things. The Government's National Award is granted for extraordinary lifelong results in research and development. It is accompanied with a reward of CZK 1 million.

Based on the result of another secret ballot, the Council then proposed to its Chairperson to appoint **Prof. Bohumír Strnadel, D.Sc.** a member **of the Committee for Evaluation of Research Organisations and Completed Programmes**. Bohumír Strnadel has worked since 2014 as director of the Centre for Advanced Innovation Technologies of the VSB – Technical University of Ostrava.

The Council members were informed of the decision of their Chairperson to award the **the Council Chairperson's Prize for Promotion and Popularisation of Science and Research for 2021**. This year's laureate of the Prize will be **František Koukolík M.D., D.Sc.** A well-known Czech neuropathologist, writer, columnist and a tireless promoter of critical thinking predominantly popularises his discipline, but with a significant spillover to social sciences. The Prize handover ceremony will take place on 15 September 2021 in the representative space of the Hrzán Palace in Prague.

Other important topics discussed at the meeting included the issue of public health research, the current state of implementation of the Czech Innovation Strategy up to 2030, or publication of the outputs of evaluation of research organisations at the national level in the 4th year of evaluation pursuant to Methodology 2017+.

Prof. Vladimír Kučera, D.Sc., dr. h. c.

Vladimír Kučera is a professor in the field of technical cybernetics. He is the Deputy Director and a head of department at the Czech Institute of Informatics, Robotics and Cybernetics (CIIRC) of the Czech Technical University in Prague (CTU). Prof. Kučera is a scientist emeritus of the Czech Academy of Sciences and an experienced educator who has lectured at CTU for decades.

His research interests include the systems theory and automatic control, or new methods of synthesis of optimal and robust control systems. Prof. Kučera was instrumental in solving a long-open problem of the so-called non-interactive control of linear systems.

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