

The RDI Council joins the call for assistance to Ukrainian scientists. Professor Jurajda elected Vice-Chair of the Council

On Friday, 25 February, a regular meeting of the Research, Development and Innovation Council (the Council) was held in the Straka Academy. The main agenda items of the meeting, led by the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation who is also the Council Chair, included information on the government proposal of the science budget for 2022 and on the meetings to date on the proposal for expenditure in the period 2023+, the Operational Programme Johannes Amos Comenius (OP JAC) or the science agenda of the upcoming Czech presidency of the Council of the EU. A Council Vice-Chair and a nominee for a board member of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic were elected. A traditional item on the agenda is Methodology 2017+ for evaluating research organisations.

At the start of the meeting, the Council members joined the initiative to help the war-stricken Ukraine in a [joint statement](#).

“The statement concerns mainly scientists. My RDI Council colleagues and I condemn Russia’s aggression and we support Ukraine. Among other things, we ask the providers of science and research support and other relevant actors to take specific steps to support the development of cooperation with their Ukrainian colleagues,” said Helena Langšádlová, Minister for Science.

The first item on the February agenda was **election of an RDI Council Vice-Chair**. By secret ballot, the Council elected for the position **Prof. Ing. Štěpán Jurajda, Ph.D.** Vice-chairs are elected from among RDI Council members and the candidates are proposed directly by the Council members.

Professor Jurajda has been Deputy Minister for Science, Research and Innovation since January of this year. He also works in the Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education of Charles University (CERGE-EI) and, since 2014, he has been a member of the Council. He regularly publishes in international scientific journals, he worked, for example, at the prestigious American Princeton University, he was a member of the National Economic Council of the Government and is a member of the scientific councils of Charles University and Masaryk University.

Another key item on the agenda was **nomination for the board of the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (GA CR)**. The Council proposes for a GA CR board member **Prof. Ing. Martin Hartl, Ph.D.**, professor of Mechanical Engineering Design and Process Engineering and Director of the Institute of Machine and Industrial Design at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering of Brno University of Technology. The proposal will then be submitted to the government for discussion.

Pursuant to Act No 130/2002 Coll., the GA CR board consists of five members, of which one serves as the chairperson. As Prof. Rostislav Drochytka ended his membership, it was necessary to top up the board, taking into account the field of technical sciences, represented by Prof. Drochytka in the board.

A regular topic on the agenda of the Council meetings is, in this period, the state budget expenditure on research, development and innovation. The first Vice-Chair Pavel Baran informed the Council members of the **government proposal of the 2022 State Budget Act**, approved on 9 February. In its resolution, the government approved the following total expenditure on research, development and innovation (R&D&I):

for **2022** at **CZK 39.07 bil.**,

for **2023** at **CZK 39.32 bil.**,

for **2024** at **CZK 39.34 bil.**

In the situation of a provisional budget, the total 2022 expenditure was reduced by CZK 275.20 mil. against the government resolution of September 2021, the 2023 and 2024 expenditure was reduced annually by CZK 25.38 mil. against the government resolution of September 2021 and the original proposal of the Council.

The Council members welcomed the **increase in expenditure of the budget chapters of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MEYS) and the Czech Academy of Sciences** for long-term conceptual development of research organisations in 2022.

In line with the government's policy statement, the Council also requests that the increase in expenditure on conceptual development is conditioned by enhancing excellence of research organisations governed by both funding providers.

The Council members were informed about the results of negotiations on the **proposal for the 2023 state budget expenditure on R&D&I** and the proposal of mid-term outlooks with specific budget chapters, including a summary of the current needs and research capacities of the R&D&I system, and the obligations arising from the Innovation Strategy of the Czech Republic 2019-2030 in the area of institutional and purpose-tied aid.

With regard to the **importance of health research for enhancing the resilience of the Czech Republic** and its societal relevance, the Council recommended considering an increase in expenditure on purpose-tied aid for the period 2023+ in the chapter of the Ministry of Health. The Council requests conditioning any increase in this budget chapter expenditure by structural changes in the Czech Health Research Council, in particular by ensuring adequate support for the whole range of applied biomedical research, including pre-clinical research and public health research.

RDI Council also requests that the new ministerial concept of health research 2023+ bindingly defines the areas of support of applied health research, fully covering the areas of theoretical, pre-clinical, clinical medicine and the related social science fields, and recommends continuing negotiations with all relevant providers and ministries on the next direction of biomedical research and its financing.

In the regular item on **Methodology 2017+**, the Council members selected from candidates the members of the Commission for Evaluation of Results of Research Organisations and Completed Programmes (KHV) and members of Expert Panels.

Based on a secret ballot, the Council proposed to its Chair, Minister Langšádlová, to appoint as KHV members **Matěj Bajgar** DPhil., and RNDr. PhDr. **Hana Voňková**, Ph.D. et Ph.D., and as members of Expert Panels: Prof. Ing. **Aleš Růžička**, Ph.D., and RNDr. Ing. **Martin Kalbáč**, Ph.D., for the area of Chemical Sciences; Prof. Mgr. **Tomáš Albrecht**, Ph.D., and Mgr. **Pavel Stopka**, Ph.D., for the area of Biological Sciences; Prof. Dr. Ing. **Josef Krýsa** for the area of Chemical Engineering; Prof. MUDr. **Milan Brázdil**, Ph.D., FRCP, for the area of Clinical Medicine; Prof. MVDr. **David Modrý**, Ph.D., for the area of Veterinary Science; JUDr. PhDr. **Robert Zbiral**, Ph.D. (Law); and **Lenka Dědková**, Ph.D. (Media and Communications).

The Council approved Reports on Discussions of Results pursuant to Methodology 2017+ with all providers. *“Based on a successfully completed evaluation according to the current methodology in the 4th year, we have cumulated knowledge based on truly robust data and we are now able to identify centres of excellence in science, that are fully comparable with*

the best centres in the world,” the Vice-Chair of the Council and Chair of KHV, Štěpán Jurajda, confirmed.

In the next item on the agenda, the Council members discussed with MEYS representatives the **planned calls under the Operational Programme Johannes Amos Comenius (OP JAC)**. Under the programme, the Council assigns a task to Vice-Chair Štěpán Jurajda to identify several areas of current societal challenges, including the theme of energy crisis, public health research etc. The Council also asks the Ministry of Industry and Trade to clarify the method of updating and implementing the RIS3, and recommends MEYS publishing a call on societal challenges.

Since the beginning of this year, an important topic has been the **preparation for the Czech presidency of the Council of the EU** in the second half of 2022. The main priorities of the Czech presidency in research will be **research infrastructures and synergies in R&D&I**. The Council members add to the research themes with European relevance a proposal to present at the practical outputs how the research financing significantly contributed to addressing the pandemic (through the involved European infrastructures), and add e.g. the **research in energy and quantum technologies**, or the issue of **market regulation**. The Council will initiate negotiations with MEYS in this respect, to jointly search for a way to mainstream the Council proposals during the Czech presidency of the Council of the EU.

In the second part of the meeting, the Council members discussed the **science diplomacy agenda**, namely the opportunities of cooperation with the Federal Republic of Germany, and adopted the document Diplomats with the agenda of scientific cooperation in the Czech external service.

In the items without debate, the Council approved the text of the call for proposals for 9 members of the Committee on Bioethics.

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