

Government Council discusses science budget proposal and new law

On Friday 30 June 2023, the Research, Development and Innovation Council (the Council) held its regular meeting at the seat of the Czech Government. The main points discussed included the preparation of the Act on Research, Development, Innovation and Knowledge Transfer, a proposal to change the conditions of national co-financing for applicants under the Operational Programme Jan Amos Komenský, the negotiations on the State budget for R&D&I for the period 2024+ and the Future of Gas report of the European Academies Scientific Advisory Council.

At the beginning, Helena Langšádlová, the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation and Chair of the Council, briefed the Council about the preparatory work on the Draft State Budget of the Czech Republic for Research, Experimental Development and Innovation for 2024 with a View to 2025 and 2026, which was discussed at the Government's meeting on 28 June. The Council expressed its support for the Minister's efforts to ensure that research and development have an adequate budget.

"I am glad that I have managed to get included in the Government resolution a provision that the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and myself will negotiate a new expenditure framework. The aim is to reach an updated proposal of the total amount of expenditure on research, development and innovation that would reflect the priorities defined in the Government's policy statement and enable further development of this area," Minister Langšádlová emphasised.



Minister Helena Langšádlová and Vice-Chair of the Council Tomáš Polívka briefed the media on the meeting's outputs. Photo: archive of the Office of the Government of the Czech Republic

Members of the Council were presented with a **framework draft of a new Act on Research, Development, Innovation and Transfer of Knowledge and Technology**. The Act revises current roles and processes: for example, it changes certain roles of public support providers, modifies the status of National Priorities of Oriented Research and introduces measures to reduce the administrative burden. The Act will also introduce new, previously unregulated elements; a great emphasis will be placed on the transfer of knowledge into practice, the security considerations or the institutional resilience of research organisations.

Another crucial point discussed at the meeting was a proposal of the Ministry of Finance regulating the **conditions of national co-financing for applicants under the Operational Programme Jan Amos**

Komenský (OP JAK). The proposed adjustment grossly increases co-financing by research organisations and public universities – the change would significantly jeopardise their ability to use European funds to support scientific excellence, which is one of the strategic priorities of the Czech Republic under to the Government’s policy statement. The Council members expressed their fundamental disagreement with this proposal made by the Ministry of Finance.

At the end of the meeting, the Czech Academy of Sciences informed the Council members by letter about the publication of **a report of the European Academies Scientific Advisory Council (EASAC)** entitled The Future of Gas. This new report points out that natural gas is no cleaner than other fossil fuels and that there is a risk that using natural gas to substitute coal or oil would only reduce greenhouse gas impacts by a small margin or not at all. The report warns that largely unrecorded methane leaks throughout the natural gas supply chain carry an extremely high global warming potential. The report suggests that to mitigate climate change it is essential to stop using all fossil fuels, ban new natural gas boilers and massively increase electricity generation from renewables.

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