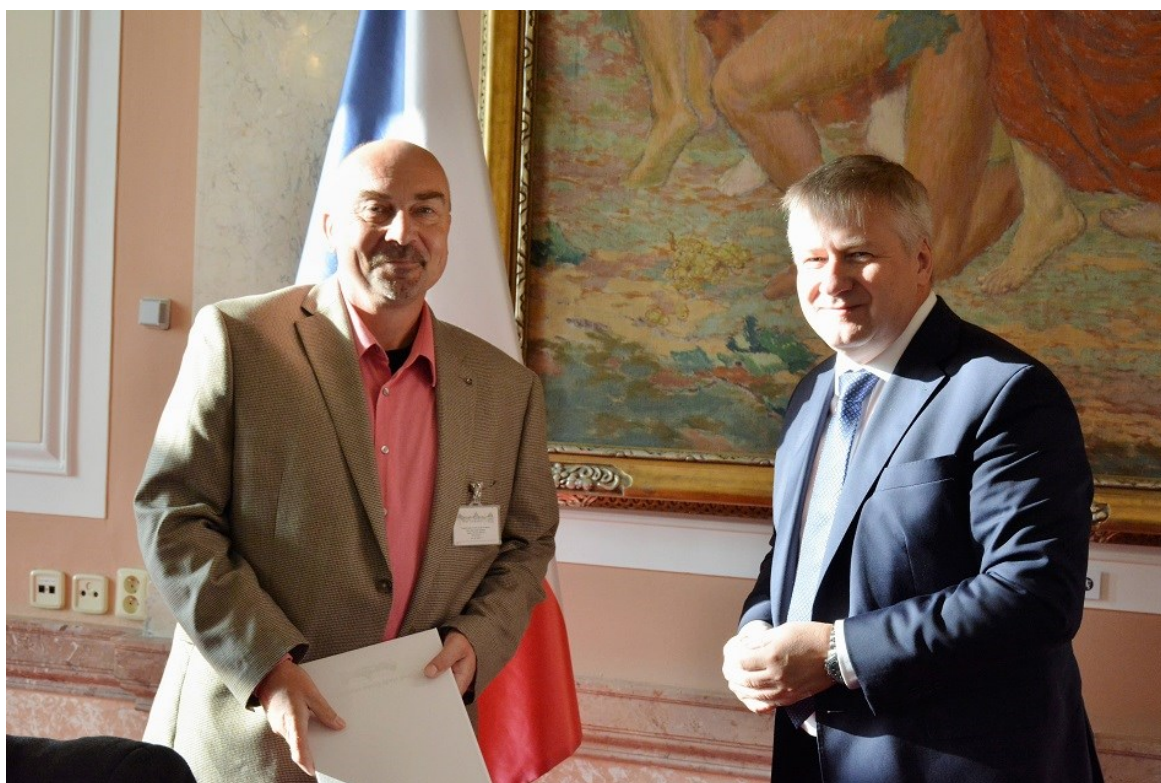


Professor of Computer Science Václav Matyáš joins the R&D&I Council

On 27 September 2023, the regular meeting of the Council for Research, Development and Innovation (the Council) took place at the Government's seat, the Straka Academy. The Council members were informed, among other things, about the current proposal of the State budget expenditure on science and research for 2024–2026, a new draft act on support for research and development, and the proposed ranking of research topics for the public competition under the SIGMA programme.

At the beginning of the meeting, the 1st Vice-Chair of the Council prof. Jiří Homola welcomed the new Council member **prof. RNDr. Václav Matyáš, M.Sc., Ph.D.**, who is the head of the Centre for Cryptography and Security Research at the Faculty of Informatics of Masaryk University in Brno. Professor Václav Matyáš was appointed a member of the R&D&I Council by Government Resolution of 20 September 2023.

"I am very pleased to welcome another internationally renowned expert to the Council. Professor Matyáš has long focused on research in the areas of applied cryptography, cybersecurity, information privacy and academic-industrial relations," said 1st Vice-Chair of the Council prof. Homola.



Prof. Václav Matyáš was appointed by the Government as a new member of the R&D&I Council. Pictured on the left together with 1st Vice-Chair of the Council prof. Jiří Homola. Photo: Office of the Government of the Czech Republic.

Updates on **the draft budget for science, research and innovation for 2024** with a medium-term outlook for the period 2025–2026 have been a regular item on the agenda of the Council's meetings in recent months. In April this year, the Council approved the draft budget material for 2024 with a medium-term outlook for 2025 and 2026. In May, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) set the limits of expenditure on research and development for 2024 at CZK 35.782 billion and for 2025 and 2026 at CZK 39.8 billion. At the same time, in June, the Government instructed the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation and the Chair of the Council, Helena Langšádlová, to negotiate with the Prime Minister and the Minister

of Finance to establish a new expenditure framework so that the updated proposal for the total amount of expenditure on research and development still reflects the priorities defined in the Government's programme declaration and allows for further development in this area. During the summer, a number of meetings took place at the level of the Prime Minister, the Minister for Science, Research and Innovation and the Minister of Finance.

As a result of these negotiations, an updated expenditure proposal was presented, in which the **total expenditure of the State budget on research, development and innovation** from national sources (i.e. excluding expenditure covered by revenues from EU programmes and financial mechanisms) **for the years 2024–2026 is proposed at CZK 40.190 billion per year**. Compared to the original proposal of the MoF, the resulting **increase in expenditure from national sources for 2024 is almost CZK 4.4 billion**. It is crucial for the Council to ensure the financing of the two basic pillars of the science and research system, the Czech Academy of Sciences and the public higher education institutions; therefore, the draft budget envisages an increase in institutional support for these two segments by approximately 4.5%. The budget also maintains the level of funding for the Czech Science Foundation, in order to ensure that programmes supporting excellence and young scientists in particular are properly covered. The expenditure proposed for 2024 is now at the level of the 2023 budget, taking into account the current tight nature of the State budget, the general economic developments and the ongoing consolidation of public finances.

“I cannot be completely satisfied with the total amount of funds, but I am pleased that even in this fiscal situation, the budget has been put together in such a way as to ensure the financing of the basic pillars of science and research, support for excellence and synergistic involvement of the extraordinary resources from the National Recovery Plan. A part of the accumulated high claims from unspent expenditure is expected to be included in addition to the budget, which will amount to approximately CZK 3.2 billion as of 1 January 2024.

Achieving greater efficiency in spending on science and research is a major challenge for the future and I have been working on this for a long time, both through the new act on research, development, innovation and knowledge transfer, the revision of the 2017+ Methodology and many other steps. Our task is also to realign support for the private sector, for companies, which in the Czech Republic, compared to other countries, is based primarily on providing direct support (subsidies) to companies as opposed to using indirect support instruments,” added Minister Helena Langšádlová regarding the science budget.

At its September meeting, the Council took note of the updated proposal for the total amount of the State budget expenditure on science, experimental development and innovation (R&D&I) and appealed to the Government to make a long-term effort to increase the State budget expenditure on R&D&I, which is one of the key strategic investments for the future of our country.

The Council also received information about the new draft **act on research, development, innovation and knowledge transfer**. The new act will, for example, support the career development of people in science, enshrine the ethical principles of scientific work or lay down new rules for international cooperation in science and research. The draft act regulates important elements of the system, such as the protection of the security interests of the State in the areas of science and research and the enshrinement of conditions for knowledge transfer. The act will also cover the promotion and popularisation of science.

At the meeting, the Council also adopted a favourable opinion on the request of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic to assess the order of priorities of research topics in the public competition “Long-term research projects and solutions to current R&D&I needs”, which will be announced under the **SIGMA programme**. At the same time, the Council pointed out the possibility of overlaps with other sources of financial support, which must be avoided when launching public competitions and calls.

At the end of the meeting, the Council members learned about the SAPEA (Science Advice For Policy By European Academies) report entitled “Towards Sustainable Food Consumption”, which was prepared with the participation of the Institute of Ethnology and the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Sciences. The report highlights the need to change the way we produce and consume goods in Europe in order to achieve the set health and sustainability objectives.

Source: R&D&I Council press release | 27 September 2023