

Biochemist Jan Konvalinka receives this year's award for popularisation of research

On 27 October 2023, a regular meeting of the Council for Research, Development and Innovation (the Council) took place at the Government's seat, the Straka Academy, chaired by Minister Helena Langšádlová. The Council members were informed about the name of this year's laureate of the award for the popularisation of research, biochemist Jan Konvalinka, received updates about the Dioscuri program, approved the opinion on the PRODEF programme of the Ministry of Defence and got acquainted with the new structure of the upcoming "Analysis of the state of research, development and innovation in the Czech Republic and their comparison with foreign countries in 2022".

The recipient of the **Award of the Chair of the R&D&I Council for the Promotion and Popularisation of Research, Development and Innovation** for 2023 was announced at the meeting. It was awarded to **prof. Jan Konvalinka**. The award has been established in 2016, and previous winners include František Koukolík, Václav Cílek, Václav Větvíčka and Jiří Grygar.

"The popularisation of research is an extremely praiseworthy activity, which helps us peek into the secrets of a whole range of disciplines, to understand the benefits and uniqueness of the results of scientific research. I am very pleased to be able to confer this award from my position as the Chair of the R&D&I Council on Professor Jan Konvalinka, who has been making scientific knowledge available to the public for many years, and who was all-the-more instrumental in spreading this knowledge during the coronavirus pandemic," said Minister Helena Langšádlová on the selection of the laureate. The award ceremony will take place at the end of the year in Prague.

During the meeting, the Council members approved the opinion on the **Programme for Support of Applied Research and Innovation in the Defence Industry PRODEF**, which focuses on the implementation of synergistic and complementary effects, especially with the European Defence Fund and on defence industry projects of national importance. The planned expenditure of the programme is CZK 7.56 billion, of which CZK 4.45 billion will be drawn from the State budget. The Council also approved the publishing of evaluation outputs in accordance with the Methodology 2017+ at the national level, as well as certain other materials such as the Report on the activities of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation for 2023 and Report on the activities of the Research Board of the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic for 2023.

The Council members were informed about the **Dioscuri programme**, which aims to open a total of 5 Dioscuri centres in the Czech Republic aimed at improving and expanding international standards of scientific excellence in the CEE region. The call for proposals to open 3 Dioscuri Centres was announced in April 2022. On 1 October 2023, the first Dioscuri Centre for Spin Caloritronics and Magnonics has been opened at the Institute of Physics of the CAS. The next call for the remaining 2 Dioscuri centres in the Czech Republic is scheduled for autumn 2024.

The Council members were also introduced to the new structure of the "Analysis of the state of research, development and innovation in the Czech Republic and their comparison with foreign countries in 2022", which the Council is required to prepare annually by law. The current Analysis will make greater use of data from the Czech Statistical Office and EUROSTAT, Web of Science, OECD, eCorda, among others. New topics such as collaborative research and technology transfer will be included.

For more detailed information on the individual agenda items, please visit www.vyzkum.gov.cz.

Prof. RNDr. Jan Konvalinka, CSc.

He studied biochemistry at the Faculty of Science of Charles University. He completed his postgraduate studies at the Institute of Organic Chemistry

and Biochemistry of the CAS (IOCB), where he returned in 1997 after scientific internships in London, Heidelberg and Hamburg. He leads the Proteases of Human Pathogens group at the IOCB, of which he has been the Director since 2022. In 2014–2022 he served as Vice-Rector for Science and Research at Charles University, and he was a member of the Council for Research, Development and Innovation until 2022. He is a member of scientific societies, including the Learned Society of the Czech Republic, and also serves as chairman of the scientific board of the Neuron Foundation.

Jan Konvalinka has published over 140 papers in international journals, which have received over 5 thousand citations. His research focuses mainly on retroviral proteases and neuropeptidases. He has received numerous awards for his work, e.g. the Datt Medal of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) and most recently the Medal of the Learned Society of the Czech Republic.

Prof. Konvalinka has been popularising science for many years and regularly appears on programmes of the Czech Radio. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the regular programme “Coronavirus with Jan Konvalinka” with Barbora Tachecí on Czech Radio station ČRo Plus had a high listenership. He was also making popular appearances on news and discussion programmes on Czech Television on the topics of COVID-19, the development of virostatics, vaccines and the course of the epidemic. He is co-author of the popularisation books *Viry pro 21. století* [Viruses for the 21st Century] (Academia, 2011), *Von Parasiten und Menschen* (Springer Verlag Stuttgart, 2023) and *Spánek rozumu plodí příšery* [When Reason Sleep, Monsters Breed] (Prostor, 2020). He is the recipient of the AFO 2021 Science Popularisation Award.

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