

The Research, Development and Innovation Council shall announce the nomination call for the Czech Head National Government Award for 2025

On Friday, 25 April 2025, a regular meeting of the Council for Research, Development and Innovation was held at the Straka Academy. Among other matters, Council members approved the document Principles for the Preparation and Evaluation of Targeted Support Programmes and the Analysis of Research, Development and Innovation in the Czech Republic, and were also familiarised with the preparation of instruments leading to support the engagement of foreign scientists in the Czech Republic. This year's call for proposals for the Czech Head National Government Award was discussed.

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, Council members observed a minute of silence in memory of the late Czech psychiatrist and science populariser Prof. Cyril Höschl.

The Council then approved the document **“Principles for Preparation and Evaluation of Targeted Research, Development and Innovation Support Programmes and Grant Project Groups and Their Impacts”**, which they had already familiarised themselves with at the March meeting. The Principles aim to provide the necessary methodological framework for preparing programme proposals and monitoring and evaluating programmes already implemented, to establish a unified approval process, and to introduce new elements, e.g. in the sphere of impact assessment. The material will now be submitted for the inter-ministerial comment procedure.

“The Principles represent an important step towards unifying and clarifying rules in the field of targeted support for research, development and innovation. They introduce a clearly structured and transparent approval process, methodologically frame the entire life cycle of programmes and bring emphasis on impact assessment. These changes enhance not only the quality of science and research support, but also confidence in its efficiency,” said Minister for Science, Research and Innovation and RDI Council Chairman Marek Ženíšek regarding the discussed document.

The document **“Analysis of the State of Research, Development and Innovation in the Czech Republic and Their Comparison with Abroad in 2023”** was also discussed and will be submitted to the government meeting. The analysis contains an evaluation of the main indicators reflecting the state of the research and development system in the Czech Republic, and the Council prepares it annually pursuant to Act No. 130/2002 Coll. The Council members also approved the draft assignment for the Analysis document for the period of 2024.

The RDI Council subsequently approved the **Call for Submission of Nominations for the National Government Award Czech Head for 2025**, which will be announced by the end of April on the websites vyzkum.gov.cz and vlada.gov.cz – in accordance with the deadline for publishing the rules of the Czech Head competition (ceskahlava.cz) for this year.

A significant point of discussion was **Tools to Support the Engagement of Foreign Scientists in the Czech Republic**. Following the declared need for greater openness of the research environment in the Czech Republic, which will facilitate the return of scientists from abroad and create opportunities for cooperation with leading foreign experts, and in view of the current international situation, the Council addresses research organisations to consider the possibility of American researchers participating in research teams for newly proposed projects in public tenders.

“Science needs freedom, stability and openness. That is why, together with the Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, we have prepared a new concept of so-called technological chairs, which will facilitate the work of foreign scientists in the Czech Republic. We want our country to become a safe and inspiring environment for top researchers from around the world who are seeking space for independent scientific work. At a time when independent science is coming under pressure in some countries, it is our responsibility to offer an alternative and thus strengthen our competitiveness and international prestige,” added Minister Marek Ženíšek regarding the initiation of the preparatory process.

In continuation of the April meeting, the RDI Council members proposed their chairman appoint another member of the International Scientific Advisory Board (ISAB). It is **Prof. Wolfgang Wahlster**, an internationally renowned expert in artificial intelligence from Saarland University in Germany. The Council members simultaneously approved the agenda for the upcoming ISAB meeting, which shall take place on 21 May at the Hrzáň Palace in Prague.

The call for nominations of candidates for the Presidium of the Czech Science Foundation (GA CR) was also approved due to the expiring term of office of its member and Chairman of GA CR, Professor Milan Jirsa, as of 4 November of this year. The Presidium, including the Chairman, consists of 5 members who are appointed and dismissed by the Government upon proposal of the RDI Council. The call will also be published on the website vyzkum.gov.cz

Prof. Doctor of Natural Sciences Doctor honoris causa multiplex Wolfgang Wahlster, ML (ISAB)

Prof. Wahlster is Professor Emeritus of Artificial Intelligence (AI) at Saarland University in Saarbrücken, Germany. He became a pioneer in entirely new fields at the intersection of computer science, industrial engineering and the Internet of Things. In the field of Industry 4.0, Professor Wahlster's research results represent a genuine breakthrough in the concept of future industry. As the founding director of the German Research Centre for Artificial Intelligence (Deutsches Forschungszentrum für Künstliche Intelligenz GmbH, DFKI) and its long-standing CEO and Scientific Director, he developed DFKI into one of the largest research institutions in the field. Since the 1990s, he has supported Czech science and contributed to the integration of the Czech AI community into European research. He has served and continues to serve on numerous advisory bodies both at home and abroad, including as an adviser to German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier.

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