

339th Meeting of the Research, Development and Innovation Council

The Research, Development and Innovation Council (“the Council”) convened a regular meeting on Friday 26 October 2018. Key items on the agenda included the management of unused funds earmarked in the central government budget for research and development in 2019, progress in the evaluation of research according to Metodika 2017+ methodology, and the financing of large-scale research infrastructures.

The Council discussed **the share of unused funds** relative to all government spending on research, development and innovation. Total expenditure for 2019 stands at CZK 35.9 billion, with government spending in 2020 and 2021 put at CZK 37.5 billion. A reduction in unused expenditure is expected among the vast majority of bodies granting funding at the end of 2018. Though the Czech Science Foundation and the Technology Agency are projected to buck this trend, unused national funding is still forecast to fall from CZK 6.9 billion to CZK 6.1 billion. The Council plans to steer some of this year’s unused funds into the development of new targeted support programmes and the financial backing of outstanding scientists within the scope of ERC grants.

The Council also discussed the results of the latest survey to be published by the Czech Statistical Office, showing that R&D spending in the Czech Republic in 2017 climbed by CZK 10.3 billion year on year to a record CZK 90.4 billion. Total expenditure accounted for 1.79% of GDP. Central government budget spending on R&D broke through thirty billion crowns (CZK 31.2 billion) for the first time in 2017. Even so, most research money comes from business (60% of overall funding), followed by government expenditure and EU resources.

Karel Havlíček, the Council’s deputy chair, responded to these figures by noting that *“We are pursuing an ambitious target of scaling up the R&D spend to 2% of GDP. Against a backdrop of solid economic and GDP growth, this is unattainable by government spending alone, so we need to keep incentivising research investment among businesses while also tapping into European resources. Achieving 2% investment in research would elevate us to Europe’s top ten.”*

The Council also examined how the **application of new methodology for evaluating** the development of research organisations was proceeding. Among other things, the Council approved the *Metodika 2017+* methodology for comprehensive evaluations at higher-education institutions and the timetable drawn up for meetings of the tripartite (representatives of bodies granting funds, expert panels, and the Council). The Council also unanimously backed *Metodika 2017+* (which is supported by most professionals at home and by foreign experts) in its entirety and emphatically refused to revoke the results reported by the methodology to date.

The discussion on large-scale research infrastructures was again attended by the Minister for Education, Youth and Sports Robert Plaga. The Council acknowledged the **reduction in the number of infrastructure projects** from 58 to 49 and their **economic consolidation**, and ordered categorisation criteria to be submitted by 30 November 2018. It also took this

opportunity to increase spending on large-scale research infrastructures by CZK 170 million per year, up from CZK 1.72 billion to CZK 1.89 billion.

Straight after the Council meeting, **its chair – Prime Minister Andrej Babiš** – and deputy chair (Karel Havlíček) **met German Chancellor Angela Merkel**. Over a working lunch, they discussed mutual cooperation in science and research, instruments of government support for science, the engagement of talented young people in research, and government strategies geared towards excellence in research. They also touched on working together at the world's largest laser research centre, ELI Beamlines, which has been set up in the Czech town of Dolní Břežany, and Industry 4.0 cooperation between Czech and German organisations.



Photo: Archive of the Office of the Government of the CR

Other items on the agenda that were discussed at the Council meeting included:

- The Technology Agency's role in cooperation with ministries
- The Council's draft opinion on the Final Evaluation of the National and Cultural Identity Applied Research and Development Programme
- The Council's draft opinion on the GAMA 2 Applied Research, Experimental Development and Innovation Programme
- Information on the Proposal to Revise the National Competence Centres 1 Applied Research, Experimental Development and Innovation Support Programme
- The Council's draft opinion on the 2020-2028 Applied Medical Research and Development Support Programme
- Membership and chairpersonship nominations for the Scientific Council of the Czech Science Foundation
- A Bill amending Act No. 130/2002 Coll. on the support of research, experimental development and innovation from public resources and amending certain related acts (the Act on the Promotion of Research, Experimental Development and Innovation), as amended

Source: R&D&I Council press release, 28 October 2018