

Perspectives of Czech Science

Conclusions and action recommendations formulated during the discussion “*Perspectives of Czech Science 2018*”, which brought together Czech and expat researchers, university rectors, and top management representatives (České Budějovice, 7. 12. 2018, <https://vedavyzkum.cz/politika-vyzkumu-a-vyvoje/politika-vyzkumu-a-vyvoje/perspektivy-ceske-vedy>).

The scientific community of the Czech Republic has the potential to excel in highly competitive international environment and to actively participate in defining the direction of global science. The community consensually emphasizes, however, that this potential can be realised only through active support of “*hypothesis-driven research*” by:

- Establishment of teams headed by strong research leaders who will carry the responsibility for the research team successes and failures.
- Complying with international standards of open competition for institutional and research positions.
- Systematic mentoring and support of young researchers and principal investigators (PI’s).
- Unconditional support of internationalization and availability of English translations of all documents and information regarding Czech science, with the exception of popularization and outreach materials.
- Encouragement of self-confidence to publish in top-ranking journals (Q1, Q2) and publishing houses; and to compete for prestigious international projects (in particular EU – Horizont 2020/Horizon Europe projects, ERC grants etc.)
- Outreach and visible public presentation of top-quality achievements of Czech science.
- Preference of scientific quality over quantity.
- Critical and systemic evaluation of scientific quality of research institutions and universities and reflection of evaluation outcome in further development of the respective institutions.

In order for the scientific community to develop and fully exploit its potential, **the following key points need to be addressed by Czech science policy-makers on institutional and state levels:**

- Formulate research and development vision and strategy.
- State and institution management bodies should take a pro-active and professional top-down approach to establishing satisfactory conditions for research – introduction of changes should not rely on the activities of individuals at lower management levels (researchers, administrators etc.)
- Set the priority on supporting excellent “*hypothesis-driven*” research while preserving the necessary research heterogeneity (increase the amount of funding available through GA ČR and TA ČR).
- Increase the ratio of institutional to purpose-oriented funding, which would help to stabilize scientific research environment.
- Stable and transparent system of research funding is required with clearly-defined rules that would exclude non-systemic funding source allocation – this point relates in particular to funding schemes administered by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT).

- Decrease the number of funding bodies.
- Significantly reduce the complexity of conditions that apply to the use of already granted funding and to the evaluation criteria of running grants (especially related to MŠMT-funded projects). This will prevent incomplete spending of finances allocated to research and alleviate bureaucratic burden and misconduct.
- Funding agencies should establish the policy of trust in researchers' conduct and integrity that is customary in countries with advanced science policies. Scientists use finances to carry out research, not to take personal benefit – introduce the presumption of righteous conduct and innocence.
- Significantly decrease the administrative burden (esp. bureaucratic requirements imposed by the central governing institutions) to support scientific freedom; increase the flexibility in re-distributing granted finances between budgetary categories.
- Establish professional administrative support that is driven by the motivation principle *“your success is my success”*.
- Set up conditions for establishing strong and competitive teams (for example by introducing “start-up” support schemes).
- Introduce necessary measures to establish clear and stable career plan schemes for young researchers and PI's.
- Establish conditions for female and male researchers and PI's with young children that would enable reaching life-work balance.
- Simplify the conditions for recruitment and employment of researchers coming from abroad, ensuring legal acceptance and formal recognition of previous achievements (including education diplomas, qualification degree, career level and academic position).

On behalf of the organisers of the discussion forum *„Perspectives of Czech Science 2018“*,

Prof. Ing. Hana Šantrůčková, CSc.

Prof. RNDr. Libor Grubhoffer, CSc.