

V4 Academies Meeting: Research Institution Forum

Třešť Castle, 23-24 September 2010

Minutes

The representatives of the four Visegrád Academies of Sciences, presidents of the Austrian and the Bulgarian academies of sciences, a representative of the Max-Planck-Society (MPS), the president of ALLEA¹ and a representative of EARTO² met on the 23-24 September 2010 at the conference centre of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic at Třešť Castle.

President's Welcome and Approval of the Agenda

The president of the hosting Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic welcomed all participants. The proposed programme was adopted.

In his opening speech Professor Jiří Drahoš commented on significant changes in the system of science evaluation in the Czech Republic. He stated that these are disadvantageous for non-university research organizations, such as the ASCR. While university research could benefit from these changes, they represent a serious risk for the structures ensuring basic research in the country and may lead to the loss of the best researchers. Last year, this situation led to series of demonstrations. Subsequent negotiations with the Czech government have stabilized the institutional funding of the academy. It is to be noted that research universities do not have tradition in Central Europe and are hardly able to run large and medium-size research infrastructures. The ASCR would welcome a system of finance for running and establishing new infrastructures as "We do not want just to survive".

Briefing on V4 + 2 Academies

The presidents of the academies briefly introduced their academies and their current structure and financial situation. In summary:

The Hungarian Academy of Sciences has a budget 200 Mio € (80% institutional funding). In Hungary, a renewal of research infrastructures is needed. The balance between institutional funding and research grants is the main issue discussed in the HAS. There are around 70 research groups at universities financed by the academy. Ground and surface waters, food security and climate research will be among the research priorities of the Hungarian Presidency in addition to regional cooperation in the Danube region. It was agreed with UNESCO that the World Science Forum should also take place on other continents, in countries such as Brazil and China.

The Polish Academy of Sciences is the top research performing organization in the country. In Poland the funding system will undergo reforms; discussion on this crucial issue will start this October. Research organizations should undergo the same evaluation system and the PAS in the observer role is not able to influence this process. The R&D budget is likely to remain unchanged. A new committee on ethics for all research subjects will be established in Poland. The PAS collaborates with universities in creating research centres. The Polish Presidency will concentrate on the full utilization of EU intellectual resources, stimulation of the growth of intellectual capital and focus on better coordination of research and

¹ All European Academies

² European Association of Research and Technology Organizations

integration in the ERA. Next year will be the International Year of Chemistry³ and a series of bilateral Polish-French events and symposia have been prepared for this.

The Slovak Academy of Sciences. Its institutes (1 300 scientists, 66 Mio € budget in total) are legal entities but funding is distributed by the academy. The budget cuts will affect the entire R&D sector drastically (10% next year) and both salaries and number of researchers will be reduced. The SAS is concerned with efficient spending of the money which depends on the selection process according to quality merits. Cooperation with university works, e.g. in education of PhD students and the creation of research units, but it is not formalized. Slovakia needs to create an effective system of funding.

The Austrian Academy of Sciences (reported by Professor H. Denk) is the largest extra university research performing institution in Austria. The AAS cooperates closely with universities. Two other important research institutions in the country are the Austrian Institute of Technology (AIT) and the new Institute of Science and Technology Austria (IST Austria). The situation of the academy is in many ways similar to neighbouring academies. It is undergoing a reform process that should result in more effective administration and a reduction in the number of institutes. More than 50% of the science advisory board members of the research institutions come from abroad. An increase in its budget (100 Mio €) of 1,5 – 2% is expected next year, however institutional funding will depend on scientific output.

The Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (reported by Professor N. Sabotinov) is the largest national research centre in the country and it is also a learned society which covers all disciplines. The academy has 3 100 scientists (of a total 7 000 employees). Compared to the country as a whole, the BAS represents 18% of scientists, 60% of research output, 70% of patents, 65% of the international cooperation. The Academy educates 20% of all PhD students in the country. In spite of this, the government is steadily reducing its budget (50 Mio € in 2009; 30 Mio € is the institutional funding). It has undergone an international evaluation (performed by the ESF and ALLEA) in order to realize structural reforms (9 priorities areas), which involve in particular a reduction in the number of institutes (69), attract young scientists, improve communication and public relations. Another goal is to involve Bulgarian industry in research.

The Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic is composed of 53 institutes and 7 500 employees including part-time students (200 Mio € budget; 60% of it public funding, 20% grants and 20% own resources). It is independent of the Learned Society of the Czech Republic. It produces 40% of results and 60% of citations of the Czech Republic. The budget of the ASCR will be reduced by 3% next year. However, the budget of the whole R&D sector in the country will remain the same, which is a positive development. 2 000 PhD students (10% of all PhD in the republic) study and work in the ASCR institutes. The academy runs 7 mid-size infrastructures, e.g. PALS⁴, Tokamak COMPASS. The Czech Republic is a member of organizations such as CERN, ILL, ESO and ESA, granting the researchers of the Academy access to large and extra-large infrastructures, and is represented on ESFRI.

In the discussion it was noted that the creation of an association of non-university research institutions could become a means of strengthening the voice of academies in the ERA; however, the word “non-university” should be avoided. The

³ Centennial anniversary of Marie Skłodowska-Curie's Nobel Prize in Chemistry

⁴ Prague Asterix Laser System

need for improved participation of Central European scientists in the ERC and for consistency between international and European personnel was highlighted.

The Max-Planck-Society (reported by B. Neizert) is composed of 80 institutes (16 900 employees, 5 000 scientists of it and 4 300 junior and guest scientists, budget 1, 3 Bio. € + 300 Mio. from third party funding). It receives institutional funding from federal and federal state governments. The MPS enhances its scientific presence outside Germany, it has and runs 3 institutes in Europe and 1 in Florida (USA), but 2/3 of its research collaboration partners are based in the EU. The MPS's research strategy it is not programme- but rather person-oriented. Half of the junior and guest scientists are coming from the EU. There are 44 partner groups worldwide. As a rule, the MPS does not provide long-term perspectives for its scientific staff but prefers a turnover of talents from all over the world. It participates in 350 FP7 projects (159 Mio. €, average 46, 500). Basic research is regarded as inseparable from innovation. The MPS benefits from cooperation with research universities and vice versa. Its institutes are often located close to universities in order to create the best collaboration environment, for example by granting students access to MPS infrastructures. The decisive criterion for funding is the scientific excellence.

ALLEA - the president J. Engelbrecht and K. Plecitá (ASCR) reported on the ALLEA project "Towards a European Young Academy". This project aims to provide an effective means for the next generation of leading researchers to influence the policy making process. Young researchers were also invited to the recent World Economy Forum meeting held in China (Tianjian). Young Academies exist in several European countries; although the academies present at this meeting are committed to providing optimal conditions for involving young researchers in science and science policy-making, a consensus was not reached as to whether a pan-European organization such as a European Young Academy is needed.

EARTO – Ch. J. Hull informed participants about current attempts to restructure European research landscape and the research and innovation partnership. The focus is not on designing new funding programmes but on pulling national policies together.

The **ESF merger with EuroHORCs** (moderated by R. Klein) was a key issue during the meeting. The guiding document (ESF-EuroHORCs Roadmap) does not fully represent past or possible future contributions of the academies to the ERA. Changes to the document had been put over by the academies and the MPS but they have not been able sufficiently influence this development. With the ESF-EuroHORCs merger proceeding without taking into account the academy interests, academies risk losing their position in the new organization. Under these conditions, the voice of the science community risks not being heard. Research performers will be marginalized for the benefit of research founders. Updates about the preparation for the merger will be given by ESF during the forthcoming meeting of the ESF Governing Council and the ESF Assembly in November. Academies agreed that there was need for a better coordination of research performing academies in Europe. ALLEA reminded participants that a proposal had been made during the General Assembly to form a strong interest group inside ALLEA of all research performing academies among which the V4 Academies could form the core of such a network.

The Central European Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (CEJSH) has become a useful tool for the international visibility of works published in national languages across the region. The representatives of the V4 academies expressed appreciation of the work of the editors and praised the retiring chief editor Jacek Kornacki. Academies in the Central and Eastern Europe were requested to cooperate in a joint letter – this challenge was echoed mostly in Ukraine and Latvia. A new computer programme for the database was installed which will improve the quality of abstracts. The editorial board has moved to Poznań and a new chief editor is being recruited.

Young Researcher Award. Four outstanding researchers in material sciences were presented with the Young Researcher Award: Bartłomiej Dyniewicz (PAS), Peter Vršanský (SAS), Imre Miklós Szilágyi (HAS) and Ondřej Podrazký (ASCR). They briefly presented their work.

Statement. The presidents and a vice-president of the V4 Academies: Jiří Drahoš, József Pálinskás, Michal Kleiber, Eva Majková have issued a statement which comprises commitments of the Academies to specific activities during the upcoming presidencies of Hungary and Poland.

Primarily: support for young researchers; career development, mobility, reintegration and European networking; a strategic and integrated approach to the development of research infrastructures and regional partner facilities; promoting synergies of FP and structural funds for a more balanced development of research environment across Europe. The statement is to be submitted to the relevant ministries in the V4 countries.