

# **Evaluation of the Research and Professional Activity of the Institutes of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) for the period 2010–2014**

## **Final Report on the Evaluation of the Institute**

**Name of the Institute:** Institute of Philosophy of the CAS, v. v. i.

**Fields, in which the Institute registered its teams:**

Languages and literature

Observer representing the Academy Council of the CAS: Taťána Petrasová

Observer representing the Institute: Tomáš Marvan, substitute observer Petr Kitzler

**Commission No. 12: Languages and literature**

Chair: Univ. Prof. Mag. Dr. Stefan Michael Newerkla

Date(s) of the visit of the Institute: October 19 – October 21, 2015

Programme of the visit of the Institute: see attached Minutes from the visit

Evaluated research teams:

*No. 10 - Centre for Classical Studies*

## **A. Evaluation of the Institute as a whole**

### **1. Introduction**

Only one of the twelve departments of the Institute of Philosophy – and not the largest in numbers – the Kabinet pro klasická studia / Centre for Classical Studies was entrusted for evaluation to the Commission 12 (Languages and literature).

The Centre for Classical Studies consists of four research groups (dealing with ancient traditions in Czech culture; biblical studies; medieval lexicography; documentation of and research into cultural heritage in the Czech lands). This Centre naturally has disciplinary links to other departments of the Institute of Philosophy, in particular the Department for the Study of Ancient and Medieval Thought, the Department of Comenius Studies and Early Modern Intellectual History, the Centre for Medieval Studies (and less with the Departments of Analytic Philosophy, Logic, Contemporary Continental Philosophy, Moral and Political Philosophy and Centre of Global Studies, Study of Modern Rationality, Modern Czech Philosophy, the Jan Patočka Archive, and the Department for Science, Technology, and Society Studies).

This situation is due to the multidisciplinary character of the research and investigations carried out by the Centre for Classical Studies. We could very well imagine the Centre as part of any institute of medieval and modern history, or merged with the Department for Research into Old Czech Literature of the Institute of Czech Literature, resp. contribute to the textological-editorial section of the Department of Language Development of the Institute of Czech Language, etc). In saying this, the commission in no way intends here to criticise the current arrangement, but just wants to emphasise that the present evaluation should be considered rather as a contribution to be compared with the evaluations produced by the commissions 11 and 13 in charge of the fields of history and philosophy and thus the eleven other departments of the institute. Our report limits itself to the global aspects concerning the whole institute, and goes into details only where it concerns the Centre for Classic Studies.

### **2. Strengths and Opportunities**

The Institute of Philosophy can boast of having an exceptional position among Czech academic institutions, which it owes to the long-term theological, philosophic and esthetic traditions of the Czech lands in the eyes of the national and international scientific community.

Its material and intellectual characteristics are proportional to this prestigious position: the scale of its premises at the heart of the Old town of Prague as well as the number of its members (including Ph.D. researchers), its scientific programs (including its integration in joint doctoral programs) and its national and international research projects in progress (79, among which 3 European projects). The institute is active both in the publication of original monographs and reviews and in the implementation of archiving and digitisation projects.

The commission clearly received the message about the efforts of the Institute of Philosophy to strive for and strengthen measures of internationalisation; its outputs have been outstanding for years, both at a European level and with regard to Central Europe and Slovakia, which have naturally enjoyed a particular attention for many years.

### **3. Weaknesses and Threats**

This eminent position should not hide the critical situation that the community of specialists has to face, in particular the younger generation, which has suffered from a drastic reduction in long-term academic positions and a situation where the increase of the state endowment does not compensate for inflation and for the natural increase of needs (cf. document 1.1 Basic structures of the revenues and expenditures of the institute). The commission understood how much the institute was affected by the structural modifications in the funding system, above all by the effects of the closure of the funding agency that, until 2012, had been especially dedicated to the research of the institutes of the Czech Academy of Sciences, but also by the rather low rate of successful projects its members can acquire through applications to the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR) – 12 %. In this case, the problem is not really the lack of quality of the research, but the lack of appropriate grant programs on a national and international level, where applications in these fields could succeed..

### **4. Recommendations**

The Institute of Philosophy should continue its outstanding tradition (editing of sources and innovation in the field of the basic research, reception facilities for foreign students and specialists).

From an international point of view, it could improve on its visibility by demonstrating that one of the elements of identification of the Czech culture in the context of the European heritage lies precisely in the long-term history of the theological and philosophic thought which characterises the country.

This cultural "lobbying" is one of the keys to bring about successful applications to leading European projects, in particular within the framework of Horizon 2020, which doubtlessly represents one of the most promising funding perspectives for the institute.

### **5. Detailed evaluations**

*Declaration on the quality of the results and share in their acquisition*

The Institute of Philosophy sets a record in the evaluations of its outputs. According to the Institute Quality Profile, it obtained many grade 1 distinctions ("world-leading") and grade 2 distinctions ("internationally excellent"), which is testament to the fact that its staff are producing high-calibre research on topics of considerable interest abroad.

The institute's outputs are easily accessible. Paper publications are of good quality (we note their relatively modest cost, compared with the outputs of similar institutes of other countries), while in digital publications the Institute has demonstrated high expertise.

*Declaration on the involvement of students in research*

The educational assistance to institutions of higher education delivered by the Institute of Philosophy is too lengthy to describe here (the report that lists its various tasks is 20 pages long).

We find, as for all the institutes, two levels of cooperation: joint training (especially with Charles University in Prague, most of all the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Humanities, but also with the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Hradec Králové, the Faculty of Theology of the University of South Bohemia in České Budějovice, the Faculty of Philosophy and Arts of the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen, and the Faculty of Arts and Philosophy of the University of Pardubice), and punctual contributions in almost all the centres of teachings all over the country.

The second element is the integration of a significant number of Ph.D. students in the research projects and the work of the institute.

*Declaration on societal relevance*

The social acceptance of the Institute of Philosophy is difficult for us to establish, but it undoubtedly enjoys high reputation among scholars and readers.

*Declaration on the position in the international and national context*

The Institute of Philosophy has a leading position, due to the high international recognition of the Czech philosophical tradition, and the demand of the academic community for accurate hermeneutical work on these texts.

To some extent, each department has to react flexibly to changing situations of popularity according to intellectual fashions. However, we appreciate the fact that the strategy of the Institute is not dependent on such temporary trends.

*Declaration on the vitality and sustainability*

The Institute of Philosophy managed the 'tour de force' of ensuring the continuity with the Czech philosophical traditions while facilitating essential reforms on political and organisational levels after 1989. The undeniable attractiveness of its disciplinary field provides the institute with the respect of a large number of citizens and the favour of numerous students and young researchers.

However, the managing authorities of the Czech Academy of Science should recognise that the current functioning of this institution is possible only thanks to the dedication of its researchers and sometimes even their willingness to make sacrifices. The general level of the monthly remuneration is unworthy of a country whose international recognition results in part precisely from the excellence of its intellectual world of thought and its philosophical production.

*Declaration on the strategy and plans for the future*

The institute should strengthen its strategy to enhance its international performance on different levels:

- 1) It should intensify the dissemination of “popular” topics among the international academic community by making Czech philosophy and its special world of thought visible (in particular Jan Patočka’s legacy, phenomenology, etc.);
- 2) it should contrive to make this intellectual treasure easily accessible to non-Czech readers by means of textbooks or digital resources;
- 3) it should also strive for collaboration with institutes abroad that intend to study less recognised topics (aesthetics and formalism, theological traditions, the three of them closely connected to semiotic traditions, rationalism, etc.), on a central-European level.

## **B. Evaluation of the individual teams**

### **Evaluation of the Team No. 10: Centre for Classical Studies**

#### **1. Introduction**

Within the research framework of the Institute of Philosophy of the Czech Academy of Sciences, the Centre for Classical Studies deals with the institute's third priority area comprising the fields of Classical Studies, Biblical Studies, Latin and Neo-Latin Studies and thus the ancient civilisations' influence on culture, language and literature in the Czech lands from their beginnings until the present day. Accordingly the Centre's research groups focus on four main research clusters: ancient traditions in Czech culture, biblical studies, medieval lexicography and the documentation of as well as research into the cultural heritage of the Czech lands until 1800.

With regard to the specific research clusters, the Centre for Classical Studies has a unique position in the Czech Republic and strives both to advance knowledge within classical studies in the international context and to mediate the results of international research to the Czech Republic. Understandably, this fact makes the Centre the leading authority in the Czech Republic with regard to the quality of research results and a central contact point for international cooperation in the fields mentioned above.

#### **2. Strengths and Opportunities**

Among several obvious strengths of the Centre for Classical Studies, we can mention the successful teamwork on several world-renowned and exclusive large-scale projects and the preservation, diversification, publication and utilisation of the results in the international context. For example, the research group focussing on ancient traditions in Czech Culture has continued to contribute to their three freely accessible scientific databases and to update already existing items. International cooperation is secured by simultaneously contributing data to two world renowned databases in Athens and at Oxford University. Similarly, the research group of medieval lexicography has continued their valuable work on the *Dictionary of Medieval Latin in Czech Lands*. International cooperation within the project COST *Medieval Europe – Medieval Cultures and Technological Resources* helped to bring about a trial dictionary database which should be published in future. Moreover, the research group for the documentation of and research into the cultural heritage in the Czech lands till 1800 was dedicated to the expansion, revision and updating of the internationally widely recognised *Knihopis...*, a retrospective national bibliography of Czech and Slovak printed books from the earliest times until 1800. In cooperation with the National Library of the Czech Republic, to which this project is going to be entrusted from now on, this group also enhanced the entries of the digital version of the *Knihopis...* by adding, for example, scanned title pages.

Another strength to be mentioned is the long-term and fruitful cooperation of the Centre for Classical Studies with Charles University, which is reflected in the

impressive and manifold pedagogical activities of the team members and the involvement of students in the research. Among other positive consequences is the balanced age structure of the scientific team. A specifically successful idea in this context was the establishing of the Centre for Biblical Studies (CBS) as a joint facility for advanced studies on the Institute of Philosophy of the CAS and the Protestant Theological Faculty of the Charles University. Experts of the CBS together with researchers from three further institutions managed to secure a long-term grant on the “History and Interpretation of the Bible” (2012–2018).

Moreover, the team members participate widely in the activities of the international scientific community. Apart from being members of leading national and international scientific committees in the field, they also publish two internationally renowned scholarly journals: *Eirene (Studia Graeca et Latina)* publishing original research on classical antiquity in English, German, French and Italian and *Listy filologické – Folia philologica* publishing original research on classics and Old Czech in Czech, Slovak, English, French, German, Italian and Latin.

In addition to that, the team members also make use of manifold opportunities to popularise the centre’s activities and research results in the media as well as in lectures for other scholars from related fields and the general public.

### **3. Weaknesses and Threats**

There are no real weaknesses with regard to the quality of scientific output of the team members. Out of 29 evaluated outputs 12 were listed in group 1 (quality that is world-leading...) and 11 in group 2 (quality that is internationally excellent), which also means that the outputs are well received in the international context, even if publication venues are still primarily national in scope, with international publications appearing mainly in Slovakia, Austria, etc.

Nevertheless, the centre could perhaps make more efforts to bring its outputs and research to the attention of a wider international audience in the form of publication in prestigious international journals and publishing houses. This, however, can only be realised, if there are enough financial resources to do so.

The last point leading us to possible weaknesses and threats can be identified in accordance with the problems of the Institute of Philosophy as a whole: There is a vicious interplay of insufficient institutional funding and the reduction and discontinuation of providers of grants for basic research in the humanities. As a result, there is a risk in the medium term that this development will also affect the research units with regard to the staff involved and finally also the quality of the research results.

Moreover, the lack of a uniform presentation policy, due to the absence of an internal group of software and presentation specialists, might lead to differing quality in the presentation of research results on the internet, because the software has to be created in cooperation with other institutions, while other tasks are outsourced. However, a somewhat more consistent presentation policy is again a question of available resources.

Nevertheless, the centre managed to come up with a new modern website and is present on Facebook and Twitter as well to target the younger generation and popularise the centre's research results (obviously, these initiatives have enjoyed some success).

#### **4. Recommendations**

The Centre for Classical Studies should continue its well-established and internationally renowned long-term research projects. The centre should also pursue its other planned tasks mentioned in the documents. They are well considered and of indubitable scientific relevance.

It should also continue its very fruitful cooperation with Charles University and other institutions on the national level and in the international context. The Centre for Biblical Studies (CBS), a joint facility for advanced studies at the Institute of Philosophy of the CAS and the Protestant Theological Faculty of the Charles University, should for example continue and intensify the cooperation with the textological-editorial section of the Department of Language Development of the Institute of the Czech Language of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

Although it is especially difficult for researchers of basic research in the humanities to obtain support from EU programmes and compete for foreign grants, the centre should all the same try to do so (also because of the international excellence of their research results).

Moreover, the centre could all the same try to obtain funds for research from EU operational programmes. Maybe the new opportunities to do so in the Prague region as well might open up at least some possibilities for improving the research infrastructure.

#### **5. Detailed evaluations**

##### *Declaration on the quality of the results and share in their acquisition*

The Centre for Classical Studies has a unique position in the Czech Republic and strives both to advance knowledge within classical studies in the international context and to mediate results of international research to the Czech Republic.

Understandably, this fact makes the centre the leading authority in the Czech Republic with regard to the quality of research results and a central contact point for international cooperation in the fields of Classical Studies, Biblical Studies, Latin and Neo-Latin Studies.

The scientific outputs as such are thoroughly convincing in terms of originality, significance and rigour. Out of 29 evaluated outputs 12 got listed in group 1 (quality that is world-leading...) and 11 in group 2 (quality that is internationally excellent), which also means that the outputs are well received in the international context.



*Declaration on the involvement of students in research*

The long-term and fruitful cooperation of the Centre for Classical Studies with Charles University is one of the centre's strengths, which is reflected in the impressive and manifold pedagogical activities of the team members on all levels (BA, MA, Ph.D.) and in several faculties (Faculty of Arts, Protestant Theological Faculty, Catholic Theological Faculty, Second Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Education) and the involvement of students in the research work.

In addition, some team members are also active as teachers at other universities, e. g. at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Hradec Králové, the Theatre Faculty of the Academy of Performing Arts, at the Collegium Hieronymi Pragensis and at the Prague Architectural Institute.

*Declaration on societal relevance*

The research results and scientific output of the centre, especially its databases, dictionaries and bibliographies represent a national treasure of irreplaceable cultural and historical value. The preservation, diversification, utilisation as well as analysis of this material and the publicising of the results not only in scientific publications, but also through numerous popularising activities, is of invaluable societal importance with regard to the heritage of the Czech lands within Europe as well as the classical antiquity and the Bible in the Czech lands. For example, the Centre for Biblical Studies (CBS) thus provides not only the international scientific community with important results, but also the interested general public.

*Declaration on the position in the international and national context*

The Centre for Classical Studies is the leading authority in the Czech Republic with regard to the quality of research results and a central contact point for international cooperation in the fields of Classical Studies, Biblical Studies, Latin and Neo-Latin Studies. The team members participate widely in the activities of the international scientific community, are part of several international networks and simultaneously share data with world renowned databases (e. g. in Athens and at Oxford University).

Apart from being members of leading national and international scientific committees and journal boards in the field, the centre's national and international collaboration is extensive as regards joint projects, but scholarly publications abroad seem to appear – with exceptions – mainly in neighbouring states such as Slovakia, Austria, etc. This might represent a missed opportunity to bring some findings and outputs to international attention more broadly.

*Declaration on the vitality and sustainability*

The long-term cooperation of the Centre for Classical Studies with Charles University as well as other universities and institutions and the involvement of many students in

the research work during the evaluated period not only bear witness to the vitality and sustainability of the department's research. Among other positive consequences is the balanced age structure of the scientific team. These positive effects, however, are threatened by an increasing insufficiency of institutional funding and the reduction and discontinuation of providers of grants for basic research in the humanities.

*Declaration on the strategy and plans for the future*

As already mentioned above in the recommendations, the centre is encouraged to pursue all the planned tasks mentioned in the documents. They are well considered and of indubitable scientific relevance, especially the work on the internationally renowned long-term research projects of highest quality.

In this context, the centre could try to obtain support from EU programmes and compete for foreign grants (precisely because of the international excellence of the centre's research results). Moreover, the new chances to obtain funds for research from EU operational programmes in the Prague region as well, might open up some new possibilities for improving the research infrastructure.

**Date:** December 21, 2015

**Commission Chair:** Univ. Prof. Mag. Dr. Stefan Michael Newerkla