

Czech Presidency Conference

**RESEARCHERS IN EUROPE WITHOUT BARRIERS**

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Introductory Remarks by Prof. Jiří Drahoš

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

It is my real pleasure and honour to welcome you here on behalf of the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic as I find the subject of your conference extremely useful and actual. The human resources are indeed a key issue in research. In this regard, the Academy is fully supportive in the common effort of both the Member States and the Commission for the further development of the mobility and career of researchers, and especially with respect to young researchers.

The Academy of Sciences considers continuing education and research-based qualifications development as an important part of its responsibility. Scientists of Academy institutes participate in education, particularly through doctoral study programmes for young researchers and also by teaching at universities. Collaboration with universities is systematically intensified through involvement in university educational programmes, and by arranging and participating in graduate and post-graduate training programmes. In addition, the Academy of Sciences awards the scientific degree 'Doctor of Science' for outstanding and original scientific work, thereby contributing to the further advancement of research in a specific branch of science. Among many other initiatives in this field I would like to mention regular courses on the fundamentals of research work organized by the Academy, and activities of the Academy's Technology Centre that serve as the National Information Centre for European Research. Moreover, international cooperation is being promoted by means of numerous joint international research projects and through the exchange of scientists with counterpart institutions abroad.

Nevertheless, the concept of mobility by itself has significantly changed with time. While in the past mobility-related obstacles were seen as the individual problem of the researchers concerned, there is now, in the context of the Lisbon objectives, a recognition of the fact that mobile researchers are essential for a country's competitiveness and therefore the country should deal with this problem rather than just individual researchers. Mobility has thus become a real factor for the benefit of research and competitiveness.

With this in view, two years ago the project 'Czech Mobility Centre' was put in place and integrated into the European Services Network consisting of more than 200 Services Centres in 35 European countries.

Along with the Czech Mobility Centre, so called Regional Cooperating Points were set up. They are located at regional universities across the entire country and are basically providing the same services as the CMC in their respective regions.

Czech Mobility Centres together with their regional counterparts offer a broad range of information about jobs and funding opportunities in the Czech Republic, advice on 'reintegration' of researchers back into their home country, help with entry conditions, information and advice on social security, health and pension coverage, assistance in taxation issues, insurance options, and information and assistance on everyday life matters in the Czech Republic.

Another important step in this field adopted by the Academy of Sciences concerns the recommendation of the European Commission on the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. I would like to stress in this respect that the core ideas of both documents have already been incorporated into the conceptual documents of the Academy.

In addition, based on Charter and Code rules, the Academy of Sciences has worked out an Ethical Code for Researchers, which has been endorsed by the Academy Assembly. As the next step, the Charter and Code principles are expected to be further enhanced by means of an Individual Action Plan, which was elaborated upon at the beginning of this year by the Academy.

Thus, both documents have already been, or, in the near future will be, accepted as fundamental internal rules of the Academy of Sciences.

Nevertheless, let me briefly mention two basic issues in the context of expanding the European Research Area and its expected contribution to the development of appropriate structures for the training and balanced circulation of research talents in Europe, which, in my view, have crucial consequences for the mobility of researchers.

First, an issue of a more general nature is related to the motivation of researchers, their recognition and international visibility. In this regard, there is broad consensus that excellence is to be supported at all levels of research work by means of increased competition and the application of appropriate measurement tools.

To that end, we should concentrate our effort on designing such instruments and indicators that would ensure a real exchange of experience since there is no direct relation between the mobility of researchers and the quality of their research work. It is necessary to guarantee, on a general level, that measurements fostering mobility simultaneously foster excellence, stressing again the fact that mobility is not a goal in itself.

Mobility and excellence supporting instruments should, however, be advocated very sensitively in order not to damage confidence among researchers, taking into account the fact that the need for recognition and respect of others is a basic human need.

The second issue I would like to bring to your attention is more specific. As you know, the motto of the Czech EU Council Presidency is 'Europe without barriers', aiming at the creation of a competitive and open Europe. Complying with this priority, during the period of the Presidency, the Academy of Sciences along with the Ministry

of Education, Youth and Sports, have concentrated on two topics, namely, large research infrastructures and the mobility of young researchers.

These two topics are closely interconnected since the construction and development of large research infrastructures will play a key role in the distribution of research opportunities in Europe.

I would like to emphasize in this context that only a regionally balanced network of research infrastructures and more equal distribution of research opportunities has the potential to secure a balanced mobility of researchers among Member States. In the event of imbalance we can expect a 'brain-drain' from less advanced Member States with only negative consequences for Europe-wide scientific cooperation and competition.

In other words, first-class infrastructures, regardless of their allocation, will always attract first-class scientists, and obviously capital flows in the direction of an educated population and top quality R&D.

The key issue, therefore, is how to ensure a more fair distribution of research opportunities across Europe.

The answer is not easy, as the decision on the location of large research infrastructures has an indisputable political dimension. However, let me on this point take refuge in a great thought expressed by Alexander von Humboldt in his youth, and later on developed by José Ortega y Gasset in his book, *Unity and Diversity of Europe*, that if humankind is to be enriched, and to consolidate and perfect itself, there must exist a 'variety of situations.' Within each nation, or in a group of nations, there must be a diversity of circumstances, so that when one possibility fails others remain open. It is unwise to stake all of Europe on one card, on a single type of man, or on one identical 'situation.'

I would only add to this idea, that if Europe is to profit more from its diversity, all measures at all levels must strictly adhere to the principal of subsidiarity with a view to preserve the diversity of Europe, and in this way also the diversity of ideas.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the organizers of this conference, and in particular, to Professor Illnerova, the Chair of the Programme Committee, who has managed to bring together such a broad range of relevant research stakeholders from both the European and international communities.

And so finally, ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues, it is my hope that you will have a truly productive conference and a pleasant stay in beautiful Prague.