

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation

Friday, October 4, 2019
Czech Science Foundation, Room no. 39-41
Beginning at 13:00

Members Present: prof. J. Doležal; prof. P. Exner; prof. M. Hartl; prof. Š. Jurajda; prof. B. J. F. Nordén; prof. J. Roithová; prof. A. Shaked; prof. A. Šedo; prof. J. Zeman

Members not present (pre-arranged): prof. F. Štěpánek; prof. P. Sommer

Guests: Dr. A. Valkárová; prof. R. Drochytka; Mgr. V. Hrkalová; Bc. F. Heřman

Agenda of the meeting:

1. Opening and approval of the agenda
2. Old business and approval of last meeting's minutes
 - a. Information on the current versions of proposals for the new types of research projects (Lead Agency, Postdoctoral and Junior)
3. An empirical analysis of GACR and its impact
 - a. Bibliometric analysis by GACR, by The Research, Development and Innovation Council (RVVI) and comments by the International Panel of RVVI
 - b. Discussion and suggestions by SAB
4. Reorganization of the Evaluation Panels and Discipline Committees
 - a. Information on the present status by GACR Presidium
 - b. Discussion and suggestions by SAB
5. Participation of a SAB representative at the Annual meeting of GACR Presidium
 - a. Information to be presented and issues to be discussed
6. Agenda of the 4th SAB meeting (Tuesday, December 10, 2019)
7. Any other business

1. Opening and approval of the agenda

The meeting was opened by SAB Chair, prof. J. Doležal, who welcomed SAB members and guests and presented the meeting's agenda.

Motion: SAB members unanimously approved the meeting agenda.

In the following, prof. Doležel informed SAB members about the absence of prof. P. Sommer and prof. F. Štěpánek and about the resignation of prof. H. Schwartz from SAB due to his health problems.

2. Old business and approval of the previous meeting's minutes

SAB Chair, prof. Doležel, asked SAB members to approve the last meeting's minutes and introduced three points, which needed to be discussed again.

First, the GACR Presidium was asked if any action was made to improve the composition of the evaluation panel 402. GACR President, Dr. Valkárová, informed SAB members that a new call was opened for panel 402 members. This information was followed by a discussion about the process of the nomination of panel members, which is seen as one of the sources of problems with the professional quality of GACR evaluation panels. Prof. Jurajda also suggested that social sciences and humanities should be covered in the working group, which selects members of panel 402 due to dramatic differences in methodology between both research fields.

Motion: *SAB members recommend unanimously to expand the three-member working groups that select members of evaluation panels to four members. The groups should consist of one member from GACR Presidium, one member from the Research, Development and Innovation Council, and two members from SAB, whose research experience is closest to the subject profile of the relevant Discipline Committee.*

Second, SAB Chair, prof. Doležel, reported on sending an official letter to prof. Michl, Chair of the International Advisory Panel of the Research, Development and Innovation Council. In the letter he informed him about the urgent need to increase GACR budget and asked him to discuss this issue with the members of the Research, Development and Innovation Council. Prof. Michl send an answer by email, which was in general positive. Nevertheless, GACR President, Dr. Valkárová, informed SAB members that GACR will encounter serious financial difficulties in 2021, as it will need additional funding to support grant awards from new project calls and also to improve its software application to handle grant applications and awards.

Motion: *SAB members unanimously decided that SAB Chair, prof. Doležel, sends an official letter to prof. Jungwirth, a member of the Research, Development and Innovation Council (or his successor in the Council), and ask him to explain the budgetary problem of GACR to the Council and request the Council to reconsider the budget of GACR for 2021 and onwards.*

Third, SAB Chair, prof. Doležel, informed SAB members on the current versions of proposals for the new types of research projects (Lead Agency, Postdoctoral and Junior), after the modifications by the Research, Development and Innovation Council. The proposals for Lead Agency projects and Junior Star projects were not changed and were approved. However, the Research, Development and Innovation Council made important changes in the proposal

for Postdoctoral projects. The name of the projects was changed to “Postdoctoral Individual Fellowship” and Czech awardees will have to spend two years in a foreign laboratory to work on their project. This requirement changes the conception of this type of projects as recommended by SAB. As the research stays abroad will be funded by GACR, the projects will be expensive and the number of awarded projects will have to be limited to only 30 – 40, thus narrowing down a chance for young researchers to obtain their own project. Moreover, as not all young researchers, and mothers of young children in particular, will be able to stay abroad for two years, this requirement will prevent many talented researchers to apply.

Motion: *a majority of SAB members considers the current system of preparation of new types of grant projects, where individual actors make changes in the project proposals independently as ineffective. SAB recommends that SAB Chair participates at the meetings of the Research, Development and Innovation Council to discuss project proposals and present the position of SAB as a possible solution. SAB members asked SAB Chair, prof. Doležel, to send an official letter with this request to the vice-chairman of the Research, Development and Innovation Council, prof. Dvořák.*

3. An empirical analysis of GACR and its impact

SAB members received reports on bibliometric analyses in advance to the meeting. Moreover, GACR president, Dr. Valkárová, informed SAB members that an in-depth analysis is now being prepared and will include also the year 2018. The discussion about the analysis was then opened and although the overall outcome of the bibliometric analysis was considered positive, SAB made a series of comments and recommendations to GACR.

Motion: *SAB members unanimously agreed on the following recommendations:*

GACR should continue with its analyses and report back to SAB at a future meeting. In particular, GACR should identify the reasons for the observed sizeable variation across fields in the share of top-decile publications on supported output relative to non-supported output. GACR should also aim to reveal why do the excellence grants perform substantially better than standard grants in terms of the Q1 shares in only some fields. Moreover, GACR should compare (across disciplines) the quality of the publication output of those applicants who were not granted support to those who were granted support. Finally, GACR should identify the reason for unhealthy share of low-quality outputs from standard grants in Social Sciences.

GACR should use the article influence score ranking instead of impact factor in future bibliometric analyses. In fields where large consortia play an important role (e.g., Physical Sciences), comparisons based on publications with a large number of co-authors should be reported separately to make the comparison more informative. The analyses should not focus on the number of outputs (quantity), or the share of impact factor papers on all output (dictated primarily by cross-discipline differences in publication practices). They should also not use the ‘weighted scores’, which essentially equal the ‘points’ of the rejected Metodika

2013 system. Social sciences should be separated from humanities given the qualitatively different coverage of the two fields in the Web of Science.

In relation to the empirical analysis of GACR and its impact, SAB members discussed possible measures to improve the selection of the best grant applications, and it was agreed that the panel evaluation forms should be modified.

Motion: *SAB members unanimously agreed that the agency adjusts the wording of the final question (criterion) in the panel evaluation forms so that it includes the following question, or similar: "Is there a realistic potential that this project produces at least one output of world-class scientific quality/originality/impact (as opposed to being focused on producing mainly quantity of output with only standard or sub-standard scientific importance in an international perspective)?"*

4. Reorganization of the Evaluation Panels and Discipline Committees

GACR President, Dr. Valkárová, informed SAB members about a decision to establish a new panel as part of the medical discipline committee. As it is desirable to keep the total number of evaluation panels constant, GACR presidium suggested to merge two panels from two discipline committees (OK1 and OK2). During the discussion, SAB members expressed their concern about the addition of a new panel to medical discipline committee and asked a more detailed analysis of the performance of individual panels before a decision is made which panels to merge.

Motion: *SAB members unanimously agreed on the following recommendations:*

GACR should not increase the number of evaluation panels and rather consider the reduction in the number of panels. Any future change in panel number and structure should be supported by a detailed analysis of their performance.

GACR should produce bibliometric comparisons of the publication quality of the members of each panel relative to the average publication quality of Czech scientists in a given discipline.

GACR should compare (across disciplines) the quality of the publication output of those applicants who were not granted support to those who were granted support.

5. Participation of a SAB representative at the Annual meeting of GACR Presidium

SAB Chair, prof. Doležel informed SAB members that he would not be able to participate at the Annual meeting of GACR Presidium. Unfortunately, neither the vice-chairman of the SAB prof. F. Štěpánek would be able to attend. Thus, prof. Šedo agreed to represent SAB at this meeting. SAB Chair prof. Doležel thanked prof. Šedo for the great help and promised to prepare a short presentation that prof. Šedo will present at the Annual meeting of GACR Presidium.

Motion: *SAB members unanimously agreed that prof. Šedo represent SAB the Annual meeting of GACR Presidium.*

6. Agenda of the 4th SAB meeting (Tuesday, December 10, 2019)

The agenda for the next SAB meeting should have been the priorities, future and visions of GACR. However, shortly before the present meeting, SAB members received a letter from the initiative “Scientists Mothers” expressing serious concerns about gender inequalities in science. After a brief discussion, SAB members agreed to change the agenda of next meeting to “gender at GACR”.

Motion: *SAB members unanimously agreed on the following:*

The agenda of the 4th SAB meeting will include the discussion on gender at GACR as the main topics.

GACR should prepare the analysis of gender structure of awarded grants, panels, etc., and present it during the 4th SAB meeting.

7. Any other business

SAB Chair, prof. Doležel, informed SAB members about the GACR President’s awards ceremony, which was held on October 1, and to which he was invited. The awardees were excellent scientists, the awarded results were original and of the highest quality. Prof. Doležel thanked GACR Presidium for organizing the excellent event, which promotes the work of GACR and highlights important contribution to the fundamental research in the Czech republic.

At the end of the meeting, prof. Doležel thanked SAB members and members of GACR Presidium for their valuable contributions and closed the meeting.

8. The meeting closed at 3:45 pm

Recorded by: Mgr. Valentýna Hrkalová

Approved by: prof. Ing. Jaroslav Doležel, DrSc.