

Minutes of the 8th Meeting of the Scientific Advisory Board of the Czech Science Foundation (remote)

Tuesday, 3 March 2021
Czech Science Foundation
Beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Members present (alphabetic order): prof. J. Doležel; prof. P. Exner; prof. M. Hartl; prof. Š. Jurajda; doc. R. Kučera; prof. B. J. F. Nordén; prof. M. Otyepka; prof. J. Roithová; prof. A. Shaked; prof. A. Šedo; prof. F. Štěpánek; prof. J. Zeman

Members not present (pre-arranged): none

Guests: prof. J. Koča; doc. P. Baldrian; Dr. A. Valkárová; Ing. Eva Molíková; Mgr. Petr Kujal

Agenda of the meeting:

1. Opening and approval of the agenda (J. Doležel)
2. Approval of the last meetings' minutes and the voting online (J. Doležel)
3. Update on the proposal for Oriented Basic Research Grant projects (J. Koča)
4. The role of the Scientific Advisory Board and its interaction/collaboration with the GACR Presidium (J. Doležel)
5. Preparation of a methodology for self-evaluation of GACR's performance and its impact on Czech science (J. Doležel)
6. Update on a plan to revise the description of GACR evaluation panels (P. Exner)
7. Gender and parenting in research: a proposal for Restart/Return projects (J. Doležel)
8. Brief information from the GACR Presidium (J. Koča)
 - a. Low success rate of GACR project proposals in 2020
 - b. Selection of new evaluation panel members
 - c. GACR project calls in 2021
 - d. A support to grant applicants provided by GACR
9. Agenda of the 9th SAB meeting (Thursday, 1 July 2021)
10. Any other business
11. Adjournment

1. Opening and approval of the agenda

Prof. Doležal opened the meeting and welcomed all SAB members connected online due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. SAB Chair presented the meeting's agenda and suggested to discuss the points 6 and 7 before the points 4 and 5.

Motion: *SAB approved the meeting's agenda and the proposed change in the order of the items to be discussed.*

2. Approval of the last meeting's minutes and the voting online

Prof. Doležal asked SAB members to approve the last meeting's minutes and minutes from two per rollam votes (online voting) which were all held in December.

Motion: *SAB approved the last meeting's minutes as well as minutes from the per rollam vote.*

3. Update on the proposal for Oriented Basic Research Grant projects

President Koča informed SAB members that GACR initiated a discussion with the R&D&I Council about the proposal for Oriented Basic Research Grant projects and that GACR would keep SAB members informed.

Motion: *SAB acknowledged the information.*

4. Update on a plan to revise the description of GACR evaluation panels

Prof. Exner in his capacity as the SAB rapporteur for this task briefed on a plan to revise the description of GACR evaluation panels. He prepared a letter which the SAB members received in advance. The purpose of the letter is to inform panel chairs about the plan to revise the description of evaluation panels and request their feedback. SAB members agreed that the description of each panel should be rather positive than negative and that the borders of each panel should be open. Finally, President Koča highly appreciated the work of prof. Exner and SAB members and thanked them for helping GACR with this matter.

Motions:

- *SAB acknowledged the information and agreed to send the letter to newly elected panel chairs in April.*
- *SAB agreed to wait for the responses on the letter from panel chairs until mid-June.*

5. Gender and parenting in research: a proposal for Restart/Return projects

Prof. Doležal proposed to name prof. Kučera as the rapporteur of SAB for the area of gender and parenting in research.

Motion: *SAB agreed to entrust prof. Kučera as the rapporteur for this area.*

6. The role of the Scientific Advisory Board and its interaction/collaboration with the GACR Presidium

SAB Chair opened a discussion about the role and responsibility of SAB and its communication with the GACR Presidium. By-laws of the Scientific Advisory Board of GACR and the Constitution of the Czech Science Foundation were sent to all members ahead of the meeting. Prof. Exner mentioned a need for a balance between both bodies and suggested that if the GACR Presidium decides not to follow an advice, or refuse to fulfil a request of SAB, they should provide a convincing explanation. Prof. Otyepka stated that communication is important, and noted that the Presidium is the executive body and has the responsibility for the function of GACR. Prof. Doležel noted that the GACR Presidium representatives attend all SAB meetings and inform SAB about all relevant issues. President Koča agreed that communication is important and noted that even very important and valuable suggestions from SAB (which may be supported by the GACR Presidium) cannot be sometimes implemented because of the current legislation and a complex process of approval and delegation of suggestions to the R&D&I Council. Prof. Jurajda noted that an active cooperation of the GACR Presidium with the rapporteur of R&D&I Council is required when important laws are discussed. President Koča and Dr. Valkárová confirmed that the communication with the R&D&I rapporteur, prof. Mullerová is smooth and efficient.

Motions:

- *SAB agreed that the communication with the GACR Presidium works. However, SAB asks the GACR Presidium to always provide a convincing explanation as to why some of its suggestions could not be accepted and requests fulfilled.*
- *SAB acknowledged that some of its proposals cannot be implemented by the GACR Presidium due to the current law.*
- *SAB agreed to invite prof. Mullerová (R&D&I rapporteur) to one of its future meetings.*

7. Preparation of a methodology for self-evaluation of GACR's performance and its impact on Czech science

Prof. Doležel thanked SAB members for the preparation of a draft proposal and suggested prof. Otyepka as the rapporteur for this agenda. Prof. Otyepka accepted this responsibility and proposed to make a preliminary research among some European research funding agencies and present the information for discussion on the next SAB meeting.

Motion: *SAB agreed to entrust prof. Otyepka as a rapporteur for this agenda and asked him to make a preliminary research in this area.*

8. Brief information from the GACR Presidium

a. Low success rate of GACR project proposals in 2020

Reflecting on the low success rate, prof. Doležel asked about the projects which were recommended for funding, pending the availability of funds, and on a possibility of their support. President Koča informed that these projects are likely to be financed. He also reminded SAB members about the reasons for the low success rate of project proposals in 2020 and explained the situation regarding the funding. He also informed SAB about

GACR budget and financial stability which is linked especially to the increasing number of international Lead Agency projects with the project start date during the year. It is necessary to have reserves to be able to support these projects.

Motion: *SAB acknowledged the information.*

b. Selection of new evaluation panel members

President Koča informed SAB about the election of new panel members. He noted that the number of nominees is rather limited, therefore in some of the Discipline Committees (and even panels) it is difficult to nominate a panel member. The selection of new panel members from a small number of candidates is also hampered by a need to avoid a conflict of interest. Prof. Doležel reminded the suggestion made by SAB during one of its earlier meetings to make the nominations more open. This can be achieved by allowing researchers to nominate themselves and not via their employer. Other idea is to allow SAB members to nominate new panel members. SAB also discussed a possibility of having researchers from abroad serving on the panels. This could be a good solution especially in research areas where not enough Czech experts are available. President Koča agreed to check SAB minutes from the previous years and come back to this issue on future SAB meetings.

Motion: *SAB acknowledged the information and agreed to come back to this issue on one of the next meetings.*

c. GACR project calls in 2021

President Koča informed SAB about the calls for proposals in 2021, which include POSTDOC INDIVIDUAL FELLOWSHIP as a new type of projects, and reminded that a call for EXPRO projects is not announced this year (as intended). He also informed that interviews are planned for the JUNIOR STAR projects, technical details are being discussed.

Motion: *SAB acknowledged the information.*

d. A support to grant applicants provided by GACR

President Koča informed SAB that traditionally meetings with researchers in various cities are organized by GACR Office. Due to the pandemic situation GACR Office intensified the information flow online, as it is crucial to keep the applicants informed. This year, GACR Office also prepared short videos (available on the website) with step by step explanation on how to apply for grants. Prof. Doležel thanked GACR for this step towards the researchers which will be helpful.

Motion: *SAB acknowledged the information.*

9. Agenda of the 9th SAB meeting (Thursday, 1 July 2021)

The main items of agenda for the next SAB meeting will include 1) the description of evaluation panels and 2) self-evaluation of GACR.

Motion: *SAB approved the agenda for the next meeting.*

10. Any other business

Three different issues were discussed at this point. First, President Koča informed SAB about difficulties encountered with the evaluation of interdisciplinary project proposals and mentioned a complaint filed by one of the applicants. GACR asks for advice on how to deal with such projects. Prof. Exner conveyed his experience from ERC and stressed that openness of panel borders as well as communication between panels are crucial to give these projects a chance to be selected for funding. Prof. Roithová shared her experience from the Netherlands and a possibility of applicants to write a rebuttal to a referee report.

Second, president Koča informed about a document on the Conception of future GACR activities which was updated and asked SAB members to read the document.

Third, prof. Otyepka asked SAB if there is any data depository for SAB members, where all necessary and internal documents can be stored.

Motions:

- *SAB is aware of the problem with the evaluation of interdisciplinary projects and their assignment to the right panel. SAB members agreed to read the document provided by GACR and discuss this issue during the next meeting.*
- *SAB acknowledged the information about the Conception of GACR activities and promised to study the material.*
- *SAB asked GACR to provide them with data depository for all internal documents.*

No other business was discussed. At the end of the meeting, prof. Doležel thanked SAB members and members of the GACR Presidium participating at the meeting for their valuable contributions and hard work and closed the meeting.

11. The meeting closed at 3:00 pm.

Recorded by: Ing. Eva Molíková, Mgr. Petr Kujal

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