

Meeting of the Scientific Board of the Central European Institute of Technology, Masaryk University

Date, venue	8 th November 2018, Brno, University Campus Bohunice, A35/211
Participants	J. Nantl (chair), O. Fojt, T. Kašparovský, M. Kiess, J. Koča, M. Mráz, S. Pastoreková, P. Plevka, K. Říha, R. Štefl, P. Tomančák
Guests	M. Pokorná, E. Handlířová, N. Kostlánová, J. Šilarová, M. Marcolla
Excused	M. Bareš, J. Mayer, M. O'Connell, M. Zvonař, V. Bryja, J. Friml, R. Zbořil, J. Doležel, P. Martásek, M. Králíčková, L. Kunz, P. Hobza
Minutes prepared by	E. Handlířová
Approved by	J. Nantl
Comments by	M. Kiess

Agenda

- 1) Bibliometric Report 2011-2017
- 2) Career System
- 3) Centre of Plant Synthetic Biology for Bio-engineering and Sustainable Agriculture (PASSAGE; Teaming)
- 4) Any Other Business

Minutes

Introduction

J. Nantl welcomed two **new members** of the Scientific Board. Silvia Pastoreková is a Director at the Biomedical Research Center of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. Marek Mráz is a Group Leader and ERC holder at CEITEC MU.

In September, CEITEC research groups underwent **the international evaluation of scientific excellence** that is organised every four years. The results should be known in several weeks. The results will help us to prepare ourselves for the 2020+ period when the sustainability period ends together with the National Sustainability Programme financial scheme (contract with the government).

CEITEC MU is also preparing an application for the ERA Chair, in cooperation with the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Medicine, and Faculty of Sports Studies. This is historical moment for the university, showing a growing level of cooperation between “campus” parts. The project should connect biomedical fields and sports studies. We would like to build a strong and supportive research environment at the campus, including improvement of governance and cultural aspects of the community life.

1) Bibliometric Report 2011-2017

See Annex 1

J. Nantl: In its spring meeting, the Scientific Board recommended to focus more on the publication strategies and trends present at CEITEC MU. In general, we can say that research performance at CEITEC MU is decent, and the Institute is competitive with western standards regarding publications performance. Some trends in our publication strategy are very divergent, compared to other research institutes in the Czech Republic. Our publication performance profile is very similar to the IOCB AS CR, which is remarkable. There is a positive trend in the share of publications in Q1. We are now able to identify fields in which we outperform, but also fields where such a trend is not happening.

J. Nantl: Each group leader has her/his own publication strategy. The Institute should send the right signals in order to support proper publication strategies, esp. regarding the quality of publications, and to be clear about what is expected. A discussion should also be held about to what extent the Institute should remunerate publication performance, and to what extent the current bonus system has reached its potential or should further be developed.

Debate:

P. Tomančák: The number of publications per FTE (as it is used for e.g., by the Czech Academy of Science) tells nothing about the quality of publications. Junior Group Leaders should produce 1-2 high-impact publications in their first five years, and this should be evaluated.

J. Nantl: CEITEC MU is going in that direction. We have just issued new rules for the CEITEC MU Awards, where we are switching to awarding the most outstanding publication(s).

J. Koča: When evaluating science at CEITEC MU, we need to be independent from what is happening on the governmental level. There is not a bridge between the national system of evaluation and the way money for research is distributed. It is important to continue in the direction that CEITEC has chosen. It is good news that the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic decided not to focus on the quantity of publications when evaluating grant proposals.

K. Říha: We need to focus on the number of good papers we have with corresponding authors from the Institute. The papers should be intellectually produced here.

O. Fojt: In the UK, there are evaluations every six years. Institutions are expected to report the four best papers per author, measured not by impact factors or citations, but by what is considered the most beneficial outcomes. It is a peer review process whereby evaluators are reading papers submitted by the institutions. The bibliometric work is done as an annex to that, not as a primary part of the evaluation. CEITEC MU should continue with its implementation system that focuses on the quality of publications, having corresponding authors.

The debate was extended, regarding science evaluation. J. Koča described the CEITEC Evaluation that takes place every four years in the form of peer review, with support of the bibliometric data. Evaluators spent one hour with each group leader and a further 15 minutes with PhD students (without the presence of the PI).

S. Pastoreková commented on the importance of real consequences of the evaluation process. J. Nantl explained that the ISAB evaluation results are one of the formal reasons for the group's termination. Besides such "hard" consequences, there are also some "soft" ones, such as a change in the culture, expected strategies, etc. For the future, the evaluation can also impact the calculation of the institutional budget allocation. K. Říha added that the international peer review evaluation is also a great opportunity for Group Leaders to gain new contacts with evaluators that are renowned people in the field.

M. Kiess agreed that the open discussion with PhD students and postdocs is a beneficial part of the evaluation process. At GMI, the Group Leader presents for ten minutes, and then the PhD students or postdocs talk about their research. The Scientific Advisory Board not only gains an impression of the quality of the Group Leader, but also gets a feel for whole group. In addition to that, there is a poster session where all PhD students can present their work (Group Leaders and Directors are excluded from the session). The evaluators should feel the vibe of the Institute, and this is also a part of the final report – how the group is managed, and how the supervisor works with his/her people.

Conclusion(s):

The Scientific Board has taken note of the Bibliometric Report 2011-2017.

2) Career System

See Annex 2

J. Nantl presented the final version of the new Career System proposal that was prepared based on the discussion and recommendations formulated at the Scientific Board meeting on 26th October 2017. The proposal was formulated as a new internal measure, after consultation with the Director's Board and Group Leaders in 2018. The aim of the career system is to provide clarity and transparency to CEITEC MU employees regarding their career path and expected competences. We formalised the tenure track for Group Leaders (which was practiced, but not previously formalised). The research group will be abolished altogether, with the end of the Group Leader contract – such a situation is now transparently described. It defines the career path, support for career development, and the transition between research, technical, and administrative positions. It also provides a clear distinction between the postdoc position and staff scientist position, stating that postdocs should be hired from outside of the Institute and that it is a transitional position that is limited for a specified number of years.

Debate:

M. Kiess asked how the Junior Group Leader could be promoted to Senior Group Leader, particularly if there are enough funds to support the group after promotion.

J. Nantl: CEITEC MU manages the expectation about the ratio between institutional funding and grant funding. The main effect of the promotion on the Senior Group Leader is receiving a permanent contract. However, that does not mean that the group cannot be abolished (e.g., based on bad results of the science evaluation).

K. Říha added that group leaders can stay at CEITEC MU if they perform well. We cannot apply the same system as e.g., MPI.

P. Tomančák and M. Kiess noticed that by having such settings, CEITEC MU could face a situation where Group Leaders leaving the Institute will be only those who failed, and that can harm the reputation of the Institute. The Junior Group Leaders should be encouraged to look around, and consider job opportunities outside of CEITEC.

K. Říha: There can also be cases of getting better job offers from other institutes, or retirement. The cases when Group Leaders leave the Institute with better job offers should be perceived as successes for the Institute.

J. Nantl: There is an important aspect of the low number of Senior PI positions available in Europe at large. It is definitely taken as a success if someone leaves CEITEC with a job offer at a good institute, and this is how CEITEC MU current strategic plan mentions it. The outplacement management is an important part of the process of the group's abolition. We try to do that very sensitively, and we want to add some new elements, involving professionals in helping people. It is essential to create a safe environment across many layers. The baseline is stable funding, science evaluation, a clear career track, and some level of certainty.

O. Fojt: The career system should define core competences, recommended competences, and expected behaviour. There should also be an option to approve an exemption from the rules defined.

J. Nantl agreed that the Institute as an employer should not only look at the skills, but also the mind-set. The Recruitment Policy will be one of the priority tasks for 2019. In 2018, CEITEC MU formulated the HR Strategy and Action Plan as a part of application for the HR Excellence in Research Award (HRS4R).

M. Mráz proposed a change in the required experience from abroad for the candidates of the postdoc position. In the proposal, there are three years required. M. Mráz suggested to decrease the requirement to two years. This proposal was generally supported by the board members and will be implemented.

It was generally agreed that PhD students should go outside of MU after finishing their study at MU, and new postdocs should be hired from other institutes. K. Říha stressed that at a certain point in his/her career, a PhD student has to decide, "Will I stay as a staff scientist? Will I end the chance to build an academic career, or will I

go to another lab as a postdoc and pursue a career to become a PI one day?" That was agreed as a very important step and decision to take, but was also encouraged and demanded by the Institute.

Conclusion(s):

The Scientific Board takes note of the Career System and recommends changing the requirement of experience from abroad in the case of candidates for a postdoc position from three to two years.

3) Centre of Plant Synthetic Biology for Bio-engineering and Sustainable Agriculture (PASSAGE; Teaming)

K. Říha presented the proposal of the PASSAGE project for the Teaming 2nd phase that will be submitted next week in cooperation with VIB. It is not a primary research project. The project is about the improvement of the institution, and its governance and culture. The research is focused on plant biology and sustainable agriculture. It also aims to bring together departments at CEITEC (e.g., to start using structural biology tools in plant research). Last but not least, the relevance of research is an important factor in the project. That should be important for every basic research institute. The investments in the project will be used for reinvestments to maintain the very good level of infrastructure that CEITEC already has. The investments will primarily go to core facilities, and will be available to a wide spectrum of researchers. We should know the results in spring 2019. J. Nantl added that the project received an endorsement letter from the Flemish Prime Minister, and a letter of commitment from the Czech government.

Debate:

P. Tomančák appreciated the combination of structural and plant biology in the proposal.

J. Nantl: The quality of cooperation with VIB was at a high level, and very organic. There is strong support from the top management of both institutes, but also real scientific cooperation. The partnership is well balanced.

Conclusion(s):

The Scientific Board takes note of the PASSAGE project.

4) Any Other Business

MUNI Silver Medals Nominations

See Annex 3

J. Nantl presented nominations for the MUNI Silver Medals that will be awarded at the celebration of the 100-year anniversary of Masaryk University. CEITEC MU can nominate two people, and the nomination has to be discussed with the Scientific Board members. J. Nantl presented a nomination for V. Sklenář, former Group Leader and Head of the Structural Biology Centre at CEITEC MU, currently a representative of the management for the research infrastructure, and P. Plevka, CEITEC MU Group Leader and ERC holder. See Annex X for detailed information about nominees.

Conclusion(s):

The Scientific Board supports the nominations of V. Sklenář and P. Plevka for the MUNI Silver Medals.

Annexes

1_Bibliometric_Report_2011-2017_ver_SB

2_Career_system_EN_2018-10-25_ver_SB

3_MUNI_Honors_Medals_2018-11-08

Next meeting

14th March 2019