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Internal Regulations

Czech Academy of Sciences

Guideline of the Academy Council of the Czech Academy of Sciences No. 1

dated 13 January 2026,

on the ERC Incubator

Guideline distributed on 15 January 2026

CHAPTER I
General Provisions

Section 1

Basic Provisions

- (1) This guideline sets out the procedure of the Czech Academy of Sciences (hereinafter the “CAS”) for the provision of support to CAS institutes (hereinafter the “institutes”) in the submission of project proposals to the European Research Council (hereinafter the “ERC”).
- (2) The objective is to increase research quality, as well as to increase the efficiency of the use of public funds, whilst the task is to increase the number and quality of project proposals submitted to the ERC (hereinafter the “ERC project proposal”) and thereby to increase the probability of success in prestigious grant schemes of the ERC and of other foreign and domestic funding bodies, as well as to retain ERC projects at the CAS or, as the case may be, their investigators as key human resources for the growth of scientific excellence across the CAS.
- (3) The support is realised through the ERC incubator as a set of activities whose objective is to scientifically support applicants, support institutes, provide information, educate, motivate and gather data and information in the relevant area (hereinafter “ERC-in”). Activity is understood to mean an action that directly pursues the objectives set out in this guideline.
- (4) A research coordinator is understood to mean a researcher who coordinates ERC-in activities.
- (5) A guarantor of a research area is understood to mean a staff member who coordinates activities for a given research area at the CAS.
- (6) A project consultant is understood to mean a project staff member who participates, within ERC-in, in the creation of methodological materials in the field of project management and consults activities with the institutes' project management.
- (7) An ERC-in coordinating institute is understood to be the CAS institute that is the employer of the research coordinator, guarantor for a research area or project consultant.
- (8) The ERC-in secretary is understood to be an employee of the CAS Head Office (hereinafter the “CAS Head Office”) who administratively manages the ERC-in agenda and acts in cooperation with the research coordinator.
- (9) An applicant is understood to be a researcher who has been included in the ERC-in Programme for the purpose of submitting an ERC project proposal.
- (10) A mentor is understood to be a researcher with in-depth knowledge of ERC schemes, usually with experience as a member of an ERC evaluation panel or as a holder of an ERC project. A mentor is a longer-term collaborator of an applicant, providing them with professional guidance and supporting them, *inter alia*, in consultations with experts in the given field. A mentor may be an employee of a CAS institute or an expert from outside the CAS. Mentors form the ERC-in mentoring network coordinated by the research coordinator.
- (11) A research consultant is understood to mean a researcher with expertise in the thematic area of the ERC project proposal who provides the applicant with individual research consultations or participates in one-off activities at the request of the applicant. A research consultant may be an employee of a CAS institute or an expert from outside the CAS.

- (12) Persons participating in ERC-in are obliged to perform activities pursuant to this guideline impartially and refrain from any action that could lead to a conflict of interest or raise doubts about their impartiality. For the purposes of this guideline, a conflict of interest is understood to mean a situation where the personal, property or other interest of the person concerned, or the interest of a person close to them, may influence, or is capable of influencing, their impartiality when making decisions pursuant to this guideline.

Section 2

ERC-in Council

- (1) The CAS Academy Council appoints the ERC-in Council (hereinafter the “Council”) as its auxiliary body. The Council members are: the research coordinator, the guarantor for a research area for each research area of the CAS and the member of the CAS Academy Council responsible for coordinating the agenda of programmes to support excellence within the CAS and in an international context. The Council chair is the member of the CAS Academy Council responsible for coordinating the agenda of programmes to support excellence within the CAS and in an international context. One of the guarantors for a research area may also hold the position of research coordinator. A project consultant is a permanent guest of the Council. Members of the CAS presidium and the President of the CAS Science Council are authorised to attend Council meetings without a voting right.
- (2) The Council, in particular:
- a) coordinates ERC-in activities and supervises their professional quality and the quality of their activities,
 - b) discusses and approves proposals for the inclusion of applicants in the ERC-in Programme,
 - c) proposes or discusses proposals for collaboration between an applicant and a given mentor,
 - d) coordinates the mentoring network and proposes the involvement or termination of a mentor's activities within the mentoring network,
 - e) evaluates the process of preparing ERC project proposals in relation to their result in an ERC competition,
 - f) proposes the distribution of funds intended for ERC-in activities between the coordinating institutes and the applicants' institutes,
 - g) is the appeal body for dispute resolution,
 - h) discusses and decides on conflicts of interest, a lack of impartiality or doubts about impartiality in decision-making pursuant to this guideline,
 - i) coordinates collaboration with the ERC national contact point,
 - j) provides the CAS Academy Council and the CAS Science Council with assistance and advice on matters related to the ERC or other prestigious grant schemes of domestic and foreign funding bodies,
 - k) submits the following to the CAS Academy Council for approval:
 1. the inclusion of the proposed candidate in the ERC-in Programme,
 2. a list of mentors who form the mentoring network,
 3. a proposal for amendments to the ERC-in Programme and this guideline,
 4. a proposal for the ERC-in budget,

5. the annual evaluations of ERC-in activities and the Council's own activities.
- (3) The Council's administrative support is provided by the secretary, who is the ERC-in secretary.

Section 3

ERC-in Activities

- (1) The Council, the ERC-in secretary and the project consultant cooperate on ERC-in activities.
- (2) For an applicant, ERC-in activities are, in particular:
 - a) individualised career consultation and consultation on an idea for a project,
 - b) mentor support in the formulation of a project proposal,
 - c) specialised project consultations on a project proposal,
 - d) preparation for an ERC interview,
 - e) organisation of a training interview,
 - f) support in communication in the event of success in an ERC competition,
 - g) support for the re-submission of an ERC project proposal.These activities are carried out within the ERC-in Programme.
- (3) For an institute, ERC-in activities are, in particular:
 - a) expert mentoring of project management staff members,
 - b) consultation on any amendments to internal regulations in connection with ERC projects,
 - c) creation of methodological materials in the field of project management,
 - d) involvement in a platform for sharing know-how of service department staff members,
 - e) consultation and assistance in the initial stages of ERC project implementation.
- (4) Other ERC-in activities are in particular:
 - a) informing employees of CAS institutes about ERC issues, including the motivation of potential applicants,
 - b) creation of networks for sharing the experiences of project holders and applicants,
 - c) educational and group activities targeting future applicants,
 - d) motivating institute management teams to create functional support for the success of ERC projects and those of other prestigious funding bodies,
 - e) comprehensive collection of information and data related to ERC competitions.
- (5) The set of activities pursuant to paragraph 2 for one applicant lasts no longer than three years. This period does not include periods of maternity and parental leave, sickness absence for more than 90 days, or a period spent caring for a person who, pursuant to the Social Services Act, is considered a person dependent on the assistance of another natural person.

Section 4

ERC-in Programme

- (1) A researcher who meets the following conditions may be nominated for inclusion in the ERC-in Programme:
 - a) at the time the proposal for inclusion in the ERC-in Programme is submitted (hereinafter the “proposal”), they are in an employment relationship with the institute,¹
 - b) they are preparing an ERC project proposal for which they will be the applicant.
- (2) A proposal for inclusion in the ERC-in Programme (hereinafter the “proposal”) is submitted by the institute director on an ongoing basis, usually ten to twelve calendar months before the end of the call in which the ERC project proposal will be submitted.
- (3) The proposal contains:
 - a) information about the proposed candidate,
 - b) information about the title of the research topic, the outline content of the proposed candidate’s ERC project proposal and the identification of the ERC call to which it will be submitted,
 - c) information about the targeted support projects that the proposed candidate is working on or will be working on during the preparation of the ERC project proposal,
 - d) a structured CV of the proposed candidate and documentation of their scientific and any teaching and organisational skills, including the prospect for their professional employment at the institute,
 - e) a statement by the institute director on the proposed candidate and the content of the proposal, including the obligation to conclude an agreement with a mentor and a statement to provide the Council with the ERC project proposal after its submission and subsequently to provide its full ERC evaluation report.
- (4) The information in paragraph 3(a) to (d) is submitted in English.
- (5) The proposal is discussed by the Council, which may recommend to the proposed candidate or the institute director the necessary changes to the proposal. The Academy Council of the CAS decides on inclusion in the ERC-in Programme on the proposal of the Council.
- (6) The Council chair sends a notification to the institute director about inclusion or rejection of the proposal for inclusion in the ERC-in Programme.

¹ either in an employment relationship or based on an agreement outside an employment relationship.

Section 5

Intellectual Property Protection

- (1) Intellectual property protection in the management of project proposals and research results is governed by the legal regulations governing intellectual property protection,² the principles of good scientific practice, the Code of Ethics for Researchers of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the instructions on recording items protected by intellectual property rights and their use at CAS institutes approved by the CAS Academy Council.
- (2) Access rights for the use of knowledge, know-how and software necessary for activities (hereinafter “access rights”) are provided on the basis of a written agreement concluded between the institute holding the required access rights and the institute whose employee is the applicant.
- (3) Access rights pursuant to para. 2 are provided free of charge, solely for the purpose of performing the activities and only for the period essential for their performance. This is without prejudice to the provisions of special legal regulations or the internal regulations of the CAS on intellectual property protection.
- (4) Within ERC-in, an ERC project proposal and an ERC evaluation report may only be handled to the extent necessary to fulfil the purpose of methodological support; their confidentiality must be ensured. ERC project proposals may not be actively shared with other applicants or third parties. Sharing of the ERC project proposal or part of it with third parties is always carried out by the applicant; ERC-in can only facilitate sharing.
- (5) Neither this guideline nor its individual parts may be interpreted in a way that would unreasonably restrict the applicants' option to choose a host institution in accordance with ERC rules.

CHAPTER II

Funding Terms and Conditions

Section 6

- (1) ERC-in is financially supported by a CAS grant, with the CAS acting as the founder of CAS institutes ERC-in support can also be realised using other funding sources, provided they are in accordance with legal regulations and internal regulations of the CAS. The research coordinator is in an employment relationship with the Czech Academy of Sciences or a CAS institute.
- (2) The grant is provided to the coordinating institute and the institute whose applicant was included in the ERC-in Programme (hereinafter the “grant”). The grant is provided to CAS institutes in accordance with the Guideline of the CAS Academy Council on Grants Provided by the Czech Academy of Sciences.
- (3) The grant can be used to cover non-investment costs, which are directly related to ERC-in activities. The following costs are eligible:
 - a) costs of the coordinating institute, namely the personal costs of the research coordinator and guarantor for a research area, the project consultant and the employee of the coordinating institute providing administration,

² E.g., Act No. 121/2000 Coll., on Copyright, Rights Related to Copyright and on Amendments to Certain Acts (the Copyright Act), as amended, Act No. 527/1990 Coll., on Inventions, Industrial Designs and Utility Models, as amended, Act No. 206/2000 Coll., on the Protection of Biotechnological Inventions, Act No. 207/2000 Coll., on the Protection of Industrial Designs, as amended, Act No. 441/2003 Coll., on Trademarks, as amended.

- b) operating costs of the coordinating institute,
 - c) costs of the applicant's institute, namely personal costs under agreements on work performed outside an employment relationship and material costs directly related to the preparation of an ERC project proposal.
- (4) The grant pursuant to para. 3(c) is a maximum of CZK 60 thousand, of which the mentor's personal costs amount to CZK 40 thousand (1st round of evaluation). In the case of the advancement of an ERC project proposal, the grant is a maximum of CZK 60 thousand, of which the mentor's personal costs amount to CZK 20 thousand (2nd round of evaluation).
- (5) The grant cannot be used to cover:
- a) investment costs,
 - b) overhead costs,
 - c) costs of usual research or administrative activities which are not the objective of ERC-in pursuant to Section 1.

CHAPTER III

Evaluation

Section 7

- (1) Evaluation of ERC-in activities is performed regularly once a year by the Council, based on reports for the previous period.
- (2) The Council evaluates the activity based on the following criteria, in particular:
- a) scientific value,
 - b) submission of ERC project proposals,
 - c) education, media attention and popularisation,
 - d) synergistic effects of collaboration.

Section 8

Report for Elapsed Period

- (1) For the purpose of the annual evaluation in accordance with Section 7, the coordinating institute submits an activity report for the elapsed period to the Council by 8 February. An institute whose applicant was included in the ERC-in Programme submits a report on activities related to such applicant to the Council by the same deadline.
- (2) The report referred to in para. 1 includes:
- a) an activity report for the elapsed period,
 - b) a brief proposal for activities for the following calendar year,
 - c) a justified budget proposal for the calendar year, including personal costs, from 1 January of the calendar year.
- (3) The director of the coordinating institute and the director of the institute submit a report on the use of funds from the grant provided, in the manner and by the deadline specified in the grant approval decision.
- (4) The Council submits to the CAS Academy Council and the CAS Science Council a report

on the current state of ERC-in activities no later than 31 March.

- (5) Based on this evaluation, the Council proposes that the CAS Academy Council approve:
- a) continuation of the activities,
 - b) continuation of the activities with recommended changes in the implementation of activities,
 - c) termination of the activities.

Section 9

General Provisions

- (1) Proposals, reports and other documents are submitted by the institute and the coordinating institute via the CAS Head Office information system, unless otherwise specified.
- (2) Summary information and news are published by the Council secretary on the CAS website and the CAS Internal Portal.
- (3) The Council is responsible for promoting the results of the ERC-in Programme so that they reach public awareness. For this purpose, the Council may use the assistance of the CAS Head Office.

Section 10

Repealing Provision

Guideline of the Academy Council of the CAS No. 10/2020 on Support for Submitters of ERC Projects, as amended by Guideline of the Academy Council of the CAS No. 15/2021, is hereby repealed. Grants provided pursuant to the repealed guideline shall be settled in accordance with its wording.

Section 11

Effect

This Guideline comes into effect on the date of its publication.

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