Call for ecological and climate sustainability to the Czech Academy of Sciences

The international scientific community agrees, in a persuasive majority, on the existence of human-driven climate and other ecological transformations that are impacting and decreasing the quality of life on Earth. These transformations and their impacts are extensively documented in leading scientific journals and summarized in the IPCC reports.[1] The Czech Academy of Sciences surely understands the credibility and gravity of these findings. The social role of the Academy as a prestigious research institution requires that it seriously and without delay engages with this global problem. This includes analysing and, in some cases, revising the operational mechanisms of the Academy that are implicated in the negative impacts of anthropogenic transformation.

Three aspects are key in this respect.

The first aspect is the support of relevant research across disciplines that describe and analyse current and future scenarios, as well as research that contributes to mitigation and adaptation measures in the Czech territory and beyond. We are aware of and appreciate that the Academy has already supported a number of such research projects, within, but not limited to, the Strategy AV 21.

The second aspect is communicating to and engaging with policymakers and the public on climate change. In this respect, a convincing and systematic communication strategy is needed that will draw upon up-to-date scientific knowledge. The aim of such communication should not only be to present available facts about climate and ecological dynamics but also showcase the complexity of the relevant processes, including analysis and modelling. This engagement will enable our society to better face and act under the pressure of an uncertain future. Many employees of the Academy have already been active in such public communication. However, these efforts should have a stronger and coherent concept and institutional support. Clear presentation of the position of the Academy's top management is also crucial.

The third key aspect is the material functioning of the Academy and its institutes in regard to the climate and ecological impacts of its operation. Efficiently coordinating efforts to solve technical, topical, and conceptual problems of individual worksites is one of the key roles of the Czech Academy of Sciences.[2] To tackle ecological impacts, the creation of a clearly formulated concept would enable the Academy and its workplaces to institute a swift transformation in its operations that align with scientific knowledge on ecological sustainability. The principal part of this necessary transformation lies in energy management of the Academy's workplaces. However, other aspects, such as waste management and the scope and forms of academic mobility should also be systematically considered.[3] Thousands of organizations and companies face the same challenge to make their operation ecologically sustainable. The expert approach of the Academy can serve as an exemplar for these other subjects. Let us note that the

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1 These mainly include [IPCC: Global Warming of 1.5 ºC], [IPCC: Special Report on Climate Change and Land], [IPBES: The global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services], [Lenton et al.: Climate tipping points — too risky to bet against, Nature 2019].

2 See Article 56 of Status of the Czech Academy of Sciences.

3 See ongoing debates within Roundtable of Sustainable Academic Travel and at number of academic institutions and initiatives, e.g., EPFL Guidelines 2019; https://unter1000.scientists4future.org.

experience of prestigious academic institutions abroad shows that many steps towards sustainability have short payback and are thus not only ecologically but also economically favourable.[4]

Thus we call on the management of the Academy, the Academy Assembly, and the management of the individual institutes to seriously consider the above issues and take adequate measures.

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[4] See examples at FU Berlin [Sustainability report 2018, chapter Energy Efficiency Programs].