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**Statement from the director of the institute on the final report of the Commission
No. 9**

We were impressed by the general recommendations to CAS from the commission. In particular, the comment on *Research on humans* is highly pertinent to the overall mission of the Institute of Physiology. We are in favor of the commission's opinion that the...."**linking of experimental and clinical research is a very difficult task, but is convinced that a thorough discussion of this weakness must be started, and that this should lead to structural changes**". As was discussed with the commission, researchers at the Institute of Physiology can substantially help with these activities, which we found to be necessary for the sake of excellent biomedical research in our country. As for the lack of external advisory board in most of the institutes, which was noted by the commission, we had already been considering establishing such a body at the Institute of Physiology, and we will do so in the near future. Also in agreement with our major focus on the training of PhD students and on their involvement in our research projects, we appreciate the comment "...that the general training of PhD students could be improved by structures within the Academy institutes (Graduate Schools) that offer a comprehensive training in all research skills, beyond the level of the respective group."

With respect to the evaluation of the whole Institute of Physiology, we are pleased by the following comments regarding its *Strengths and Opportunities*:

"The main research themes represent a clear strength for the Institute of Physiology";
"....the Institute has many well experienced PIs with strong international visibility as well as a clear general high level of motivation and a set of vibrant public engagement activities";
"....the Institute has a very good publication record"; and
"Critically, a very constructive working dialogue and collaboration exists between the Director and the Institute Council. As a consequence, the Institute aims to implement an entirely convincing vision for the future."

We are aware of the potential problem as expressed in the comment on *Weaknesses and Threats*, that several smaller groups "...lack critical mass and so represent weak points for achieving the global strategy and vision of the Institute. This tendency to "fragment" research efforts is in part exacerbated by the domestic funding landscape which inevitably encourages the development of smaller scale, shorter duration projects." We have already adopted a strategy to merge several smaller groups with complementary research topics into larger ones. Additionally, we believe that the problem is counteracted by strong collaborations between several smaller groups within the Institute. We also agree with the notion that "One set of problems that is certainly not unique to this Institute, is a general weakness in the age structure". We have presented to the commission a detailed analysis of this problem regarding the number of researchers in different age categories. However, we cannot share the commission's opinion that it will be a major problem to replace several group leaders who will be retiring in the near future. We already have a well-defined strategy of procedures for

replacing team leaders after they reach retirement age, which is based on an internationally open competition processes

We were greatly encouraged by the Detailed evaluation of the Institute as a whole, which was highly positive in every aspect it covered.

The commission evaluated 14 out of 22 research teams of the Institute. While we know that it was a very difficult task to accomplish within the limited time available, we agree with most of the evaluation comments and we are convinced that they will provide important new feedback for the team leaders to help them further improve their research efforts. The Institute director will also discuss the evaluation reports with them, taking local conditions into account. Some of the comments were more general and repeated in several of the individual evaluation reports, namely the need for more clinically oriented and translational research, higher levels of student involvement and planning for the successors to team leaders. We have started taking measures to deal with these concerns already, as part of our response to comments on the whole Institute. For 2 of the 14 evaluated teams, we provide more information below that may help to explain some specific aspects of the current situation.

The department of **Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering**

Additional information:

One of the weaknesses pointed out for this team was that there is no clear vision for an independent research roadmap for the future. The team headed by Dr. Bacakova successfully took advantage of multiple collaborations with external biomaterial groups to gain access to new bioengineering materials and is now in a transition period. In fact, there has already been a clear plan to apply the results obtained in more focused research in new research projects also involving *in vivo* models. This new activity is coordinated by the team's junior scientists, and it has already enabled very healthy level of grant funding and substantial growth of the team output within the evaluated period. This team is one of the groups with the most advanced translational research profile at the Institute.

The department of **Experimental Hypertension**

Additional information:

3.1. Dr. Zicha's comment related to EU-funded collaborative projects was not well understood. His team participated in two EU grant applications concerning metabolic syndrome and cardiovascular diseases (2009-2011), but none of them received financial support.

3.3 The role of particular neuropeptides in the pathogenesis of metabolic and cardiovascular diseases is a highly promising topic. The team is happy to cooperate on this topic with IOCB CAS within the framework of two joint projects. This cooperation dovetails with the concept of the CAS for the 21st century linking basic and applied research, the potential for the development of new drugs, etc. Thus such cooperation should be considered to be a strength of this team rather than its weakness.

We gratefully acknowledge the evaluation report and would like to thank the commission for the excellent work it did to accomplish this highly demanding and helpful task. We have found the report to be very well elaborated, very detailed and objective.

Prague, 19 January 2016

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