

Open report of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the Institute of Biotechnology (IBT) of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Jun 2022

The SAB visited the premises on June 2-3, 2022. The members of the SAB participating in the review were: Gideon Schreiber (chair), Milton T. Stubbs (co-chair), Stefan Diez, Rafael Oliva, Marie-Paule Roth and Arne Skerra, joined on the first day by Agnes Gerlach (online). The review panel was complemented by Tomáš Obšil and Tomáš Stopka of the IBT Council.

The evaluation proceeded as follows: After having submitted a written report in advance, the head of each Laboratory under evaluation, Jiří Neužil (online from Australia), Zdeněk Lánský, Kateřina Komrsková, Jiří Černý, Mikael Kubista and Jan Dohnálek, gave a short *in camera* presentation to members of the review panel. Following discussion of both the presentation and the written report, members of the panel visited and interviewed members of the Laboratory, after which an individual report was prepared. Once all Laboratories had been reviewed, the results of the evaluation were discussed with the director of IBT, Bohdan Schneider.

Overall, the review panel was very impressed with the way the IBT is managed. The PIs and the junior researchers are very happy with the infrastructures available and the possibility to do excellent science. Also, the members of the IBT are very happy with the management of the Institute.

Individual evaluation criteria were graded as follows.

Funding: While funding varies greatly between research Laboratories, this is not a limiting factor in doing science for most Laboratories. Most of the funding comes from Czech sources. One problem identified is the inability to carry over funding from one period to another. We indeed heard several times that it would be advantageous if scientists could carry over a small proportion of the funds, as new funding commitments by the Czech Academy of Science and other funders are done only weeks before termination of previous funding, causing stress and uncertainty as new funding is far from assured. In this respect, the director informed us that the IBT has funds to help out scientists for a bridging period in cases where funding is not renewed.

What is clearly a weak point is the low international funding (particularly from European sources). One reason for this is the complexity of European grants, which requires considerable bureaucratic assistance that is limited in the IBT. The SAB suggests that the IBT joins forces with other institutes affiliated to the Academy of Science to jointly hire a person with the appropriate expertise to consolidate the existing support.

Technology transfer and patents: This point is clearly problematic. Recently, the IBT hired a person to assist in exploitation of new inventions. As discussed for applying for European grants, this subject requires considerable expertise. It is therefore similarly suggested that the IBT joins forces with other institutes affiliated to the Academy of Science to jointly build a technology transfer arm with the appropriate expertise.

Long term vision and recruitment: The IBT should put forward a long-term vision for its development. This relates in particular to the recruitment of new scientists, which should be

done based on excellence and research direction, not through inheritance of a particular line of research of the existing IBT PI.

The evaluation left room for discussion of points not directly requested in the written reports:

- At least one member in every Laboratory lamented the lack of social networking within the IBT and BIOCEV. It is suggested to strengthen social networking, for example through beer time Friday afternoon.
- Surprisingly, we found that only few lab members are motivated to move to PI positions. This may relate to the perception that it is very difficult to become a PI and also difficult to be one. While industrial jobs are very interesting these days, the best PhD students should be encouraged to try to become PIs by sending them to international meetings and workshops, and encouraging them to accomplish a Post-Doc in a different country. Career development schemes for junior staff should be offered.
- The issue of child support was raised multiple times, as there is no nursery nearby.
- More communication with the general public is encouraged for outreach.
- The IBT has mainly two research directions, one relating to structure/function of macromolecules and the other with more biological focus. Stronger synergy between these parts of the IBT is encouraged.
- Some of the Laboratories spend much of their resources on collaborations that they themselves do not lead. These Laboratories are encouraged to concentrate more on their own core projects with which they can be identified.
- A statistician is needed; again such persons could be hired by a number of institutes together.
- The next meeting of the SAB is expected to be in spring 2024, where the remaining Laboratories in the IBT will be evaluated.

Sincerely yours

Gideon Schreiber (chair), Milton T. Stubbs (co-chair), Stefan Diez, Agnes Gerlach, Rafael Oliva, Marie-Paule Roth, and Arne Skerra.