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EURAXESS Members in Focus: Czech Republic

- The Czech Republic is home to some of Europe’s oldest and largest universities.
- Czech R&D is not driven only by the country’s history of excellent science, but also by extensive state support. Financial aid comes from national and European resources and is administered by a number of mostly national institutions (Czech Science Foundation, Technology Agency of the Czech Republic, Czech ministries; with the exception of Horizon 2020).

R&D Funding in the Czech Republic

- Czech Science Foundation (www.gacr.cz)
- Technology Agency of the Czech Republic (www.tacr.cz)

Research Excellence in the Czech Republic

New European Centres of Excellence focus mainly on international collaboration and contribution to applied results.

- The Central European Institute of Technology (CEITEC) is a multidisciplinary science centre focused on life sciences and advanced materials and technologies whose aim is to establish itself as a recognised centre for basic as well as applied research (www.ceitec.cz).

- Extreme Light Infrastructure (ELI) is part of a new generation of large European research facilities with the main goal of creating laser equipment with unique parameters (www.eli-beams.eu)
**CzechGlobe - Global Change Research Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences** is a public research institution and European Centre of Excellence investigating the ongoing global climate change and its impact on the atmosphere, biosphere and human society through the use of the latest techniques and instrumentation ([www.czechglobe.cz](http://www.czechglobe.cz)).

**The IT4Innovations national supercomputing centre** conducts research and provides state-of-the-art technologies and services in the fields of high performance computing and embedded systems ([http://www.it4i.cz](http://www.it4i.cz)).

*Where can I find out more?*

**Government Office for Science, Research and Innovation**

The main objectives of the Section are as follows: science policy unification; setting up of the rules for transparent funding of institutions engaged in science, research and innovations; identification and support of excellence in science and the expansion of international scientific cooperation. [http://www.vyzkum.cz/](http://www.vyzkum.cz/)

**The Czech Academy of Sciences**

The Czech Academy of Sciences (the CAS) is set up as a complex of 54 public research institutions. The Academy employs over 8,000 employees, more than a half of whom are researchers with university degrees. [http://www.avcr.cz/en](http://www.avcr.cz/en)

**CzechInvest**

The main objective of The Business and Investment Development Agency CzechInvest, is to advise and support existing and new entrepreneurs and foreign investors in the Czech Republic. [http://www.czechinvest.org/en](http://www.czechinvest.org/en)

**EURAXESS Czech Republic**

EURAXESS Czech Republic provides information and assistance to researchers who are coming to work in the Czech Republic. EURAXESS help researchers and their families to plan and organize their move to a foreign country, providing assistance in all matters related to mobility. [www.euraxess.cz](http://www.euraxess.cz)

**The Czech Republic and Japan**

In 2017, both Czech and Slovak Republics as successors to former Czechoslovakia will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Czechoslovakia (13 February 1957). 12 years later, in 1978, the two countries signed an Agreement on Scientific and Technological Cooperation, and this agreement has been serving as the basis for scientific and technological cooperation between Japan and the Czech...
The Czech Republic is in a different weight category than Japan and this fact, of course, has a significant effect on the scope and extent of cooperation between the two countries. That is why the Czech Republic has adopted a two-pronged attitude to its cooperation with Japan – a multilateral one and a bilateral one. The former has, basically, two forms.

On one hand the Czech Republic strives to participate in various programs of scientific cooperation between the European Union and Japan, especially within the framework of the EU program for research and innovations Horizon 2020.

On the other hand the Czech multilateral cooperation with Japan stems from the joint efforts of the Visegrad Four countries (so called V4 - Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia). In 2013, the summit of prime ministers of V4 countries with prime minister of Japan took place in Warsaw and one of its significant outcomes was the establishment of the Year of Exchanges between the V4 countries and Japan. In 2014, a memorandum on a new program of cooperation between the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and relevant state institutions of the V4 courtiers (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport on the Czech side) was signed in Bratislava. The first call for projects under the joint research program "V4 - Japan on Advanced Materials" was launched in January 2015. Out of 51 recommended projects, a joint committee chose five. Czech universities and scientific institutes participate in four of them.

In order to foster the scientific cooperation with Japan and to demonstrate the willingness of the V4 countries to develop this form of cooperation, the V4 countries under the then Czech presidency organised a Joint V4 - Japan Seminar on Technology Transfer: “Nanomaterials for Industrial Use” in June 2016. The present Polish presidency plans a similar seminar for the year 2017.

Finally, the most significant part of the Czech-Japan cooperation in the field of science and research is based on a bilateral platform. An important number of Czech scientists work in Japan at present and the core of cooperation lies on university level. In addition, the Czech Academy of Science and the Japan Society for Promotion of the Science signed a memorandum on joint projects and exchange of scientists in 2009. One of the crucial steps for enhancing the cooperation between the two countries is a memorandum signed by the Technological Agency of the Czech Republic (TACR) and the New Energy Development Organisation (NEDO) in June 2016. The existence of the memorandum paves the way for identification of fields of mutual interest and implementation of joint projects. The first initiative of the Czech side will be the Czech Technological Robotic Mission which will visit Japan in the first half of April 2017.
Hot topic: Launch of the new EURAXESS Portal

As many may have already noticed, we EURAXESS launched a totally renewed version of our portal in late 2016, for a better user experience and adding some new, very useful features. At this occasion, we had an interview with Mr Notis Pikros, Intrasoft International; Technical Responsible for the EURAXESS Portal.

- Notis, you and your team have been working very hard to design the new EURAXESS portal that has recently been launched. In a nutshell, which are the most important features of this new portal?

Job opportunities, funding as well as personalised services and training are known to be fundamental to a successful research career. At EURAXESS we have adapted to the ever-growing needs of the research landscape by redesigning the EURAXESS portal, a platform for researchers, entrepreneurs, universities and businesses to interact with each other.

On the new EURAXESS portal, researchers, research institutions and companies will be pleased to find a consistent palette of new and improved functionalities designed especially for them. To mention a few, we have a responsive design: the EURAXESS platform will adapt to any type of device from mobile to tablet and desktop. The portal will also address to two new target groups: entrepreneurs and businesses.

Another very important aspect of the revamped portal will be a new type of offer. Aside from job opportunities, visitors to the portal will be able to search for funding, hosting, internship and training offers! Moreover, the new EURAXESS dashboard/private area has been especially designed to match registered users with the best collaboration, job and hosting opportunities. The search functionality has been improved to allow for both free text and pre-defined search, all this in order to guarantee a better search experience.

Last but not least, the brand new collaboration tool called “Partnering” will help people and organisations connect, while the Science4Refugees Research Buddy Programme will support refugee scientists in finding European
researchers to discuss problems, find solutions and study together, by matching their research field, scientific studies and interests. In a nutshell, it has been quite a ride! We’ve surely enjoyed the process, we’ve gained a lot of experience along the way and we are now extremely proud to have launched this portal.

- As a researcher how can the portal help me find a research position? Or a research funding opportunity?

If you are a researcher looking for a job or funding opportunity in Europe, EURAXESS is the best place to start your search! At EURAXESS, researchers will be able to browse through a collection of thousands of research related job vacancies as well as funding opportunities. The search for offers does not necessarily require registration, meaning that researchers will be able to search for opportunities in a free and easy way without having to create a profile. Both the job and the funding offers are accessible via the pre-defined search functionality (at the top of the EURAXESS homepage), the JOBS & FUNDING section, or the free text search functionality (at the top right hand side of the homepage menu). Once the researcher has found the offer suiting him/her the most, he/she can apply by following the instructions under the “Apply” button. It is important to note that the institutions publishing on EURAXESS will provide the necessary details for application (e.g. e-mail address, website etc.) but the application itself will always happen outside the EURAXESS portal. Apart from searching for offers, we also invite researchers to edit/upload their CV at EURAXESS, thus making it available to the thousands of potential recruiters registered in our database. Once they have created a researcher profile via the LOGIN/REGISTER section, they will easily be able
to edit/upload their CV via the MY EURAXESS private area. Last but not least, another very important aspect of the EURAXESS initiative, that I would like to stress is that once the researcher has found his/her dream job, he/she can beneficiate from the free, personalised assistance of the EURAXESS Centres, a network of more than 500 units spread across Europe that assist researchers relocate to a foreign country for their new assignment. Researchers can also access the EURAXESS Career Development Centres which are ready to support them with regards to their career development.

- Can I use the portal to find international research collaborators for my research project? How so?

Absolutely! We are extremely proud to introduce the PARTNERING section as part of the new portal. This is a tool specially designed to help our visitors - whether they are researchers, entrepreneurs, research institutions/universities or businesses – connect and collaborate. PARTNERING will allow all registered users to search for both individuals and research organisations or businesses, as well as look for CVs.

- Is the portal open to universities and research institutes? What about companies?

Yes, all that and more! The new EURAXESS portal addresses four target groups – out of which two are new. They are researchers, entrepreneurs (new), universities/research institutes, and businesses (new). Universities/research institutes and businesses will be able to post job, funding and hosting opportunities, find the best talent by browsing through the collection of CVs, as well as search for funding opportunities and collaborators.

- How can companies use the portal to recruit research talent?

Businesses that have created a profile on EURAXESS will be able to post their research vacancies and will have access to the collection of CVs in the EURAXESS database. Moreover, adverts published on EURAXESS will also be displayed on one of the 40 national EURAXESS web sites and on Science AAAS, AlumniPortal.de and Career.edu, with whom we mutually exchange job vacancies on a daily basis.

- Please tell us more about the section of the portal focused on entrepreneurs.
Indeed, entrepreneurs are one of EURAXESS’ new target groups. The new EURAXESS portal offers entrepreneurs with great ideas the possibility of finding partners in business and academia to help them get started, to develop their project, as well as access to the EURAXESS funding database and information about EU funded programs.

- Does it cost me to join the portal?
No, registration is free. EURAXESS is a pan-European initiative and all available services are free of charge.

- How do I join the portal and the EURAXESS Japan community?
In order to join the EURAXESS community and benefit from the extensive and ever-growing range of free services EURAXESS has to offer, you will need to register an account via the LOGIN/REGISTER section. Once you have registered you will be welcomed to your own EURAXESS private area which is where you manage your profile, offers, CV data, and much more. Registration is quick and simple and we warmly invite you to register now, and you will have your own EURAXESS account in no time!
If you are already a member of the EURAXESS Japan community (if for example you directly receive Flashnotes from EURAXESS Japan), you do not need to do anything. In early 2017 you will receive an email from us with instructions on how to make sure that your membership is not discontinued in the new EURAXESS Portal.

Submit your picture to the website header contest here!
Meet Martine Reicherts, Director-General DG Education and Culture, European Commission

Directorate-General Education and Culture (EAC) plays a key role in putting European Union (EU) policy into practice, contributing in particular to developing a knowledge-based Europe and reconciling a competitive economy with an inclusive society. EAC uses EU flagship programmes, particularly Erasmus+ and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions (MSCA), to foster equity and excellence in education, cross-border cooperation and cross-fertilisation between education, research and innovation. Mobility of individuals is a key component.

- What does the Directorate General Education and Culture (DG EAC) of the European Commission have to offer researchers and HEIs outside Europe?

Erasmus+ has four main actions offering opportunities for students, researchers and university staff. They are fully funded by the EU and provide good conditions for those selected.

'International credit mobility' allows higher education institutions (HEIs) to develop partnerships for mobility of students, researchers and staff between 'Programme' and 'Partner' countries. The Programme countries are the 28 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; all other countries are Partner countries. The mobility project is on the basis of bilateral agreements setting out the mobility flows between the HEIs involved.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMD) are high-quality and highly integrated international Master degree programmes, with EU-funded scholarships attracting the brightest students worldwide. Three Programme country HEIs must be involved but there are also opportunities for HEIs from any country to join consortia offering EMJMDs.

Cooperation projects allow for capacity-building in higher education, meaning EU-funded support to modernise and reform higher education institutions and systems in eligible Partner countries. High income and industrialised countries (such as Japan, Singapore, the USA or Canada) are not eligible for this action.

Jean Monnet activities develop excellence in teaching and research in EU or European integration studies worldwide. This may be of particular interest to EURAXESS Worldwide readers as a special budget is earmarked this year for applicants from a small number of countries including Japan.
**Marie Sklodowska-Curie actions (MSCA)** focus on research excellence, starting with doctoral training but including individual projects for experienced researchers. The programme supports research projects which implement the triple "I" dimension (International, Inter-sectorial and Inter-disciplinary). It covers all disciplines and is also open to non-academic partners, such as industry, libraries, hospitals, etc. Within Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), MSCA will support 65,000 researchers including 25,000 doctoral candidates.

- **How does DG EAC promote European integration studies and research abroad?**

DG EAC promotes European integration studies and research worldwide through 'Jean Monnet activities,' part of the Erasmus+ programme. Jean Monnet activities also foster dialogue between the academic world and policymakers. Professors in subject areas related to the European integration process (typically law, economics, social sciences, international relations, or history, but also less traditional areas such as medicine or hard sciences) can apply for a Jean Monnet grant to support specific activities.

As I said before, the EU relies on webinars, mass and social media, conferences, workshops and fairs to reach out to target audiences but word of mouth is equally important. A researcher or academic explaining to colleagues and peers how to apply, what the scope for activities is and what benefits these can bring in terms both of funding and visibility, can be a great ambassador for us.

Our message should be this: ‘Jean Monnet' can help develop Japanese expertise in areas which improve understanding, enhance cooperation and indirectly boost trade with the EU.

- In Japan, HEIs usually cannot (legally speaking) setup courses or programmes with more than one other HEI. Therefore JMDs are quite difficult to setup since they require two or more European HEIs at least. But there is an alternative to that through the use of the bilateral action International Credit Mobility under Erasmus+. Could you tell us more about how it works, and what are its main specificities?

We are very aware that different countries have different approaches and different traditions but what we want to see overall is an ever-closer recognition of diplomas and credits for periods of study spent abroad. In the case of the Erasmus Mundus joint degrees, our basic rules are based on the higher degree of academic cooperation existing in Europe, where we have close links between HEIs and a ‘European Higher Education Area’ which provides comparable learning outcomes and academic certificates. If the legal structure in a non-European Partner Country does not allow its HEIs to join EMJMD consortia, it is possible to use the ‘international credit mobility’ route to establish cooperation and mobility flows with the Erasmus+ Programme Countries. For students, this can mean periods of study of 3-12 months in Europe which must be recognised as part of their home degree programmes – we are talking about any level of...
study here, undergraduate, graduate or even doctoral, and there are opportunities for staff including postdocs to spend 1 week to 2 months in a partner HEI. The arrangements are made between the HEIs but there is almost limitless scope.

- Under Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA), organisations from so-called developed or emerging economies countries outside of Europe are not eligible for direct funding (as in other programmes of Horizon 2020). This includes countries like US, Japan, China but also India. Yet, MSCA Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE), the most popular MSCA funding scheme in many of the EURAXESS Worldwide countries, allows some funding to go to the Japanese institutions (through the agreement they have with the project leader institution in Europe). Could you tell us how Japanese institutions could benefit from the MSCA RISE programme?

Indeed, some countries do not receive direct funding under Horizon 2020 because of their advanced economic development allowing them to financially support their own organisations. However, there are exceptions and programmes like MSCA offer much more than just financing: enabling access to networks of European institutions collaborating at the highest level of research excellence. This can give a new dimension to research, not only at academic institutions but also in industry.

- Participation of women in Erasmus+ and MSCA actions: Which percentage of the total Erasmus Mundus grantees and Marie Curie Actions (2007-2013) are female? What is DG EAC doing to attract promising female students and researchers?

We do not set quotas but we do encourage consortia selecting students for scholarships to take gender and geographical balance into consideration and Erasmus+ also makes special provision for certain disadvantaged groups so that access reaches beyond the privileged few. Just to give one indication, last year there were 1347 Master students selected from over 24,250 applications. 673 of these were men, 674 were women, although there were actually more than 14,250 male applicants and only 10,000 female. In MSCA, the share of female researchers is just under 40%, which is relatively good, taking into account that women account for just 33% of the research population in Europe.

- Before we close this interview, do you have any tips for potential Higher Education Institutions in EURAXESS Worldwide countries wanting to apply for an Erasmus+, Jean Monnet or a Marie Skłodowska-Curie call? Where can they look for European partners?

Yes. I would say that there is real competition for Erasmus+ funding because it achieves what it sets out to do: develop innovative approaches and support
modernisation and internationalisation of higher education, and support the best students, researchers and staff worldwide. But the EURAXESS Worldwide countries are the ones with highly developed HEIs and highly qualified researchers, meaning both Europe and our Partner Countries can benefit from the contacts. Putting together a good proposal takes time and effort but success is not only its own reward, it is a well-funded step ahead in this interconnected and fast-changing world. European partners are also looking for opportunities to develop cooperation and close partnerships, whether through personal contacts made at seminars or conferences or previous joint activities, including via EURAXESS and the Participant Portal. These days, higher education and research are serious businesses: they are our future and that of all our young people and creative minds. And so, supported by our EU programmes, they deserve all the time and effort we can make together.

Thank you very much Director-General Martine Reicherts!
EURAXESS Japan activities
EURAXESS Japan Tour 2017 @ Waseda University

EURAXESS Japan and Waseda University will organise a seminar on research cooperation with Europe and post-doctoral mobility to Europe through the well-known Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) programmes Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE) and Individual Fellowships (IF), as both programmes have active calls in 2017 (RISE: closing 5 April; IF: open 11 April, closing 14 September).

To allow an enhanced engagement with the participants, individual consultation sessions will be organised in the second half of the event, so that interested PhD students, postdocs, or senior researchers can seek council directly to a panel of experts from Waseda University, EURAXESS Japan, Delegation of the EU to Japan, the National Contact Point for Horizon 2020 in Japan.

Event title: Research cooperation and postdoctoral mobility to Europe through the Marie Sklodowska-Curie Actions!

Date and time: Tuesday 7 February, 13:30 - 17:30
Venue: Waseda University, Bldg. 26 B1F public meeting hall (map)
Language: Japanese
Further information: win-t-euro@list.waseda.jp
Registration (until 5 February): https://goo.gl/YkS8R5

European Innovation Day: save the date!

This event will be jointly organised by EURAXESS Japan, the EU-Japan Technology Transfer Helpdesk (a service of the EU-Japan Centre for Industrial Cooperation), and French Tech Tokyo in partnership with Hello Tomorrow Challenge. It aims to bring together the community of innovation oriented researchers, students, engineers or startuppers of Japan and allow them to network and learn about the European innovation landscape and how to find European investors to launch their activities, or to perform technology transfer operations.

It will be a dual event, with a pitch contest in the morning -- in partnership with the Hello Tomorrow Challenge-- and a seminar with talks from experts and pitch simulation in the afternoon.

Save the date: 10 March 2017
Venue, TBA very soon, Tokyo
Language: English
Stay tuned for further announcements!