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September 23, 2009

Mr. Jan Fischer, Prime Minister  
Government of the Czech Republic  
Edvarda Benese 128/4  
118 01 Praha 1  
Czech Republic

Dear Prime Minister Fischer:

I am writing in response to an article about funding in the Czech Republic, which was published in the July 9, 2009 issue of *Nature*. I have also received numerous communications from my Czech colleagues who are very much concerned over some of the proposed changes.

I have had a number of fruitful interactions with scientists from the Czech Academy of Sciences and have been very impressed by the excellent quality of their research. Your country should be very proud to have world-class scientists in the Czech Academy. Thus, while it was gratifying for me to learn that overall funding for research and development in the Czech Republic has been increasing in recent years, I was very troubled to read about plans to cut the funding of the Academy of Sciences by more than a half over the next three years. Such severe cuts will endanger this outstanding institution.

In addition, it seems that the plan involves simplistic and subjective formulas to evaluate research productivity. The latter is indeed critically important in deciding the worthiness of institutions (and individuals) for funding. However, one may find more intelligent ways to deal with this evaluation. My experience has been that the viability of research institutions should be measured through a comprehensive peer review process that allows considering a wide range of factors. Like democracy, peer review is not perfect, but has proven over many years (and across many disciplines) to be the best way to judge the quality of scientific output and potential.

I am firmly convinced that a well-funded and scientifically-viable Academy of Sciences is in the best interests of the Czech Republic. I urge the Czech government to reconsider the planned cuts and to keep the funding of the Academy of Sciences at the level that will make enhanced research possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Grinshpun'.

Sergey A. Grinshpun, Ph.D., Professor,  
Director, Center for Health-Related Aerosol Studies

COPY: Prof. Jiri Drahos, President  
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