



STANFORD UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF GEOPHYSICS
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305

Mark D. Zoback
*Benjamin M. Page Professor of Earth Sciences
and Professor of Geophysics*
email: zoback@stanford.edu

*Tel: (650) 725-9295
Mobile: (650) 468-3871
Fax: (650) 725-7344
Home: (650) 322-9570*

August 24, 2009

Prime Minister Jan Fischer
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 science funding in the Czech Republic that I read in the July 9, 2009 issue of Nature magazine as well as communication I have received from Czech colleagues who are understandably concerned over some of the proposed changes.

Over the years I have had a number of fruitful interactions with Czech colleagues at the Academy of Sciences. I have been very impressed by the excellent quality of their research. As I'm sure you know, there are many world-class scientists in the Czech Academy. Thus, while it was gratifying for me to read in Nature 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. There can be little doubt that such severe cuts will endanger this outstanding institution.

In addition, it was disturbing to read of the plan to use simplistic, and somewhat subjective, formulas to evaluate research productivity. While research productivity is critically-important in deciding the worthiness of institutions (and individuals) for funding, it is hard to see how simple formulas can be used for this. My experience has been that only way to accurately measure the viability of research institutions is through comprehensive peer reviews which consider 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 'M. D. Zoback'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'M.' and last name 'Zoback' clearly distinguishable.

Mark D. Zoback
Benjamin M. Page Professor of Earth Sciences