

THE CENTRE OF ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATIONS – THE CAS INSTITUTES’ FIRST PORT OF CALL

The Czech Academy of Sciences (CAS) was established by Act No. 283/1992 Coll. It conducts research by way of its institutes, which are established as public research institutions. The CAS today builds upon the scientific legacy of not only the Czech Academy of Sciences and Arts (1918), but also other predecessors, the oldest learned society being the Royal Czech Society of Sciences (1784).

The Czech Academy of Sciences is a complex of 54 research institutes engaged primarily in basic research in the public interest. It is the most important non-university scientific institution in the Czech Republic.

The primary mission of the CAS and its institutes is to conduct research in a broad spectrum of the natural, technical and social sciences and the humanities. In this sense, the CAS is the only scientific institution in the Czech Republic that covers almost all fields of research and the vast majority of scientific disciplines (according to the OECD). It employs over 11,000 employees, of whom more than 7,000 are university-educated.

The Centre of Administration and Operations (CAO) constitutes one of these institutes and is a public research institution that does not focus on basic research. Instead, its main mission is to provide research and development infrastructure and support services primarily to the CAS institutes based on its unique insight into the internal processes of the CAS. This has been the case for 30 years.

From 1 January 2023, in accordance with the current supplement to the CAO’s Deed of Establishment, the mission of the CAO is also to carry out research activities in cooperation with other CAS institutes in the social sciences and humanities, focusing in particular on technology and knowledge transfer (in the field of management and administration) and on methods of presentation and popularisation of the results of research, development, and innovation and verification of their reach and impact (in the fields of writing, mass media, audio-visual documentation, library science, work with information).

For the CAO, its own research activities are still in the initial phase. As such, the CAO is not primarily a research institute and thus seeks out those projects through which it can create new infrastructure services in cooperation with other CAS institutes. For instance, it is collaborating with the Institute of Czech Literature of the CAS to develop specific encyclopaedic software. Another example is a project with the CESNET association, with which the CAO is working on developing tools for academic network security based on security incident analysis.

The CAO is not a standard research institute and focuses all its activities on research support. It provides services to research organisations which enable them to concentrate on research projects, thus contributing significantly to the improvement of research in the Czech Republic and

in the European Research Area. The CAO provides consultancy services in a number of areas (IT, network management, legal support, web management, audio-visual technologies), manages knowledge and technology transfer, enables researchers to publish scientific papers and monographs by means of the CAO's own publishing house Academia, and ensures the promotion of research results by way of popularisation events organised for the public. It is also focused on the development and implementation of a modern system of human resources management within the CAS. The CAO organises conferences, training courses, and workshops for research staff in various positions as well as soft skills courses, and it scouts for talented students and organises internships. It facilitates the integration of employees–parents into the workforce after parental leave by operating preschool facilities (daycare). It provides full consultancy services and assistance in recruiting researchers from abroad with the help of the EURAXESS Network, which is also the national contact point for HR Award issues.

The CAO holds a unique position within the Czech Academy of Sciences. Its principal task is to provide the CAS with professional infrastructure services of a high standard and wide range. In general, research, development, and innovation (R&D&I) entails a number of inconsistent exceptions and contradictory or unclear provisions in various laws and decrees, whether the issue concerns taxes, accounting, research support, GBER, or entrepreneurship. The legislative environment for R&D&I is quite complex and, compared to other types of organisations, non-standard and incomprehensible on the outside. These specifics enable the CAO to be a unique partner to the CAS institutes. Knowledge of the environment of the CAS and an understanding of issues specific to the functioning of R&D&I is a crucial, distinguishing characteristic of the CAO. We strive to ensure that all institutes are sufficiently informed about our range of services and for the staff of academic public research institutions to contact primarily the CAO. Our goal is to be the first port of call for the CAS institutes, which is why winning the HR Award is important to us. The research institutes of the Czech Academy of Sciences approach the CAO with, for instance, the need to consult on standards of care for their staff. By receiving the HR Award, the CAO would be able to make it clear to them that we understand and identify with the principles and requirements of HRS4R, that we are prepared to apply these standards (albeit mostly to our own non-research staff at present), and that we are capable of finding solutions.

For researchers, the HR Excellence in Research Award signifies that the awarded institution creates and upholds conditions for its employees according to the European standard, with adherence to the principles enshrined in the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The CAO recognises the importance of ensuring a high standard in human resources. It already meets a significant number of the criteria of the HRS4R process and is committed to developing its own HR Strategy.

It is for this reason that we are applying for the HR Excellence in Research Award, which would represent confirmation for the research institutes of the CAS that the CAO is a reliable place to turn to for cooperation – guaranteeing that their research staff are provided with outstanding service and that the CAS institutes are aided in implementing new tools for the career development of research staff, thus contributing to improving job prospects for researchers in Europe overall. For the CAO, applying for the HR Excellence in Research Award is not a mere formality, but a genuine endeavour to create a working environment of a high standard for R&D&I staff. Receiving the award would be an acknowledgement that the CAO fully identifies with the required procedures and objectives of the HRS4R strategy.

Since 2018, the EURAXESS Czech Republic Network has also been organising seminars, webinars, and workshops within the framework of the CAO for all interested HR Award applicants. The aim is to familiarise representatives of Czech universities and research institutes with the principles of the European Charter for Researchers and the Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers and with the practical aspects related to the implementation of the Human Resources Strategy for Researchers (HRS4R), to share experiences and good practice, and provide lectures/consultations with evaluators. This is just one of the reasons why we are seeking the award. If we want to provide effective support, we must go through the process ourselves to gain credibility in terms of understanding the intricacies of the process. The CAO considers it important to be able to indicate by means of the HR Award that it has in-depth knowledge of the issue.

The services of the EURAXESS Network have been extended to provide support for the HR Excellence in Research certification. The team has set up a discussion group on the MS Teams communication platform which employees of the CAS institutes can join. They can share experiences, specific issues

the institutes deal with during the administration of the process leading to the HR Award, important documents, guidelines, and good practice concerning the implementation of measures from customised Action Plans as well as experiences with the implementation of the HRS4R strategy. They have the opportunity to discuss specific issues of the process in their institute as well. The platform provides a unique opportunity to discuss the benefits of the process and its impact on their organisation.

The HR Excellence in Research Award gives public recognition to research institutions that have made progress in aligning their HR policies with the principles set out in the “Charter & Code”. Institutions that have been awarded the right to use the icon can do so to highlight their commitment to implementing fair and transparent recruitment and appraisal practices for researchers.

By providing its services, the CAO supports the CAS and its institutes in taking the necessary steps to create, ensure, and maintain a conducive research environment for their research staff and a work culture in which individuals and research groups are valued, encouraged, supported, and are provided with the necessary material and immaterial aid to enable them to fulfil their goals and objectives. In this way, the CAO plays a role in raising the appeal of careers in research and development.

How does the CAO, by way of its eight divisions, provide infrastructure services specifically? And how does the implementation of HRS4R carry over changes to research staff and their career development?

The CAO recognises the general principles and requirements of the European Charter for Researchers and helps secure the relationship between research staff and their employers (the CAS institutes). In this way, it contributes to successful development, transfer, sharing, and dissemination of knowledge and technology, including the provision of long-term career development systems in R&D. The CAO provides know-how regarding the implementation of selection and recruitment procedures and career development adhering to international standards in order to help develop strategies and systems for the long-term career development of researchers. It advocates that research staff should be seen as a professional group forming an integral part of the institution within which they work. It also ensures compliance with requirements arising from national, regional, and industry-specific legislation.



In the light of the Commission Recommendation of 11 March 2005 on the European Charter for Researchers and on a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers, the CAO is helping implement the HRS4R principles at the CAS institutes by way of all its divisions, specifically as follows:

The **Advisory and Administrative Office (AAO)**, via its Legal Section, provides legal support concerning labour law, legal support in connection with the drafting of labour-law documents, and interpretative opinions. Upon request, it prepares seminars on labour law. It also provides legal support concerning copyright law and intellectual property law in general. It provides legal support in the field of contract law (commercial contracts, amendments to contracts, interpretative opinions on risky contractual arrangements). It distributes monitoring of new legislation (national/EU level) on a regular basis to the CAS institutes, including annotations pertaining to individual legal regulations and any subsequent clarifications to the queries of the institutes according to the specifics of their activities and the possibilities of applying new legislation in the context of research activities.

Furthermore, the AAO provides administrative support concerning public procurement, namely legal advice pertaining to the implementation of the public procurement procedure and legal support in the implementation of the procurement procedure and the awarding of public contracts, including possible modifications of draft contracts and in some cases the interpretation of operational programme rules. It provides administrative support regarding GDPR, also as part of contractual documentation. It supports the self-education endeavours of lawyers in a wide range of legal disciplines, also with regard to the specific needs and requirements of public research institutions, which the CAS institutes constitute. The AAO continuously provides training to individual departments of the CAS institutes in terms of legal awareness and application of ethical conduct within the framework of support it offers to research institutes, which also includes consultancy services.

The Technology Transfer Office of the Czech Academy of Sciences (CeTTAV) is a specialised department of the CAO (which falls under the Advisory and Administrative Office) that provides consultations and services to all CAS institutes concerning the exploitation of research results. It assists research teams with specific cases of the commercialisation of results, the analysis of the potential for practical applications, intellectual property protection strategies, and contractual provisions of cooperation with the application sector. CeTTAV created the Transfer Portal of the CAS, which it continues to manage and develop.

CeTTAV is involved in projects of knowledge and technology transfer mainly on the basis of demand from individual CAS institutes. It offers specific services and consultations according to the development of individual cases. Specifically, it provides consultations on knowledge and technology transfer cases and assists the CAS institutes and their research teams with the management of cases and commercialisation projects as well as the funding of collaborative and Proof-of-Concept projects. Regarding transfer cases, CeTTAV provides legal support, negotiates terms of cooperation and draft contracts, reviews contracts and agreements, licensing agreements, MTAs, and NDAs, and it addresses trade secret and copyright issues. It participates in the drafting of strategic documents, such as the creation of internal guidelines, methodologies, and manuals that regulate the area of knowledge transfer and the management of intellectual property, including intellectual property rights and the remuneration of originators and/or authors.

It cooperates with the CAS institutes, including the CAO and the Head Office of the CAS, and helps them implement the approved proposals. It provides consultations on intellectual property protection and patent audits, assistance with the preparation of patents and business plans, and assistance with establishing spin-off companies (among other things, this constitutes one of the forms of career development for researchers). It provides analytical services, market research, patent searches, and advanced analyses based on public and commercial patent databases, company databases, and other databases. It also operates an online database of grant programmes for applied research and knowledge and technology transfer on the website of the CAS.

CeTTAV actively cooperates with organisations in the knowledge and technology transfer sector, such as the ASTP (Association of European Science & Technology Transfer Professionals), the TTO Circle at the JRC (the European Technology Transfer Offices Circle), and the national platform Transfera.cz. The information obtained by CeTTAV is shared with the CAS institutes and is reflected in its activities. CeTTAV also manages the Transfer Portal of the CAS – a communication platform whose main component is the “Technology and Equipment Database”, which primarily concentrates research results ready for transfer. The database also contains individual presentations of research results and product lists suitable for commercialisation and transfer as well as easy online access to these offers. It also provides an overview of equipment, facilities, and laboratories suitable for use by commercial and non-commercial entities.

CeTTAV’s marketing support for research teams and institutes of the CAS includes assistance with the preparation of the offer of results and marketing product list, consultation and advice on marketing and social media, collaboration on the promotion of research results aimed at the application sphere, and the organisation of matchmaking events connecting research teams with the business sector. It also shares news from the world of knowledge and technology transfer (KTT).

One of the main services CeTTAV provides are professional development programmes in the field of KTT. Specifically, it is the provision of comprehensive training in KTT competencies for the dissemination of knowledge and the career development of both new and experienced KTT managers. Within the framework of professional training in the field of KTT, CeTTAV organises practical and interactive, approximately six-month-long training courses on an ongoing basis for both novice and experienced staff of the CAS institutes, concluded with a knowledge test and a certificate of completion. The trained skills include evaluation of the market potential of inventions, valuation, contract preparation and negotiation, preparation of business models and presentations and negotiation for/with investors, open science, know-how/trade secrets and classified information, dual use, funding, etc. CeTTAV also organises specialised seminars and workshops on KTT topics for new and experienced KTT managers, researchers, and heads of institutes, as well as for staff of all CAS institutes or for individual institutes upon request. In addition, it organises regular informal meetings of the KTT staff working at the CAS institutes to share know-how and experience. CeTTAV initiated the creation and manages the meetings of “Council for the Use of Intellectual Property”, an advisory body of the CAS which issues recommendations in the field of KTT and cooperates with representatives of approximately twenty CAS institutes, including the CAO and the Head Office of the CAS.

As for the **Human Resources Office**, we want to highlight the favourable and constantly improving working conditions, including support for work-life balance, evaluation activities and numerous motivational factors, and preschool daycare facilities. The HR Office provides consultancy services to the CAS institutes concerning HR-related issues and assistance in setting up specific processes – evaluations, training, implementation of selection procedures, employee adaptation.

It provides templates of labour-law documents (e.g., the employment contract, non-disclosure agreement, agreement on deductions) and internal regulations, which are prepared by the Legal Section and, if needed, can be used by the CAS institutes, after some generalisation and modification, for their own use.

The HR Office fosters conditions for gender equality by providing childcare services (on-site in certain cases) for the entire Czech Academy of Sciences, thus enabling parents to gradually return to work after parental leave and helping employees achieve an optimal work-life balance. It facilitates the return to work by offering the option of working part-time, a hybrid on-site work/remote working model, flexible working hours, etc.

The CAO organises get-togethers for parents who are still on maternity or parental leave in order to provide them with relevant information regarding changes in the organisation, training, benefits, children's daycare groups, and the parents' possible involvement before the end of their parental leave. We plan to expand this project throughout the entire Czech Academy of Sciences in the future.

The HR Office organises regular training courses for the CAS institutes, primarily in soft skills and expertise/professional skills.

The **Finance Office** organises expert discussion sessions twice a year for the CAS. The meeting of technical and administrative senior management constitutes a two-day hybrid conference with the possibility of participating in person or online. Participants of the conference tend to comprise the staff of the Head Office of the CAS, including certain members of the Academy Council, invited speakers depending on the topics of lectures and workshops, and mainly the economic and administrative managers of the CAS institutes as well as their other colleagues, depending on the agenda.

The programme of the session always focuses on current topics, e.g., grant programmes of the CAS, support for excellence in research, evaluation of research and professional activities of the CAS, practical topics and specifics for research institutions concerning public procurement, filing services, a registry of contracts, areas of law related to research institutions, research, intangible assets, etc., a selection of recurring audit findings of the founder's audit department, and current topics in the field of accounting and taxation.

The **Academia Publishing Division** ensures the Academia brand remains top-tier among European publishers of academic and popular science literature and maintains a high standard of content as well as editorial and printing quality of book production. For the CAS institutes, it provides publishing activities in the field of non-periodical publications (books) and publishing activities in the field of periodical publications (journals). It also contributes with authorship to publications published by the CAS institutes themselves. It promotes the research results of the CAS institutes by means of the marketing event 'Month with the institute' and the publication and distribution of the promotional series *Science Around Us* (the brochures are distributed free of charge). The division also promotes the results of the individual research programmes of the CAS Strategy AV21 by distributing free brochures of the Strategy AV21 series and publishing monographs produced within the framework of the Strategy AV21 programmes. The division provides consultations in the field of printing and typesetting work, produces printing quotations, and sells the publications of the CAS institutes through the Academia bookstore network.

The **Conference and Hotel Division** provides medium- and long-term accommodation for researchers and their families. It manages conference rooms at the headquarters of the CAS on Národní Street in Prague and in other facilities of the CAS, providing full conference services and logistics. Specifically, the division manages the booking websites, conference fee collection, accommodation, catering, event technical support, including transportation services to/from the airport, and additional programme items and activities. For the public and the CAS staff, it organises topic-focused and cultural events such as Children's Day, Honey Days, etc. as well as popularisation lectures. It manages a bistro for employees at the CAS headquarters in Prague and provides catering at its own facilities and the CAS institutes. The division has also launched the Client Card project, a card of benefits for all CAS employees which includes discounts on the services of the Conference and Hotel Division (offering relaxation and wellness services) and the Academia Publishing Division.

The **Property Management and Services Division** manages the property and assets of the CAS and provides support to the CAS management in assessing, processing, and preparing documents for the approval of planned investment and non-investment actions concerning new construction, restorations, and costly repairs of buildings owned by the CAS institutes. The division provides support to the scientific community, and it is worth emphasising that the division is constantly expanding the scope of provided services. In particular, the division provides the following services for the management of the CAS and generally for all the CAS institutes: it manages the housing resources in use by the entire CAS, prepares documents for the Property Commission, the Economic Council, and the Housing Committee of the CAS, provides methodological and consultancy assistance to the CAS institutes and cooperates with them especially in regards to negotiations with cadastral and administrative authorities and investment actions, retains a record of contracts of the CAS institutes for the Economic Council and the Property Commission of the CAS (property transfers, lease agreements), provides technical support to the investor during construction projects, annually updates the list of spaces leased in the buildings of the CAS institutes and spaces leased by the CAS institutes in other buildings, holds artworks owned by the CAO in its care, retains their records and ensures the gradual restoration of selected works, and ensures a comprehensive loan process of artworks for exhibitions, including insurance. Furthermore, it prepares and negotiates contracts for the establishment of easements, prepares documents for the supervisory board, and implements the submission of proposals and subsequent registration.

The division maintains records of property and lease agreements pertaining to all CAS institutes. One of its most important tasks is the provision of quality housing for the employees of the individual CAS institutes and the preparation of documents for the meetings of the Housing Committee of the CAS, which deals with the allocation of starter apartments, standard apartments, or accommodation units to applicants from individual CAS institutes and which also approves the extension of existing lease agreements. The CAO owns and manages a total of 328 housing units.

The **External Relations Division** (ERD) is involved in creating and systematically presenting a positive media image of the Czech Academy of Sciences. It supports the long-term development strategy of the CAS by popularising science and promoting the results of research work conducted by the CAS institutes. The main objectives of the ERD include fostering public outreach and the interaction of the CAS with the academic and non-academic public, organising promotional and educational activities and projects, and helping identify important scientific and social issues. The CAO, by means of the ERD, organises popularisation events for the public (including

exhibitions, lectures, etc.) and hosts the largest science popularisation events in the Czech Republic. It provides marketing and production support to other CAS institutes in organising their own popularisation events. The ERD organises official events of the CAS and manages a platform supporting the cooperation of science popularisers. It organises the largest science festival in the Czech Republic, which includes lectures, exhibitions, open days at the CAS facilities, documentary film screenings, workshops, science cafés, and other activities that cover all scientific disciplines and take place across the country. Tens of thousands of visitors attend the festival every year. The ERD also organises the largest popular science event in the Czech Republic – the CAS Science Fair, where (not only) the CAS institutes present their research activities. It also organises Week of the Brain, a series of lectures on the latest discoveries and trends in brain research and neuroscience, which is part of Brain Awareness Week – a global campaign to raise public awareness of the achievements and benefits of brain research. The Open Science Project focuses on paving the way to science for students, educators, and the public, its aim to increase interest in science and research. It manages internships for talented students at the CAS institutes and holds courses to introduce educators to experiments in botany, chemistry, and physics that they can apply in their teaching. It organises lectures, excursions, exhibitions, and other events for the professional and general public and teaches researchers and science popularisers how to communicate with the media.

An integral part of the ERD is the office of **EURAXESS Czech Republic**, one of the members of the pan-European EURAXESS Network. It fulfils its main objective in line with its mission, which is to support the mobility of scientific researchers. It provides information, consultation, and assistance services on an individual basis, operates a unique portal dedicated to research mobility, including job offers within the European Research Area, and organises socio-cultural events that help improve the integration of R&D&I workers from abroad. It educates the professional public on the topic of employment of these researchers and makes every effort to eliminate obstacles hindering the mobility of researchers and to simplify administrative processes in the Czech Republic. The management team considers its primary task to be the expansion and further improvement of the level of services provided in accordance with the current needs of specific researchers and their Czech employers. Utilising all its know-how and competences, it has created a fully professional service that guides R&D&I workers through the process of entering the country and helps handle any potential administrative obstacles. EURAXESS Czech Republic constitutes an indispensable partner for employers who assemble international research teams. To facilitate the posting of vacancies on the EURAXESS web platform, a Guide for Researchers has been created (available in Czech). This guide (both in printed and electronic form) provides instructions on how to publish job offers and contains useful advice and recommendations.

Furthermore, social gatherings that contribute to improving the integration and inclusion of international researchers offer a unique opportunity to informally discuss the HR policies of individual institutes, the HR Award logo, and the HRS4R strategy, and to find out how international researchers are involved in this process at their workplaces and how they perceive the importance of the HR Award when choosing a future employer.

EURAXESS also prepared a questionnaire survey for researchers from abroad entitled “Persisting barriers in mobility of researchers and career development (legal, administrative, social, practical etc.)”. The survey consisted of a set of questions that focused on gauging motivation to pursue a research career, experience with administrative and cultural barriers, satisfaction with working conditions at the host organisation, career development opportunities, application of gender equality rules, work-life balance, and more.



The **Information Technology Division** is a partner to the CAS institutes regarding IT support. Within the framework of the Planned Development of Activities of the Czech Academy of Sciences, it promotes the use of modern information technologies, especially hosted cloud and network services, while ensuring the protection of personal data. At the same time, it offers the services of its own data centres and server infrastructure for the Economic Data Systems used by the CAS institutes. It actively participates in the CESNET and PASNET associations and manages the modernisation of the entire computer network of the CAS with an emphasis on improving its performance, security, and cost-effectiveness. It secures the conditions for ensuring optimal connection and access of the CAS institutes to the internet and other data networks and develops consultancy and methodological activities in the field of IT for the CAS institutes. It creates, manages, modernises, and maintains websites and web database applications with an emphasis on maximising user friendliness, accessibility, and optimisation. It also helps create and maintain the conditions for the implementation, maintenance, development, and support of the centralised Economic Data System used by the CAS institutes.