



Study 11/2022

# The Publication Performance of the Czech Science Foundation Panel Members (2019–2021)<sup>2</sup>

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## Summary

- The aim of this research has been to find out to what extent the scientific results of the members of the Czech Science Foundation (GA ČR) evaluation panels confirm their erudition for evaluating GA ČR Standard Project proposals.
- One of the principal goals of GA ČR is to „provide financial support in research and development for research projects in basic research with a high potential for achieving world class results“. The GA ČR evaluation panels play a key role in identifying such projects. They assess the quality of submitted projects, draft evaluation reports and prepare recommendations for discipline committees. Each panel comprises approximately 10 scientists working in a given field. In order for the panels to succeed in their mission, their members need to be able to identify projects with a high potential. It can be expected that scientists are better placed to recognize excellent research if they have themselves undertaken research projects at such level.
- Using bibliometric tools, we have analysed the share of panelists who served in GA ČR evaluation panels in years 2019–2021 whose publication performance during the preceding decade was substantially lower than the publication performance of lead researchers of projects that these panels evaluated and that ended up being supported. We show results separately for each of 3 alternative measures of publication performance: i) the qualitatively highest group of scientific journals (e.g. the top decile) where a researcher has published an article, ii) the number of publications in the top two quartiles of scientific journals in terms of their influence and iii) the total number of citations received by the researcher’s publications.

<sup>2</sup> This study represents the author’s own views and not the official position of the Czech Academy of Sciences’ Economics Institute nor the Charles University Centre for Economic Research and Graduate Education (CERGE). An earlier draft of this study has been shared with the GA ČR Presidium. I would like to thank Martin Srholec for invaluable advice and comments throughout the process of preparing the study. I would also like to thank Taras Hrendash, Štěpán Jurajda, Dan Münich and members of the Presidium and the staff of GA ČR for their help and useful suggestions. I would like to thank the Czech Science Foundation for providing additional data for this project. The study was produced with support from the Czech Academy of Sciences as part of its Center for Research, Development and Innovation Analysis programme (RaDIAC). All remaining omissions and errors are my own.

- The main findings of the study are the following:
  - In most panels, the publication performance of panelists matches that of the lead researchers on supported projects, and in many panels it is even exceeds it.
  - The share of panelists with inadequate publication productivity is low to negligible in most panels. Fewer than a quarter of members of an average panel are characterised by a publication productivity substantially inferior to that of above-average lead researchers.
  - In some panels, however, the share of members with inadequate publication productivity is high enough to potentially influence the recommendations issued by the panel as a whole. This is the case in about a third of all panels; the share of members with an inadequated publication productivity exceeds 30% in these panels.
  - A higher share of panelists with publication performance substantially below that of lead researchers is observed particuarly in social and technical fields. These fields lag behind other research areas in the Czech Republic also in terms of the overall publication performance.
  - Even in the fields where a high share of panelists have inadequate publication performance, there are many scientists with sufficiently high publication performance who have never been members of a GA ČR panel. On average, these fields include several dozens scientists whose publication performance is comparable to that of lead researchers on supported projects.
- Our findings lead to the following recommendations:
  1. In the case of panels characterised by a high share of members with inadequate publication performance, the relevant bodies within GA ČR should put a stronger emphasis on the publication performance of the nominated scientists during the selection procedure, and they should try to attract more nominations of excellent researchers.
  2. The top scientists in all fields, and particularly the fields with a higher share of panelists with inadequate publication performance, who have never served on GA ČR panels should consider joining a panel. The situation in their respective fields is unlikely to improve without their help.
  3. The relative scientific quality of panels could be increased be a stronger participation of researchers based outside Czechia. These changes would be particularly valuable in fields characterised by a lack of sufficiently qualified potential panelists within the Czech Republic. This could be facilitated, in particular, by simplifying the nomination procedure. A more extensive use of English as a working language and support to online participation from abroad could also be helpful in this regard.