

European Research Ministers meet in Prague

Prague, 22 July 2022 – Yesterday and today, EU Ministers responsible for the research agenda met at the Congress Centre in Prague for an informal meeting of the EU Competitiveness Council. The main theme of the policy debate was to exploit the potential for synergies between EU and national initiatives and programmes to promote research and innovation in Europe. The informal meeting of European Research Ministers was chaired by the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, Vladimír Balaš, as host.

At the two-day meeting, ministers discussed ways to fully exploit the potential of synergies, i.e. the effective combination of financial resources when investing in research and innovation, so as to avoid overlaps or possible duplications. Examples of good practice from individual countries were also exchanged during the discussion.

"Synergies between European and national research and innovation funding are one of the key priorities of the Czech EU Presidency. In light of the increasing complexity of European support for research and innovation, it is necessary to ensure the most efficient use of invested funds and resources. To this end, it is therefore essential to strengthen cooperation between the European Commission and EU Member States so that the wide range of instruments supporting scientific progress and technological development in Europe are used in ways that complement each other and maximise the benefits and impacts of such investments," said **Vladimír Balaš**, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, who chaired the EU Council meeting.

Ministers also discussed the impact of the Russian military aggression against Ukraine on European research and innovation policy and the measures taken to assist Ukrainian academicians and researchers. In this context, Minister of Education, Youth and Sports Vladimír Balaš noted: *"It is crucial that there is a clear consensus at EU level on the measures taken by the European Commission in the research and innovation sectors, and EU Member States are intensively assisting Ukrainian academicians and researchers affected by the war. I firmly believe and hope that the measures taken will help to involve and integrate Ukrainian scientists into the European Research Area, as well as into our society, and that their talents will be further developed for Ukraine's post-war reconstruction."*

Mariya Gabriel, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, added: *"I welcome the debate on synergies to better exploit the links between different funding instruments, to mobilise R&I investments across the Union. It is a way to reinforce our European Research Area and improve access to excellence. We need stronger innovation ecosystems across the EU to achieve our green and digital transitions and through them reinforce our strategic autonomy. It was also important to exchange views with EU Ministers on the impact of the war in Ukraine on our academic and research community. We have decided to use our Horizon Europe and ERASMUS+ resources to provide concrete support to researchers, and I am very pleased to see that our institutions have shown a remarkable resilience and solidarity."*

The meeting of European Research Ministers was a follow-up to the Conference on Synergies in Research and Innovation Funding in Europe, which took place in Prague on 7-8 July 2022 and resulted in the so-called Prague Declaration.