

Open report of the Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) of the Institute of Biotechnology (IBT) of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Jun 20-21, 2024

The Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) visited the premises on June 20-21, 2024. The SAB members present were: Gideon Schreiber (chair), Milton T. Stubbs (co-chair), Agnes Görlach, Rafael Oliva, Marie-Paule Roth, and Arne Skerra.

The evaluation process involved each Laboratory head — Cyril Bařinka, Jiřĩ Černý, Petr Malý, Gabriela Pavlínková, Bohdan Schneider and Jaroslav Truksa — submitting a written report in advance and giving a short presentation to the review panel. Discussions with the panel members followed, after which they visited and interviewed laboratory staff prior to the preparation of individual laboratory reports. The results were subsequently discussed with the director, Bohdan Schneider.

The review panel was highly impressed with the IBT's management, infrastructure, and the ability to conduct excellent science. Both PIs and junior researchers expressed satisfaction with the available resources and overall institute management. Evaluation criteria were graded as follows:

Funding: While funding varies significantly among laboratories, it is generally adequate for scientific pursuits. However, the inability to carry over funds from year to year causes stress due to last-minute new funding commitments. The director has mitigated this with bridging funds, though international funding remains low, partly due to the complexity of European grants.

Technology Transfer and Patents: Significant progress has been made in technology transfer under Martina Plisová 's coordination. Her assistance in translating basic science into potential drug discoveries is highly valuable. While industrial collaborations generate funding and patents, they result in fewer high-end publications, prompting a discussion of the extent to which industry-led projects—where research groups use their expertise to fulfill industrial partners' research goals—should be promoted.

Long-term Vision and Recruitment: The IBT's ongoing recruitment of junior scientists based on merit is commendable, and continuous recruitment is recommended to maintain a balanced age structure.

Additional Points Discussed:

- **Social Networking:** Improved networking activities include a joint IBT BIOCEV weekly seminar, popular Wednesday coffee breaks, and a successful PhD day organized by students. Concerning the latter, the students indicated that higher participation of senior staff would be appreciated.
- **Career Development:** Few lab members are motivated to pursue PI positions, highlighting the need for career development schemes to encourage and support students and junior staff.
- **Childcare:** Establishing an affordable campus childcare facility would help promote women scientists to senior roles by addressing the considerable disruption caused by extended childcare leave.

- Research Synergy: Encouraging synergy between researchers focused on macromolecular structure/function and those with a biological focus is positive and should be further promoted.
- Shared Infrastructure: The institute's well-maintained and expertly run shared infrastructure facilities are excellent, supporting high-quality research and serving the wider scientific community and industry.
- The IBT is well-funded, with outstanding facilities and researchers. To become a leading European biotechnology research institute, it should increase international visibility and attract excellent post-docs. Suggestions include (i) launching a competitive post-doc program where excellent post-doc candidates can receive increased fellowships; (ii) funding visits for potential excellent post-docs; (iii) leveraging social media for promotion of the IBT visibility; (iv) using alumni success stories for advertisements; and (v) providing success stories of current post-docs. Obviously, more thought has to be given to this subject.

Sincerely yours

Gideon Schreiber (chair), Milton T. Stubbs (co-chair), Agnes Görlach, Rafael Oliva, Marie-Paule Roth and Arne Skerra.