

Recommendations by the International Advisory Board to the leadership of the Slovak Academy of Sciences 23.8.2019

The IAB noted with pleasure that our recommendations have produced positive developments, such as the new collaborative clusters with leading universities, inclusion of rectors in the scientific board, outreach activities of the Open Academy and management training for Institute directors.

- The IAB agrees with the topics/headlines of the draft SAS Strategy 2030, as well as with the analysis of the present situation of SAS.
- We suggest that when advocating the “knowledge society”, SAS avoids a narrow interpretation of the concept that may lead to building of elites and creation of inequalities in society. “Knowledge society” is a somewhat out dated concept, because it excludes natural resources that are as important an asset for any country as knowledge. SAS is advised to widen the “knowledge society” concept by including social innovation, inclusivity and social cohesion as key targets. Inter-disciplinarity, inclusiveness and internationalization should be at the core of the SAS Strategy 2030.
- The catalogue of strategic tasks in the draft SAS Strategy 2030 is somewhat long and detailed. Maybe by some clustering and weeding out the text will become stronger. The primary tasks of SAS, as stated in the mission, should be included in this catalogue.
- SAS is advised to look beyond national borders. Being an acknowledged player and an integrated part of the international world of higher education and research is a worthy goal. As an internationally attractive and well-connected eco-system, Slovakia can develop itself better and more sustainably, enabling brain drain to turn into brain circulation.
- The bottlenecks of collaboration between public and private institutions in R&D, and especially the issue of intellectual property rights and their commercialization should be made visible at the national government level, and solutions to problems should be sought for jointly.
- An international advisory board is recommended for each SAS Institute.
- Concerning the posts of new Institute directors, also international advertising is proposed.
- In addition to management training, exchange of best practice between the Institutes is recommended to be urgently implemented.
- The IAB noted with pleasure that SAS is preparing for the next round of evaluation in 2020 or 2021. Our suggestion is that the next evaluation be more strategic and less detailed, more developmental and less ranking oriented. The three main spheres (quality and performance, contribution to society, strategy and potential for development) are well chosen. Yet it looks as if ranking into 4 or 7 categories is the most important output. We would strongly advise the Institutes to focus on robust and deep self-evaluation, as well as on strategic planning ahead. The international evaluation panel could then concentrate on these two aspects, rather than on detailed data sets and comparative ranking.
- The IAB remains confident that SAS is on the right track. It will be our pleasure to further contribute to the success of SAS where we can.