

Egils Levits: national research institutes are key for Latvia's scientific excellence

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President of Latvia Egils Levits met with representatives of the National Research Institute Association at the Riga Castle on 4 October. Meeting focused on future development of research institutes and their place in the national science ecosystem.

'Thank you for taking care and promotion of Latvia's scientific excellence! You have put Latvia on the global science map,' President of Latvia said when discussing the international assessment of Latvia's scientific potential conducted in 2020.

Independent international experts have concluded that Latvia has very good infrastructure in terms of independent national research institutes. Scientific excellence of the academic personnel at these research centres has allowed them to raise almost 38% of international funding tendered out. Science is one of the presidential priorities of Egils Levits and he is extremely pleased to see the level of scientific excellence achieved by research hubs, stressed the President.

On the activities and governance of these institutions, participants praised the increase of research funding in the proposed next year's budget. President of Latvia has repeatedly urged to ensure adequate science funding and well-informed policies.

Although all national research institutes cooperate with at least two or even three universities, including student participation in joint inter-disciplinary research projects, Association is highly concerned about retention of young and talented scientific minds in Latvia as brain drain is still a problem that plagues local research hubs.

Other topics of discussion included university reform. According to President Levits, this reform should give a boost to national research institutes. Representatives of the Association underlined that unnecessary competition between science hubs is detrimental to their development, and there should be closer cooperation instead.

President met with Aivars Bērziņš, Director of Institute of Food Safety, Animal Health and Environment "BIOR", Uģis Cābulis, Head of Lab at Latvian State Institute of Wood Chemistry, Modris Greitāns, Director at Institute of Electronics & Computer Science, Jurgis Jansons, Director of the Latvian State Forest Research Institute "Silava", Osvalds Pugovičs, Director of the Latvian Institute of Organic Synthesis, and Nils Rostoks, Director of the Latvian Biomedical Research and Study Centre. President of Latvia Egils Levits has personally visited most of these research hubs.

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