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HR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH



*The CREAtion of the Department of Physical Chemistry of Biological SysTEms [CREATE]*

**666295 — CREATE — H2020-WIDESPREAD-2014-2015/H2020-WIDESPREAD-2014-2**

## The 5<sup>th</sup> Advisory Board meeting report

Summary

**Warsaw, March 2021**



This project has received funding from the *European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme* under grant agreement No 666295

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## AN OVERVIEW:

On 12<sup>th</sup> March, 2021, the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting of the ERA Chair Advisory Board (AB) for the CREATE project took place. Due to the pandemic, the meeting was held online via the Zoom platform. The following persons participated in the meeting:

### ERA Chair holder:

- **Professor Maciej Wojtkowski** – the ERA Chair holder, head of Department of Physical Chemistry of Biological Systems, the Institute of Physical Chemistry, Polish Academy of Sciences (IPC), PL

### Authorities representative:

- **Mateusz Gaczynski** – Deputy Director, Department of Innovation and Development, Ministry of Education and Science, PL

### ERC grant holder:

- **Professor Wilhelm Huck** – ERC Advanced grant holder, head of Physical-Organic Chemistry Group, Institute for Molecules and Materials, Radboud University Nijmegen, NL

### Business representatives:

- **Rafal Bator** – Partner, Enterprise Investors, PL

### Project management and Project-Support-Office:

- **Professor Robert Holyst** – Project Coordinator, head of Department of Soft Condensed Matter, IPC, PL
- **Agnieszka Tadrzak** – CREATE Project Manager, Manager for R&D funding, IPC, PL
- **Dr Patrycja Niton** – member of PSO, IPC, PL
- **Dr Monika Kuczynska-Wydorska** – member of PSO, IPC, PL.

## THE COURSE OF THE MEETING

The 5<sup>th</sup> (final) ERA Chair Advisory Board meeting aimed to demonstrate the results of the CREATE project to the AB members and seek their advice on the key points related to the maintenance and evolution of the department led by the ERA Chair holder in a post-pandemic era.

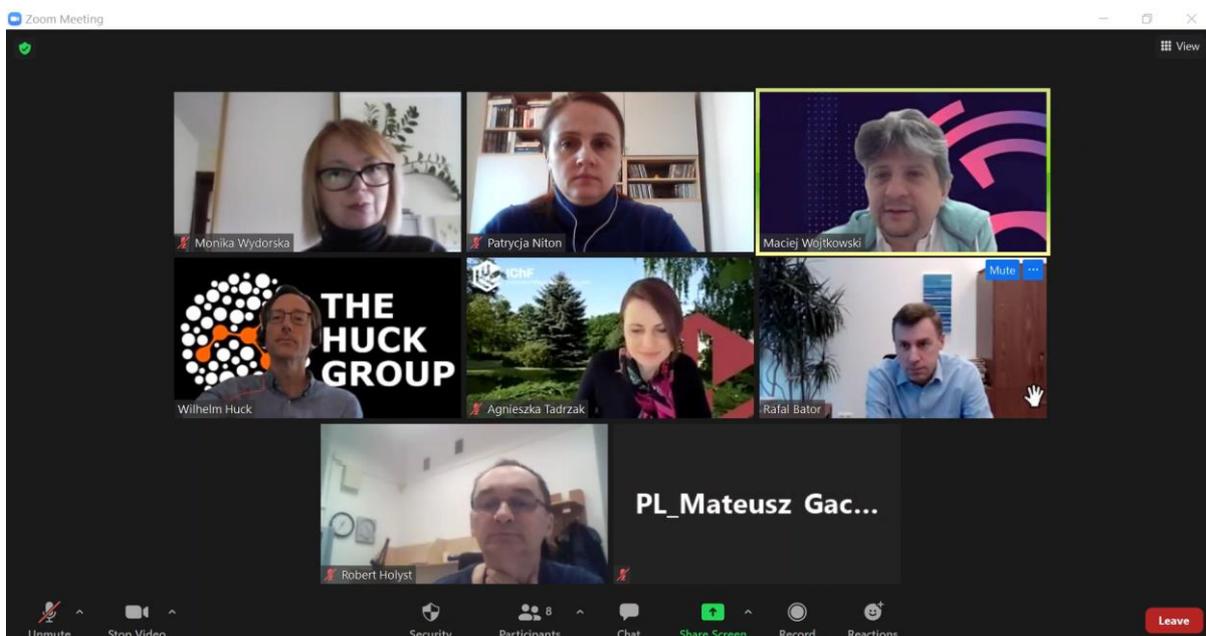
The ERA Chair holder's way to secure CREATE project's sustainability was to raise funds to grow a new excellence centre at IPC. Requirements of the granting schemes led to developing a subunit of IPC – the International Centre for Translational Eye Research (ICTER). ICTER has been developing new therapies and diagnostic tools to detect and cure various visual dysfunctions of ageing populations.

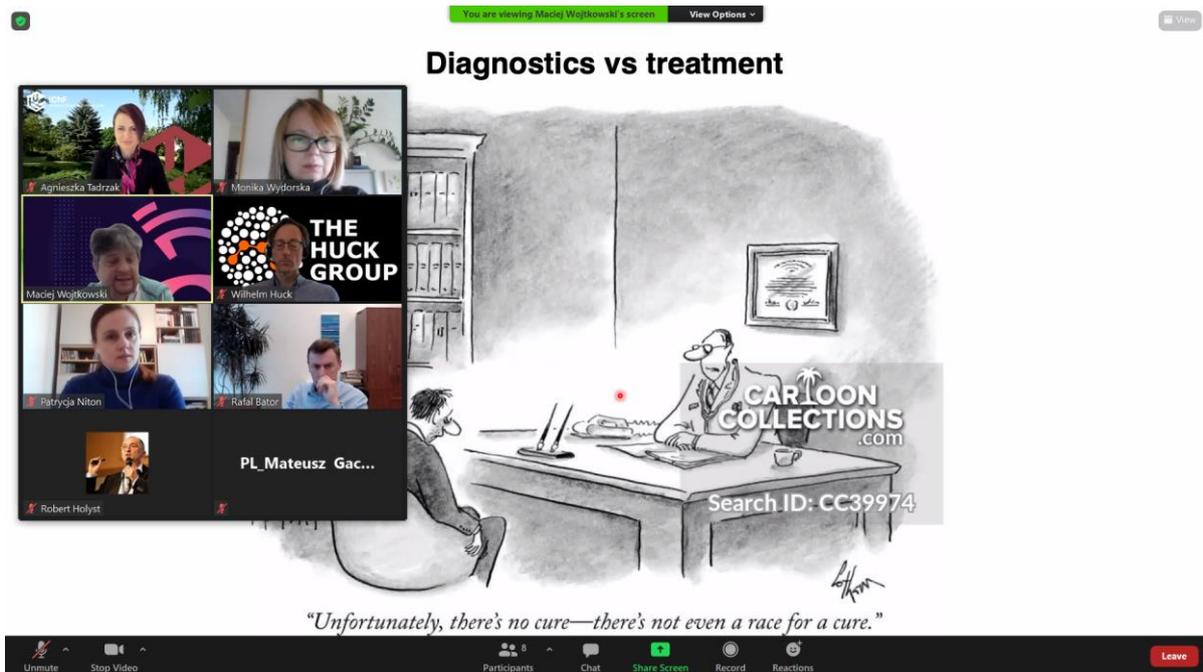
The pandemic and the recent changes in the research funding ecosystem may significantly impact the ERA Chair's research agenda. It raises issues that the ERA Chair holder wanted like to discuss with the Advisory Board members (see annexe 1. for a full Agenda), such as:

1. The current situation of the financial market – the aptitude to invest in science and/or launch new high-tech products
2. The post-/pandemic reality in science (e.g. collaboration, mobility, science funding and science management)
3. Development of future funding strategies to fit in key orientations of the Horizon Europe and Green Deal, National Development Plan

The meeting started with an opening speech of **Professor Robert Holyst**. After this introduction, the ERA Chair holder – **prof. Maciej Wojtkowski** – summarized the research and organizational work carried out during the entire CREATE project.

In his speech, Prof. Wojtkowski briefly summarized the last five years of his scientific activity in IPC PAS: he discussed the core competence of the Physical Optics and Biophotonics Group (POB) and current research projects carried out by POB. He also presented the structure and research strategy of the newly established International Centre For Translational Eye Research (ICTER).





**Professor Maciej Wojtkowski delivered the presentation summarizing the research and organizational work carried out during the entire CREATE project**

The AB members shared their suggestions and thoughts referring to the abovementioned key points, e.g.:

1. The current situation of the financial market – the aptitude to invest in science and/or launch new high-tech products
  - ✓ Rafał Bator expressed that there is there excess liquidity on the market. Everyone wants to move from cash to investments, people are more open to investing in all kinds of assets, and technology is definitely at the top of the investments list. He also stated that during the pandemic, the international funds are also ready to invest in oversees ventures. Nowadays, the market has become global, and thanks to the online formula of the meetings it is easier to start the new cooperation.
  - ✓ Prof. Huck agreed with Rafał Bator that there is a good time for the funding for new ventures and spin-out companies. However, he expressed concern about the continued funding for research and academic activities. Prof. Huck suggested an application for EU grants. However, he warned that due to the pandemic, these funds could be reduced.
  - ✓ AB members, prof. Huck and Mateusz Gaczyński, suggested building a business plan for the next 2-3 years.
2. The post-/pandemic reality in science (e.g. collaboration, mobility, science funding and science management)
  - ✓ Prof. Wojtkowski pointed out the pandemic's positive aspects, such as easier access to the conference while saving time, high-quality online courses and training that can change young people's culture to be more independent learners. However, Prof. Huck mentioned that people are not motivated to do science with the ongoing

pandemic and remote learning. They both agreed that the lack of mobility among students causes that we have to rely only on local students, which is not good for research and for the creative atmosphere among the group.

- ✓ Prof. Huck shared an idea introduced at his university, the Late Night Conference initiative. The Late-Night Conference is a series of live-streamed themed lectures delivered by famous scientists (even Nobel Prize winners) and interactive discussions for science students and those with an interest in science in general. During this pandemic period, it has become harder to communicate science to undergraduate students. This initiative gives an opportunity to experience the latest developments in science, provides perspectives on scientific careers, and enables participation in discussions.
- ✓ Rafał Bator recommended establishing a solid second layer of management in prof. Wojtkowski's team. He advised that prof. Wojtkowski should make sure that somebody can replace him, especially during a pandemic.

### 3. Development of future funding strategies to fit in key orientations of the Horizon Europe and Green Deal, National Development Plan

- ✓ Mateusz Gaczyński suggested getting acquainted with the European Funds for Innovative Economic Programme draft, which is the new financial perspective of the cohesion policy instrument. This programme will include the support schemes for the entrepreneurs and for the scientists, and it could support prof. Wojtkowski activities at various levels.
- ✓ Prof. Huck shared his experience in preparing for the Open Data policy. He mentioned that a good solution for securing and sharing research data is setting up a central server that all group members use. Moreover, to make this data available to everyone and present it in an understandable way for the recipient, it is good to include the research results in the supporting information attached to the publication.
- ✓ Rafał Bator suggested securing long-term financing for research. Now when time is favourable for any investment, it is an excellent moment to establish new relationships with investors and look for financing resources.
- ✓ Mateusz Gaczyński suggested that if prof. Wojtkowski will apply for the Teaming project under Horizon Europe and will receive it, additional funding from the Ministry of Education and Science budget could be eligible to supplement this project.

"Before COVID-19" is going to become the new "B.C."

1. The current situation of the financial market – the aptitude to invest in science and/or launch new high-tech products
2. The post-/pandemic reality in science (e.g. collaboration, mobility, science funding and science management)
3. Development of future funding strategies to fit in key orientations of the Horizon Europe and Green Deal, National Development Plan



***Discussion of the Advisory Board members.***

After the discussion, the assembly was officially closed. AB was impressed by prof. Maciej Wojtkowski achievements. All AB members congratulated him on setting up a new department at IPC PAS, which works perfectly, as well as setting up an international centre that looks to be an extremely powerful and leading player worldwide.



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## ANNEX 1.

### *Full agenda of the 5<sup>th</sup> Advisory Board meeting*



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**THE 5<sup>TH</sup> MEETING OF THE ERA CHAIR ADVISORY BOARD**

[link to Zoom meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/94194757321?pwd=L1Ntc0RRYVJMby8vcGp5SUxvVWtZZz09>]

**AGENDA**

**12<sup>th</sup> March 2021**

**10.00–10.10 Prof. Robert Hołyst, Project Coordinator**

Welcome and Introduction

**10.10–10.40 Prof. Maciej Wojtkowski, ERA Chair holder**

Presentation summarizing the research and organizational work carried out during the entire CREATE project

**10:30–12:00 Discussion:**

**“The maintenance and evolution of the department led by the ERA Chair holder in a post-pandemic era”**

The ERA Chair holder’s way to secure CREATE project’s sustainability was to raise funds further to grow a new centre of excellence at IPC PAS. Requirements of the granting schemes led to developing a subunit of IPC PAS—the International Center for Translational Eye Research (ICTER). ICTER aims to develop new therapies and diagnostic tools to detect and cure various visual dysfunctions of ageing populations.

The pandemic and the recent changes in the research funding ecosystem may significantly impact the ERA Chair’s research agenda. It raises issues that the ERA Chair holder would like to discuss with the Advisory Board members, such as:

1. The current situation of the financial market – the aptitude to invest in science and/or launch new high-tech products
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