

STRATEGIC PLAN OF CERGE UK

FOR 2026–2030

PREAMBLE

The Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education of Charles University in Prague (CERGE UK) aims to continue building and strengthening a center of excellence and innovation in both basic and applied economic research and in doctoral education — educating elite economists for the Central European region and beyond who will serve the public interest and produce and disseminate economic research with an impact on public policy.

To achieve a level of excellence comparable to that of the world's leading economics departments, the Center for Economic Research and Graduate Education forms a joint workplace with the Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, known as CERGE- EI. The operation of the joint workplace is highly integrated on the basis of a long-term agreement between the Czech Academy of Sciences and Charles University, including a shared administration. Since its founding, the position of CERGE UK has been unique in that, although formally a university institute, it operates its educational programs entirely autonomously alongside its top-level research. At present these comprise four programs (the master's program Master in Economic Research and the PhD program in Economics and Econometrics, each in a Czech and an English version). The de facto autonomy of CERGE UK extends not only to the academic content of the programs themselves but also to the related administration and services for students and faculty. CERGE UK thereby substantially exceeds the traditional scope of a university institute and in practice covers the full remit of a faculty. This unique position of CERGE UK was reflected in an informal founding understanding that CERGE UK would in practice be placed on an equal footing with the faculties — a status that is absolutely essential for a strategy focused on top international scientific output.

Since its founding, CERGE-EI has aimed to become one of the world's top 20 university programs in economics. Within the joint workplace of CERGE UK and the Economics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences, CERGE UK

thus constitutes the only truly internationally comparable economics institution in the Czech Republic. High international academic standards are set and maintained by an international Executive and Supervisory Committee (ESC), whose members are renowned economists from leading economics departments around the world, including Nobel laureates.

The plan for 2026–2030 builds on the goals of previous periods and further develops and revises them in the context of the changing environment of science, research, and education. Its starting point is the exceptional position of CERGE UK within Czech science. In the most recent round of the national evaluation of research organizations, 10 of the 11 results submitted in Module 1 (peer review) were rated at the highest level of contribution to knowledge and societal relevance — by far the highest success rate of any unit of Charles University across all disciplines. In the bibliometric evaluation (Module 2), CERGE UK shows the highest relative publication productivity in the most influential decile of world journals in Economics and Business in the entire Czech Republic, across disciplines and institutions. These top results are achieved despite a very small staff base. Likewise, in the evaluation of the Cooperation program, CERGE UK received an A rating — and, as the only unit of Charles University, it has now received it twice in a row. The most recent evaluation describes economics at Charles University as its “crown jewel.”

The strategic plan therefore deliberately builds on a unique combination of three characteristics, as CERGE UK has no counterpart in the Czech environment: doctoral and master's education of international standard, top-level basic research published in the world's best journals, and the direct transfer of knowledge into public policy through applied research. The aim for the coming period is not only to maintain these strengths but also to deliberately expand into fields of economics that are essential for the Czech Republic yet so far remain uncovered.

PRIORITY AREAS

1. Excellence and international standard of the CERGE UK doctoral program in economics

The goal is for CERGE UK, as a top center of doctoral study, to strengthen its excellence and international reach and to compete successfully with the world's leading PhD programs in economics. We want to maintain our dominant position among doctoral programs in the Czech Republic, continue to improve our standing in Europe and worldwide — in line with Charles University's placement in Economics and Econometrics in the QS 2026 ranking — and further improve the already exceptional competitiveness of our graduates.¹

Within this goal, we want in particular to:

- Raise the quality of applicants and students through intensified, systematic recruitment efforts, both within the Czech Republic and internationally — especially in the countries of Central Europe and the post-Soviet region, where CERGE UK is historically strong. The instrument is strategic promotion of the program in target countries, including communication of graduates' success. At the same time, we want to simplify and streamline the transition from the Master in Economic Research program to doctoral study.
- Increase the attractiveness of the program by maintaining and further improving an internationally competitive curriculum that is regularly updated and whose content is comparable to similar courses at the world's top universities.
- Further increase graduates' competitiveness on the international academic and non-academic job markets, both by supporting doctoral students' mobility stays at leading world universities and their active participation in top conferences, workshops, and summer schools, and by emphasizing systematic work with doctoral students, including regular student workshops.
- Increase the rate of successful and timely completion of studies while maintaining high quality standards, for example by strengthening stipends for the most talented students.
- Further develop alumni relations and involve alumni in CERGE UK activities, thereby strengthening the alumni network, alumni identification with CERGE UK, and their support of new students — for example through Alumni Fellowships for first-year students.

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- number and share of doctoral students with mobility stays at leading foreign universities;
- placements of graduates on the world academic job market as well as in the Czech Republic;
- rate of successful completion of studies and median time to completion;
- number and quality of doctoral students' publications in internationally recognized journals;
- number of applicants and share of international applicants;
- maintaining or improving Charles University's placement in the QS ranking (Economics and Econometrics).

¹ In the past five years, CERGE UK graduates have taken positions at, among others, the following academic institutions: Nova School of Business and Economics, Universidad Carlos III, University of Bonn, University of Cologne, University of Copenhagen, Maastricht University, Toulouse Business School, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne, Banco de Portugal, the German Central Bank, the Max Planck Institute for Research on Collective Goods, and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission.

2. | Development and strengthening of the master's program Master in Economic Research

The goal is to create a master's program that enables students to acquire economic knowledge with an emphasis on its applicability, data science expertise, and professional skills such as programming and presenting. The program will offer a public policy focus as one of its specializations.

Within this goal, we want in particular to:

- Introduce a new specialization focused on the economic analysis of public policy. Within this specialization, students will gain knowledge of fields of economics with a public policy focus, as well as data analysis skills. The specialization will prepare students to address public policy problems and to design, communicate, and implement policy reforms and proposals.
- Increase enrollment to 30–40 students per cohort through intensified, systematic recruitment efforts, both within the Czech Republic and internationally — especially in the countries of Central Europe and the post-Soviet region, where CERGE UK is historically relatively strong. As with the doctoral program, the instrument is strategic promotion of the program in target countries, including communication of graduates' success.
- Improve services for students entering the job market: connecting students with potential employers more actively through “Career Lunches” that enable mutual contact already during their studies, building a network of internships for students, and improving services for graduating students.
- Increase the number of students in the tuition-based English version of the program. Tuition revenue will enable further development of the program and increase its competitiveness.
- Increase the attractiveness of the program by streamlining the transition to doctoral study.

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- number of students in the program;
- placements of graduates on the job market;
- number of applicants and share of international applicants.

3. Excellence of CERGE UK in economics in Europe and worldwide

The goal is for CERGE UK to be an institution with a dominant position in basic economic research in the Czech Republic that continues to strengthen its standing in the world.

The most serious long-term constraint on the development of CERGE UK's excellence is its small size: the total number of faculty members is far below the minimum efficient scale. This makes CERGE UK vulnerable to the departure of key faculty members. Its small size also prevents coverage of the full breadth of economics and the creation of full-fledged research groups, and consequently limits the ability to recruit top researchers capable of publishing in the best international journals.

Within the joint workplace CERGE-EI, we therefore pursue the following:

- We want CERGE UK to increase the number of faculty members by roughly 10 FTE and to cover all important areas of economics — especially those that are essential for the Czech Republic and are not yet developed by research teams domestically.
- We aim to cover in particular the following fields, which are not covered at the team level — many not even individually — and for whose scientific development, and for meeting the associated societal needs at a comparable level of excellence, no other domestic institution has the prerequisites:
 - *International trade*. For a small open economy such as the Czech Republic, this is a crucial field. Its importance is especially clear amid worldwide changes in tariff policies and the aggressive growth of Chinese exports. The field is currently not covered at all.
 - *Economics of growth and innovation*. A fundamental theoretical and applied field, in which the 2025 Nobel Prize was awarded to Philippe Aghion, a member of the CERGE-EI Executive and Supervisory Committee. The field's importance is especially clear for Europe and the Czech Republic, for which restoring economic growth and innovation is absolutely essential. It is currently covered by only about one FTE.
 - *Industrial organization and competition policy*. This field is not yet developed in the Czech Republic, although it is a necessary condition for high-quality regulation and the protection of competition. It is currently not covered.
 - *Health economics and health policy*. This field barely exists in the Czech Republic and is essential for managing the fiscal burden of aging — that is, the challenge of maintaining the quality of health care in an aging population and the optimal functioning of the health insurance sector. It is currently not covered.
 - *Labor economics*. This field studies the functioning of the labor market and the evolution of wages, employment, and unemployment. It is exceptionally important at present, particularly because of the rapid development of artificial intelligence (AI), which is fundamentally transforming the labor market, but also because of demographic change and population aging. It is currently covered by roughly 1.5 FTE, which is insufficient given its importance.
 - *Economics of education*. This field analyzes the quantity and quality of public and private investment in education, and individuals' decisions about investing in their education and human capital. It, too, is important especially because of the development of new technologies and their consequences for education policy. It is currently covered by roughly two-thirds of an FTE.

- *Urban and regional economics*. This field addresses questions related to the economics of cities and, more generally, the spatial distribution of economic activity. It is important for understanding regional economic inequalities and for the regional economic policy that builds on that understanding. It is currently not covered.
- *Energy and environmental economics*. These fields are key to the energy transformation of the economy and society's resilience to climate change, as well as to the design of effective energy policy. They are currently not covered.
- Expanding the thematic scope of research must not come at the expense of high quality standards. We plan to continue developing the conditions for recruiting talented junior and leading senior academics on the international market and for reducing the risk of their departure.
- We will support a system of evaluating academic staff based on a preference for the quality of output over quantity, with the Executive and Supervisory Committee (ESC) serving as an integrated part of faculty evaluation. In the same spirit, we will support further, more flexible adjustments to the conditions of habilitation and professorial appointment procedures that move in the same direction.
- We want to increase our success in international grant competitions (ERC, Horizon Europe, and other EU programs) as well as in competitions for top national grants (EXPRO, ERC-CZ), through a systematic emphasis on research excellence.

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- number of newly covered fields and the FTE of top researchers in them;
- success of recruitment on the international academic market and the retention rate of key staff;
- number of publications in the Top 5 and in the most influential decile/quartile of world journals (D1/Q1);
- CERGE UK's share of top publication output in Economics and Business in the Czech Republic;
- results of the regular international peer review of staff;
- number of submitted and funded international projects (especially ERC and Horizon Europe);
- number and quality of prestigious awards and invited lectures given by staff.

4. Societal impact of economic research and its popularization

The goal is to further strengthen the role of CERGE UK as an institution that — through top-level economic research, its accessible communication, and active cooperation with the public and private sectors — contributes to informed public debate, the design of high-quality public policies, and the popularization of economic science. CERGE UK will develop activities that connect academic excellence with practical societal impact, reach both expert and lay audiences, and promote the use of evidence-based knowledge in addressing key societal challenges.

Within this goal, we plan in particular to:

- Expand the thematic scope of applied research oriented toward current public policy issues whose research and analytical support in the Czech Republic has long been significantly underdeveloped. This will include improving access to data and information sources and their analytical exploitation. This goal will be coordinated with the development of the master's program and its specialization in public policy analysis.
- Further develop CERGE UK's external relations and communication strategy in keeping with its international character, including intensive cooperation with the media and communication through the website, social media, and other channels and tools.
- Popularize economic science and research through our own lectures, seminars, conferences, panel discussions, workshops, and courses for expert and lay audiences, as well as through active participation in existing events focused on communicating science and its societal importance; and produce and disseminate expert and popular outputs — in particular studies, policy briefs, newsletters, analytical commentaries, and other formats — that communicate in an accessible way the results of economic research, especially applied research relevant to public debate and decision-making.

- Produce studies, policy briefs, newsletters, and other outputs that disseminate the results of applied research in particular.
- Seek public and private funding sources (including foundation and philanthropic funding) that enable the pursuit of applied research.

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- number of applied policy studies and expert outputs (IDEA);
- documented impacts on public policy (legislative changes, NERV recommendations, etc.);
- volume of funding for applied research from public and private sources, including donations;
- representation of staff in national and international advisory and evaluation bodies;
- media visibility and positive media coverage of the institution's work.

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