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# The Second Cycle of Charles University's Mentoring Program for Postdoctoral Researchers Begins

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February 2, 2026

Charles University (CU) is launching the second cycle of its mentoring program for early-career researchers. A total of 42 mentees from 13 faculties and units of CU is paired with experienced mentors for a one-year period, aiming to gain valuable experience, support their career development, and expand their professional networks. Compared to last year, when 28 mentees participated, this represents a 50% increase in the number of participants.

The primary goal of the mentoring program is to support the professional development of postdoctoral researchers at CU. Participants will have the opportunity to draw on their mentors' experience, address key topics related to their careers, and explore new opportunities both within academia and beyond. The program also emphasizes supporting women and promoting equal opportunities in science and research. **Of the 42 mentees this year, 27 are women and 15 are men.**

Mentoring pairs will meet both in person and online throughout 2026, allowing greater flexibility and the inclusion of international mentors. The program involves mentors not only from Charles University and other Czech universities but also experts working abroad.

During the program, participants will take part in approximately five meetings, systematically focusing on achieving their career goals and personal development. The program is designed to be flexible, with its content tailored to the individual needs and expectations of each mentoring pair.

## **Motivations of Participants in the Second Cycle**

Postdoctoral researchers typically join the mentoring program at a stage when they face important decisions about the direction of their careers. Many seek **strategic guidance** on long-term professional development, including preparation for habilitation and building their own research profile.

**Uncertainty about the next steps in their careers**—particularly after returning from research stays abroad or navigating the Czech academic environment—is another significant factor motivating enrollment. Participants often mention the need to **better understand research funding systems, grant opportunities, and informal institutional expectations**.

A strong motivation is also **support in writing grant applications and securing research funding**, which is essential for achieving research independence. This closely relates to **developing skills in team leadership, student supervision, and project management**, which are critical for early-stage principal investigators.

Equally important for mentees is finding a **balance between professional and personal life**. Participants value having space to reflect on topics such as parenting, mental health, and returning from career breaks or periods of heavy workload.

Mentoring is also seen as an opportunity to **gain an independent perspective**, providing support from experienced mentors outside of their direct institutional hierarchy. This helps participants clarify priorities, boost self-confidence, and make informed, sustainable career decisions.

The launch of the new cycle would not be possible without the support of our mentors. We sincerely thank everyone who participated in the first cycle, as well as those who will guide participants in the upcoming year—your time, experience, and willingness to share know-how are essential to the program. **We are also continuously seeking new mentors interested in joining the program; anyone interested is encouraged to contact us .**

**For those who wish to participate in the future, a third cycle is planned for 2027. The call for mentees will open in the fall of 2026.**

Current information about open calls for mentees and mentors will be shared on our website and social media channels, LinkedIn and Bluesky .

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