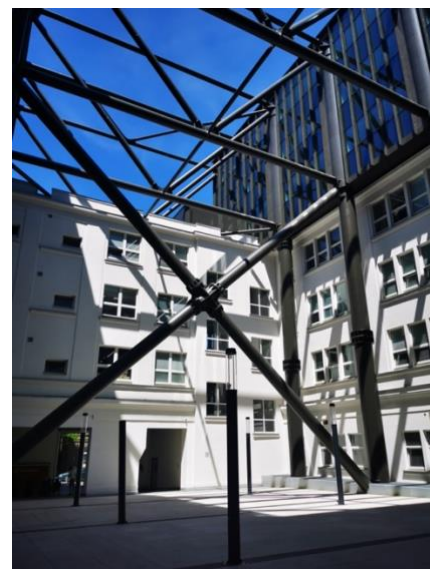


Impressions from my Erasmus Staff Exchange to the EOOSC CZ Initiative in Brno

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From 17.-21. June 2024, I had the opportunity to continue forging the connection with our EOOSC counterparts in Czechia thanks to the Erasmus Staff Mobility Program. During an unrelated visit to the University of Vienna in February 2024, the Czech colleagues met Tereza Kalová and expressed interest in some kind of exchange. The EOOSC CZ Initiative is based in Brno, just a short 1,5-hour train ride from Vienna. The colleagues there are well known throughout the EOOSC-sphere for their well-organized national approach, so I thought a week-long internship would be just the right thing for me to be able to learn about their successful strategies. The EOOSC CZ Initiative is spearheading the effort to not only link all the research data infrastructures throughout Czechia, but also to create a national repository and offer supercomputing capabilities. They are comparatively far along toward realizing the National Repository Platform on schedule with the EOOSC Association Strategic Research and Innovation Agenda (SRIA).



The entrance to Informatics Department, the former home of the EOOSC CZ Initiative.



The lobby of the Informatics building, which shows its past as a textile factory. The city of Brno was historically an important center of textile production.



New home of the EOOSC CZ Initiative

The EOSC CZ Initiative is the culmination of the efforts of hundreds of people: 17 FTE positions and a combined 350 researcher-participants who engage in 12 active working groups. There are 4 cross-cutting WGs: National Data Infrastructure Architecture, Meta Data, Core Services, and Education and Human Resources, and 8 thematic WGs: Bio/Health/Food, Material Sciences and Engineering, Data Management for AI and Machine Learning, Social Sciences, Physical Sciences, Humanities and Arts, Environmental Sciences, and Sensitive Data. Their Secretariat team includes many sub-teams, handling the areas of: Analytics, Communication, Training Center, National and International Engagement, and a team of Secretaries to provide support to each working group.

I had the opportunity to meet with the Analytics, Communications, and Secretaries teams, who told me about their activities and best practices. Olga Bohuslavová, who is in charge of International Engagement, was an amazing host, taking care of me before, during, and after my stay. Jiří Marek, Head of the Secretariat and heart of the EOSC CZ community, also ensured that I got the most out of my time in Brno (even giving us a guided tour of the town!). I am grateful to the staff of the EOSC CZ Secretariat for sharing their time, knowledge, and sense of humor with me (especially since my visit coincided with the relocation of the office and the national Open Science Day hosted also by Jiří Marek at Masaryk University!).

Mid-week was the zenith of the trip, with a transnational exchange between the EOSC CZ Initiative and the EOSC SOA. Tereza Kalová and Chris Schubert of the Management Board and Marie Czurray and Bernd Saurugger of the Secretariat joined us in Brno at Masaryk University.



The EOSC CZ and EOSC SOA teams in front of a statue of Masaryk, the first president of Czechoslovakia for whom the university is named. Jiří Marek is in the foreground.

We had a full program including presentations about our respective EOSC project's organization, progress, resources, and community needs and specificities. The last presentation of the day on the use-case of *Alphafind: Scalable search in 214 million protein structures* brought everything together and reminded us of our purpose. After much food for thought, we enjoyed a great dinner together.

All in all, the EOSC CZ Initiative's blend of a stellar team and a huge pool of hundreds of engaged researchers has created a very active community and productive collaboration between researchers and research support staff. There were many take aways from my visit, but the biggest one is how crucial community building and sufficient resources are for the success of any project, let alone one of this size. True to the spirit of the Erasmus Mobility Staff Exchange program, we plan to continue our collaboration with our Czechia-based colleagues and have invited them to visit us in Vienna at our General Assembly.

You can read the EOSC CZ Initiative's account of the exchange [here](#).