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Photography: Petr Jan Juračka  
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“You hear lots of good ideas over a lifetime but when an idea becomes reality, that's truly exceptional,” is how Jiří Zima, dean of Charles University's Faculty of Science, sums up the installation of an exceptional interactive Periodic Table at the Chemistry Institute found in Albertov in Prague.

The installation, which includes samples of the elements (with the exception of radioactive materials) behind glass, commemorates 150 years since Russian chemist Dmitri Mendeleev published his periodic table, in which he arranged all of the elements then known (63 compared to today’s 108 or 109) in the order of their relative atomic mass and chemical similarities. The interactive board is also in honour of Mendeleev’s cooperation with Czech chemist Bohuslav Brauner.

The new 3.5 metre wide interactive board coincides with UNESCO celebrations marking 2019 as the International Year of the Periodic Table of Chemical Elements.

In his day, Mendeleev realised that chemical and physical properties of elements were tied to their atomic mass in a 'periodic way' and arranged them in vertical columns so that groups of elements with similar properties were located together. This method had gaps in the table but the Russian chemist reasoned that the gaps represented elements that had not yet been discovered. He was able to closely predict the atomic mass of missing elements as well as to largely predict their properties. At the launch of the installation in Prague, Dean Jiří Zima credited Mendeleev’s immense contribution as cementing chemistry as an exact science. Elements on display in the tableau include 24 karat gold, rubidium, or carbon.