

Statement

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Statement on the study commissioned to map and describe open access services in Germany

The Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany calls on scientific institutions and their funding bodies to view investments in non-commercial offerings as a strategically important contribution to a future-oriented publication infrastructure. This requires an overarching view of the open access landscape, taking into account both commercial and non-commercial offerings.

The recently published [study by the Technopolis Group](#) commissioned to map and describe open access services in Germany examines the part of the sector operated by institutions. The study was commissioned by the German Research Foundation for the Alliance of Science Organisations and is part of the Alliance's strategy to support the Open Access transformation. It was conducted against the backdrop of appeals by European and international science policymakers and analysts to strengthen publicly funded and science and research-led publication infrastructures. The consulting firm Technopolis Deutschland developed the study under the supervision of a task force from the Alliance's focus area Digitalising Science. The results of the study must be considered together with other developments in the Open Access transformation, such as the financing of further contracts which aim to facilitate the transformation.

Overall, non-commercial Open Access offerings in Germany form a decentralised backbone of the academic publishing culture, which includes sufficient subject-specific and interdisciplinary publication offerings and background services. However, there is a lack of success criteria as well as coordination for avoiding redundancies. In addition, not all services are yet reliable, sustainable, and competitive in terms of their quality.

The Alliance therefore calls on scientific institutions and funding bodies at both the federal and state ministry level to focus on this sector and support sustainable financing models in the long term. The stabilisation and strengthening of the segment encompassing non-profit infrastructure supported by scientific institutions must result in this infrastructure being operated and used in a professional manner. The benefits for the entire scientific system lie not least in an increase in digital sovereignty.

The financing of the publication infrastructure supported by scientific institutions should be seen as a strategic investment by research policymakers and scientific institutions, and be placed in the context of regular acquisition and information procurement. The establishment of information budgets is an important prerequisite for this.

The Alliance considers the permanent financing of an institutionally supported publication infrastructure to be necessary for its further professionalisation and increased capacity for innovation.

To this end, new ways of co-financing basic services or subject-specific services must be found. This requires efforts on the part of both the providers and the (institutional) service users. Examples of international infrastructures (such as the open access preprint server arXiv) demonstrate that institutional membership models are a viable option. Relying exclusively on third-party funding, on the other hand, is not sustainable. Without new financing models and other sources of funding, non-profit infrastructures will not be competitive and will be left behind by commercial offerings, particularly in the face of current developments (e.g. the use of content in AI applications/services).

The providers' marketing of their services is considered insufficient by the researchers surveyed in the study and requires additional resources in order to keep up with the visibility of commercial offerings. The focus must be on the benefits for science and research of the respective publication portfolio. Discipline-specific strategies must be adopted here, as the dissemination and recognition of publicly funded vs. commercial providers differs between disciplines. In addition, the information infrastructure organisations are called upon to jointly maintain central core and background services, including for storage and archiving, in order to facilitate a smoothly functioning publication landscape.

In addition, the obstacles to the further use of non-profit and institutionally supported infrastructure by scientific organisations should be addressed. Above all, this includes shifting evaluation practice away from focusing on quantitative metrics towards evaluating the quality of publication content. This would enable the equitable use of different publication venues - independent of metric indicators - that are appropriate to the respective publication goals of the researchers.

The Alliance of Science Organisations is an association of the most significant science organisations in Germany. It regularly comments on important issues of science policy. The Max Planck Society is a member of the Alliance and has taken on the role of spokesperson for 2024. Other members are the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service, the German Research Foundation, the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centers, the German Rectors' Conference, the Leibniz Association, the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina and the German Science and Humanities Council.

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