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Statement of the Czech Chemical Society on Plan S

In its statutes, the Czech Chemical Society (Česká společnost chemická, ČSCH) commits itself to the promotion of scientific publishing and information dissemination. It therefore supports all activities that serve this purpose, in particular Open Access, which provides readers with free access to the digital content of publications, including extended usage and sharing options. However, the ČSCH has repeatedly stated, in coherence with other European societies, that all these activities must serve the advancement of science, do not restrict authors and must be based on resilient and sustainable business models.

On 4 September 2018, eleven European research-funding organizations (cOAlition S) published Plan S, which defines in ten principles the framework for the transition by 2020 to open access for the research results funded by these organizations. See <https://www.coalition-s.org/10-principles>.

The Czech Chemical Society supports the fundamental intention of Plan S and explicitly welcomes all of the principles formulated that serve or aim at the above key principle. However, it sees a need for clarification and is seriously concerned that some of the key issues will have significant adverse effect on the researchers involved and on Europe as a center for innovative research and will significantly support many non EU and even predatory journals.

- (i) The ČSCH fully endorses the intention of the research funding organizations to support the creation of high-quality Open Access journals and platforms, in those scientific disciplines where there still are no adequate platforms and infrastructures. See principle 3.
- (ii) Both the statement that open access publication fees will be borne by the funders or the scientific institutions and not by the individual researchers and the explicit confirmation that all researchers must be able to publish their research results in Open Access publications, even if their institutions have only limited resources, address one of the major concerns of the ČSCH and are highly welcomed. However, Plan S does not specify how this should actually be ensured. ČSCH as a Society from a country with rather limited resources of scientific financing in current situation sees as the very limiting factor a missing systematic support for Open Access publishing, it means that just one paper publication fees may take good portion of the total running costs of an average grant project in an year. See Principle 4.
- (iii) ČSCH welcomes the creation of the preprint server ChemRxiv. On this platform, manuscripts can be made publicly available as preprints prior or in parallel to the submission to a regular journal. There are no costs for the author or the reader, which is good. Unfortunately, according to the “Guidance on the Implementation of Plan S” from 27 November 2018 preprint servers are not sufficient to be compliant. The ČSCH greatly regrets this exclusion. See principle 8.
- (iv) The stipulation that hybrid journals (subscription journals in which authors can have their article Open Access after paying an extra fee) are not compatible with the Plan S principles is considered particularly critical by the GDCh. About 85% of all journals are affected by this restriction. In chemistry almost all high-quality and very selective journals, the majority of which are published by learned and professional societies, such as *Angewandte Chemie* and the *Journal of the American Chemical Society*, fall into this category. Hence, these journals are no longer available for authors bound to Plan S. This will have serious negative effects on authors, readers and the affected societies. See Principle 9.
- (v) The standardization and capping of open access publishing fees will inevitably result in great economic pressure on high-quality and selective journals, whose costs per published article are necessarily higher because of their high rejection rates. In the field of chemistry, this also applies first and foremost to the journals published by chemical societies. Journals of average or even mediocre quality are favored by this business model and the number of so-called predatory journals will increase to the detriment of science. See Principle 5.

- (vi) From a current perspective, broad international support and participation in Plan S, especially from the research-intensive regions in America and Asia, is not expected. The impact on the scientists concerned, or the consequences and risks for Europe as a center for innovative research, if large parts of the global research enterprise do not participate in Plan S, are not addressed.
- (vii) Generally the strongly expressed commitment of ČSCH to the freedom of researchers makes problem to oblige scientists to publish in Open Access journals. The exclusion of hybrid journals formulated in Plan S, the obligation to publish the work under one of the most liberal open licenses, preferably CC-BY, and the threat of sanctions for non-compliance are significant interferences with the freedom of the researcher. The ČSCH cannot agree with these stipulations for several reasons, not the least of which is the freedom of science. See principles 1, 9 and 10.
- (viii) ČSCH has certain hesitation to believe that it is possible to “create high quality Open Access journals” for fulfillment of Plan S requirements. Such “creation” takes a lot of finances and time, so it may not be any help. See principle 3.

The Czech Chemical Society appeals to Plan S supporters and those of its more than 2,000 members to incorporate its concerns into future considerations and implementation plans. The legitimate aim of making scientific results freely accessible to all must not be thwarted by unintended, science-damaging consequences.

The Czech Chemical Society with more than 2,000 members is one of the oldest chemical societies. In its statutes, the ČSCH commits itself to the support of scientific publishing and information dissemination. The ČSCH owns and co-owns over 15 internationally renowned scientific journals, including Chemistry a European Journal, one of the very well impacted journals in chemistry. The oldest journal Chem. Listy of ČSCH, in 2019 published already 113th year, is total Open Access and is available freely so far since the Volume 91 (1997).

Unanimously passed by the ČSCH Board at its meeting on January 18, 2018, based on similar ChemPubSoc Europe initiative.