

Statement of the Swiss Chemical Society on Plan S

The Swiss Chemical Society (SCS) represents chemists and scientists from chemistry related fields in national and international organizations. The society supports the exchange of scientific and technical know-how and offers corresponding networking possibilities to the academic and industrial community. It has members in more than 50 countries and represents about 2700 individual and institutional members.

The scientific publishing business is one of the core activities of SCS. It publishes its own journal CHIMIA, is owner of the journal Helvetica Chimica Acta and is a member of ChemPubSoc Europe. Furthermore, SCS owns shares of some other scientific journals in the field. The SCS is interested in fair and transparent publishing processes with the focus on economic reasonable 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 Swiss Chemical Society supports the fundamental intention of Plan S and welcomes some of the principles formulated. 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.

(i) The Swiss Chemical Society endorses the intention of the research funding bodies to support the creation of high-quality open access channels, 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 a longstanding concern and are highly welcomed. However, Plan S does not specify how this should actually be ensured. See Principle 4.

(iii) Chemical societies from Europe and America recently set up the preprint server ChemRxiv. On this platform manuscripts can be made publicly available as preprints before submission to regular journals. There are no costs for the author or the reader. ChemRxiv is financed by the participating societies and other partners. Plan S explicitly states that preprint servers are not sufficient to be compliant. The Swiss Chemical Society regrets this exclusion. See principle 8.

(iv) The stipulation that hybrid journals (subscription journals in which authors can pay the open access publication fee) are not compatible with the Plan S principles is considered particularly critical by us. About 85% of all journals, including all those renowned and strictly peer reviewed journals in chemistry which are published by nonprofit societies, such as 'Chemistry A European Journal', 'Angewandte Chemie', the 'Journal of the American Chemical Society', and 'Chemical Communications, RSC', are affected by this and are no longer available for authors bound to Plan S. This will have serious negative effects on authors, readers, the affected societies, and the quality of Science. The vast majority of publications from Swiss authors in the chemistry field is in top level society journals. Their quality is high precisely because they practice a rigorous selection. See Principle 9.

(v) 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 and lower quality are strongly 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 approval and participation in Plan S, especially from the research-intensive regions of 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) We as Swiss Chemical Society explicitly express our commitment to the freedom of researchers and explicitly reject mandates that oblige scientists to publish in open access journals. The exclusion of hybrid journals formulated in Plan S, the obligation to publish the work under a most liberal open license, preferably CC-BY, and the threatened sanctioning of non-compliance are major interferences with the freedom of the researcher to whom the Swiss Chemical Society cannot agree. See principles 1, 9 and 10.

The Swiss Chemical Society appeals to Plan S supporters 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.

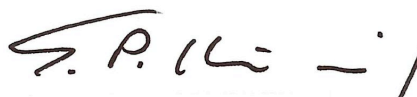
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