

**21 June 2017****Federal Cartel Office does not act on objection to Project DEAL****HRK President: Ball is in publishers' court**

As early as the end of May, the German Federal Cartel Office made the decision not to initiate proceedings against Project DEAL. This means the authority has decided against pursuing a complaint by the German Publishers and Booksellers Association. The association had accused DEAL of misusing its market power over subscriptions to electronic journals.

"The decision of the Federal Cartel Office strengthens the hand of the research community," declared Prof Dr Horst Hippler, President of the German Rectors' Conference (HRK) and lead negotiator of Project DEAL. "I call on the publishers to finally give serious consideration to the demands of the research community, instead of attempting to delay the negotiations or trying to push through outdated business models," said the HRK President.

By implementing Project DEAL, the German research organisations aim to achieve national licensing agreements for electronic journals published by the major academic publishers. One of their goals is lower costs for scientific libraries. "Over the last 30 years, the price increase for scientific journals has been around four to five times the increase in the consumer price index. Today, expenditure on the three major publishers Elsevier, Springer Nature and Wiley is already tying up a major part of scientific libraries' acquisition budgets – and rising," said Hippler. "This cannot continue."

Furthermore, in future scientific articles are to be published in line with Gold Open Access. This would create free and unrestricted access to articles. Scientific institutions would then pay publishers for publishing articles – not for reading them.

"Free exchange of information on current research findings is indispensable to science. The internet enables these findings to be made accessible across the world. We need appropriate regulations so that the research community can use these opportunities," HRK President Hippler underlined.

In relation to the negotiations with the publishers, Hippler made his determination clear: "There can be no mistaking how serious we are about this." Last year numerous universities and research institutions had cancelled their subscriptions to electronic journals published by Elsevier, after the company had failed to present a realistic offer despite several rounds of negotiations. More institutions intend to follow suit.