

Commission study addresses Europe's scientific publication system

The European Commission is today publishing a study which examines the scientific publication system in Europe. Scientific publication ensures that research results are made known, which is a pre-condition for further research and for turning this knowledge into innovative products and services. Scientific publication is also an important part of certifying the quality of the work done. Given the scarcity of public money to provide access to scientific publications, there is a strong interest in seeing that Europe has an effective and functioning system for scientific publication that speedily delivers results to a wide audience. Today's report, drawn up for the Commission by a panel of experts, makes a number of recommendations for future action, including improving access to publicly-funded research. All interested parties are invited to send feedback on the report's findings to the Commission, to provide input for a conference on scientific publication to be held in autumn 2006.

European Science and Research Commissioner, Janez Potočnik said *"It is in all our interests to find a model for scientific publication that serves research excellence. We are ready to work with readers, authors, publisher and funding bodies to develop such a model."*

The study looked at the economic and technical evolution of scientific publication markets in Europe. It was commissioned as a contribution to on-going public debate on the conditions of access to and dissemination of scientific publications. There have been significant changes in the landscape over the last 30 years, in particular the rise of internet use. The study confirms scientific journals as an essential channel for the dissemination of scientific knowledge. With large amounts of public money invested in research, it becomes increasingly important for publications reporting on that research to be accessible to as wide a public as possible.

The study therefore makes a number of recommendations for future action, including:

- Guaranteed public access to publicly-funded research, at the time of publication and also long-term
- A "level-playing field" so that different business models in publishing can compete fairly in the market
- Ranking scientific journals by quality, defined more widely than pure scientific excellence, but also taking into account factors such as management of copyright, search facilities and archiving
- Developing pricing strategies that promote competition in the journal market
- Scrutinising major mergers that may take place in this sector in the future

- Promoting the development of electronic publication, for example by eliminating unfavourable tax treatment of electronic publications and encouraging public funding and public-private partnerships to create digital archives in areas with little commercial investment.

The European Commission is keen to hear the views of all interested parties. It is therefore calling for reactions to the study, and contributions on other issues linked to scientific publications. Contributions should be sent to rtd-scientific-publication@cec.eu.int by 15th June 2006.

The study and its public feedback will be at the centre of a conference on scientific publication to be held in autumn 2006. SINAPSE, the web interface between the scientific community and Europe's policy-makers, will also host a debate on the subject. (SINAPSE's website: <http://europa.eu.int/sinapse>)

The study was carried out by a consortium led by Professor Mathias Dewatripont of the "Université Libre de Bruxelles".

The study is available for downloading at:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/science-society/pdf/scientific-publication-study_en.pdf

For more information on SINAPSE: [IP/05/271](#) + [MEMO/05/86](#)