

Statement

13 July 2021

Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany

Preserving sequence data as a public asset

Statement of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany regarding open access to Digital Sequence Information (DSI)

The countries of the world are negotiating a post-2020 global framework for the preservation and sustainable use of biological diversity through 2050 that will likely be adopted at the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD-COP 15) in October 2021 in Kunming, China. In light of the upcoming international negotiations, the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany would like to issue a reminder that, in order to reach global biodiversity goals, international research will have to intensify in order to provide scientific findings essential to the preservation of biological diversity.

Several non-European countries are making their agreement to the post-2020 global biodiversity framework contingent on monetary benefit-sharing from the use of life science-related data, so called "digital sequence information" (DSI) which has to-date been available free of charge. Currently, various regulatory models for DSI benefit-sharing are under discussion. However, many of those fall short of enabling research since they overlook scientific guiding principles (such as Open Data, Open Science) and thus interfere significantly with rapid, globally interconnected collaborations. The Covid-19 pandemic demonstrates only too clearly how essential international sharing of DSI through open access to public databases is for complex global problems. The impending restrictions on data access and data use would not only affect research on biodiversity loss and the understanding of ecosystem services for humankind but many other areas as well, such as the complete scope of biomedical research, bio-economic research with its wide range of applications and basic research in molecular biology in its entirety.

In their statements, the German Research Foundation (18 September 2017)¹, the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany (9 February 2018)² and the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina (January 2021)³ have pointed out the substantial limitations on scientific progress, notably in developing countries, should access to and use of data become restricted. These organisations reaffirm their call to maintain the open access status quo and free use of digital sequence information. Access to and use of DSI must not become subject to individual bilateral negotiations for research on genetic resources as provided for in the Nagoya Protocol. From a scientific perspective, any demand for benefit-sharing must harness a multilateral mechanism and should not be linked to the regulation of data access or use.

Not much time remains until the start of the Conference of the Parties to introduce sustainable proposals to the political process on DSI. It is now vital that the German Federal Government contribute to EU policy on biodiversity with a clearly stated commitment to open data access by means of a decoupled multilateral mechanism.

The *Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany* will gladly participate in further discussions.

¹ [Link auf PDF-Datei Stellungnahme der DFG zur Diskussion über die Digitale Sequenz Information \(DSI\) 2017](#)

² https://www.wissenschaftsrat.de/download/archiv/Allianz_DSI_090218.html

The Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany is an association of the most important German research organisations. It regularly issues statements on central issues of research policy. The German Council of Science and Humanities (WR) is a member of the Alliance and has taken the chair for 2021. Further Members of the Alliance are the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, the German Academic Exchange Service, the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation), the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft, the Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres, the German Rectors' Conference, the Leibniz Association, the Max Planck Society, and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

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