Dutch research institutions and Elsevier reach framework agreement

The Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU), The Netherlands Federation of University Medical Centres (NFU), The Dutch Research Council (NWO) and information and analytics business Elsevier have reached a framework agreement. NWO President Stan Gielen: “This agreement is in accordance with Plan S and is a huge step towards 100% open access and therefore a major breakthrough for open science in the Netherlands.” Overall it means that Dutch research institutions and Elsevier will embark on a new and innovative approach to scientific research, making it more transparent, collaborative, efficient, in support of social issues and questions. VSNU’s chief-negotiator Tim van der Hagen: “This is the beginning of a new way of working for science. We will be in the driving seat of what’s important for science in the future and the applicable rules of engagement and services needed in this context.”

The framework agreement, with a transition period from January 1 2020 through May 1 2020, provides Dutch researchers with full reading access to all Elsevier journals, and allows (unlimited) open access publishing in Elsevier journals. In addition, a range of pilots will be undertaken to develop tools and services in support of (open) science and research intelligence.

VSNU, NFU, NWO and Elsevier acknowledge that especially the development of these new services has been cause for concern in the community. To address this concern, an initial set of clear principles has been agreed by the partner organisations. These principles are:

1. Interoperability: no vendor lock in, researchers and institutions can also use their own tools.
2. Future proof: system should be flexible to different setups and different agreements.
3. Vendor/publisher neutral: system development is not limited to any specific vendor.
4. Researchers and/or institutions own their own research data (not Elsevier).

In the coming months, a working group will further define the rules of engagement and the governance structure will be worked out. To bridge the transition period, the parties have agreed on a Memorandum of Understanding to provide continued and expanded access to the reading and publishing services of the agreement. If the parties reach a final agreement, the contract will be made publicly available and registered on the ESAC-registry.

Gino Ussi, Executive Vice President at Elsevier: “This MoU marks an important step towards achieving Dutch research and open science ambitions, and further solidifying the Netherlands’ standing as an innovative leader in the international research community. This announcement has been a long time in the making, meaning four partners in research have taken time and allowed one another to explore the opportunities and perimeters of this new and unique collaboration. We look forward to formalizing the agreement with our trusted partners in the early months of 2020.”

More information can be found in the digital Q&A