

Press Release 27 June 2016

GWK rules that government and state funding for ZB MED should end

Phase-out funding agreement enables transformation process and continued existence of ZB MED

On 24 June, the Joint Science Conference (*Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK*) announced its decision that the central government and state-level funding of ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences will be terminated on 31 December 2016. This means that ZB MED will also be ejected from the Leibniz Association. At the same time, the GWK welcomed the announcement that the North Rhine Westphalian Ministry of Innovation, Science, Research and Technology (MIWF NRW) and the German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG) intend to make a joint effort to ensure that this national stock of information in the field of life sciences is maintained in the future.

The elimination of standard central government and state-level funding at the end of 2016 does not mean that the library will close. Phase-out funding is already in place to ensure that the “German National Library of Medicine (ZB MED)” foundation will be maintained until the end of 2019. The library will reorganise itself during this period with the goal of being reincorporated in the standard system of federal and state-level funding at the end of this transitional period. This process will be supported by the federal state of North Rhine Westphalia, represented by the MIWF, and by the German Federal Ministry of Health. The fact that the GWK has welcomed these plans can be interpreted as a positive sign.

The process of transforming ZB MED into a modern specialised information centre will now get underway as soon as possible. A key part of this process is a joint call for applications for a W3 professorship in collaboration with Cologne University and a W2 professorship in collaboration with Bonn University. The W3 Professor will also take over as the director of ZB MED. These application procedures were put on hold when the Leibniz Association Senate recommended in March that the government and state-level funding of ZB MED should cease. According to reports, however, the two universities are now willing to reinstate these procedures, and the corresponding negotiations have already begun.

The news in March that ZB MED’s funding was in danger of being eliminated set off a wave of protests. The #keepZBMED petition started by the scientific community was signed by almost 10,000 people and

attracted widespread coverage. In addition, numerous professional associations protested to the MIWF and BMG, including the German Association of Scientific Medical Societies (AWMF) and the German Pharmaceutical Industry Association (BPI). They issued statements, open letters and similar publications calling for the continuation of ZB MED as a key provider of information in the life sciences arena. The latest developments have now paved the way for this to happen.

Background information: ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences

ZB MED – Leibniz Information Centre for Life Sciences is Germany's central service centre for specialist information and research support in the field of life sciences. It evolved from the world's largest library in the subject combination of medicine, health, and nutritional, environmental and agricultural science. ZB MED's primary goal is to support researchers, students and key disseminators and multipliers working in these disciplines. To achieve that goal, ZB MED offers literature and specialist information in both digital and print formats, both on-site and through its semantic-based search portal LIVIVO. ZB MED also offers its own open access portal known as PUBLISSO, and its registration service assigns Digital Object Identifiers (DOIs) to ensure articles and research data are kept permanently available online. The information centre also carries out applied research in the field of knowledge discovery. ZB MED has two sites, one in Cologne and one in Bonn. As a member of the Leibniz Association, ZB MED helps provide the information infrastructure required for scientific research and plays a major part in maintaining Germany's status as a key player in the world of science and research.

Find out more at: www.zbmed.de.