

Not being on a list of predatory journals and publishers is no quality guarantee

There is a new, and unfortunate, trend in academic publishing and open access to publications.

It has now become customary and a well-recommended practice for researchers and/or librarians to crosscheck their selected academic journals and publishers against a [list](#) of potential predatory journals and publishers, which has saved countless academic personal integrities from associating oneself with a sub-par journal.¹ At the same time, open science and open access started to play a major role in terms of high-quality research outputs. Specifically, within the realm of international research projects, the most prominent grant authorities, such as the European Commission, demand open access to publications (as well as data!) as a requirement for [Horizon Europe](#) projects and so on. The synergic result is that researchers welcome quality journals and publishers who open their content – and they are prepared to pay an often hefty fee for it.

Unfortunately, certain publishers managed to quickly address the business side of open access to publications and are now well profiting from a considerable volume of published papers. One particular publishing house, [MDPI](#), has been repeatedly put to question given the scope of its current operations and publishing integrity. MDPI is a massive publisher with 420 journals which span topics from Acoustics all the way to Zoonotic Diseases. Economics is, of course, among them. MDPI was added to the Beall's list in 2014, however, the publishing house fought back and [succeeded](#) in being removed.

MDPI has nevertheless become a talking point again recently since its business practices – and the sheer volume of it – became apparent. According to [Predatory Reports](#): *“Traditional journals have a fixed number of issues per year and then a low to very low number of special issues, that can cover a particular topic, celebrate the work of an important scholar, or collect papers from conferences. MDPI journals tend to follow the same model, **only that the number of special issues has increased in time, to the point of dwarfing the number of normal issues.** Moreover, special issues are usually proposed by a group of scientists to the editors of the journal, who accept or reject the offer. At MDPI, it is the publisher who sends out invitations for Special Issue, and it is unclear which role, if any, the editorial board of the normal issues has in the process.”*² Thanks to the concept of virtually unlimited special issues, **MDPI grew from 36,000 articles in 2017 to 167,000 in 2020.**

And while growth of the publishing house itself does not constitute a predatory practice, combined with its at least questionable process of very light peer-review of the special issues which is astoundingly quick compared with “regular” journals, **MDPI is possibly crossing into predatory territory.** They [promise](#) an undeniably swift publication: *“manuscripts are published within 5-7 weeks of submission (provided no major revisions are required),”*³ which may be highly attractive to researchers who are struggling to keep the peer-reviews of their articles under the period of even a year.

[Predatory Reports](#) conducted their analysis and warn against publishing with MDPI: *“These results showed that the **MDPI journals under analysis fitted the definition of predatory journals**, as their behaviour indicated that they prioritize self-interest, forsaking the best editorial and publication*

¹ You can find out more about predatory journals [here](#) (in Czech).

² PREDATORY REPORTS. *Is MDPI a predatory publisher?* Online. Predatory Reports. 8. 4. 2022. Available at: <https://predatoryreports.org/news/f/is-mdpi-a-predatory-publisher>. [cited on 2023-02-01].

³ MDPI. *Information for Authors*. Online. mdpi.com. [b.r.]. Available at: <https://www.mdpi.com/authors>. [cited on 2023-02-01].

practices within the scope of self-citations and citations from other journals of the same editorial.“

⁴And they are certainly not the only ones.

Crucially, the Scientific Board of the Czech Academy of Sciences ([Vědecká rada AV ČR](#)) makes an appeal **to carefully reconsider publishing with MDPI due to the dwindling quality of its peer-review process.**⁵ The Slovak Economic Association similarly [warns against publishing with MDPI](#), and [open science officers](#) and [university libraries](#) are sharing their concerns as well.

Based on the above-mentioned circumstances, henceforth, **the counsel of VŠE vice-deans for research does not recommend publication in journals published by MDPI and unanimously declares that article processing charges and remuneration for the authors of these articles will not be paid from DKRVO funds.**

The Research Office urges you to think twice about where you publish and conduct a thorough screening of your selected journal and/or publisher. When in doubt, do not hesitate to contact us at researchoffice@vse.cz or consult directly with VŠE librarians at oa@vse.cz.

⁴ PREDATORY REPORTS. *Is MDPI a predatory publisher?* Online. Predatory Reports. 8. 4. 2022. Available at: <https://predatoryreports.org/news/f/is-mdpi-a-predatory-publisher>. [cited on 2023-02-01].

⁵ VĚDECKÁ RADA AV ČR. *Usnesení z 8. zasedání Vědecké rady AV ČR dne 21. 4. 2022.* Online. 2022. Available at: https://www.avcr.cz/export/sites/avcr.cz/.content/galerie-souboru/usneseni-vr/2021-2025/08VR_2104_22_usneseni.pdf. [cited on 2023-02-01].