



SW Europe Regional Workshop for research institutions policymakers

“Working together to promote policy alignment in Europe”

Host institution/Location: Nexa Center for Internet and Society, Turin-Italy

Date: 22 February 2016

Countries represented: Portugal, Spain, Malta and Italy

On February 22nd, 2016, UMinho jointly organised with POLITO the second South West Europe regional workshop. The workshop brought together a total of 38 participants from research performing organisations of Portugal, Spain, Malta and Italy. The aim of the workshop was to bring together policymakers from those countries to allow the exchange of ideas and policy practises among participants and to promote discussions on the ways to improve existing policies or develop new Open Access policies aligned with the Commission’s Recommendation on Access to and Preservation of Scientific Information and the Horizon 2020 (H2020) Open Access policy requirements.

In the first session of the workshop, ‘Good practice examples from the region’, a series of presentations were focused on highlighting best practices from each country in terms of development and implementation of Open Access policies. Common points were identified which are relevant to implement Open Access policies: the importance of undertaking advocacy activities within the institutions in order to create awareness about the benefits of Open Access as well as to inform researchers about how they can deposit their research outputs in the institutional repositories, and the importance of linking the deposit of publications in institutional repositories with the internal performance evaluation of researchers. For example, Carlos III University of Madrid is doing some significant work in terms of raising awareness about and advocating for Open Access and the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança is linking the deposit of research outputs with performance evaluation. These presentations stimulated discussions about different issues such as: copyrights where it was agreed that authors should retain rights; infrastructure, workflows, and human resources allocated to the management of institutional repositories; research evaluation at institutional and national level; and cost issues (i.e. how much does it cost to an institution to develop an infrastructure and to implement an OA policy).

The second session of the workshop was devoted to the wider European Open Access landscape. Firstly, the initiatives of the European Universities Association, in particular of the [EUA Expert Group on Science 2.0/Open Science](#), was presented. Those initiatives, aim to issue recommendations and guidelines; to support institutions in negotiations with scientific publishers; to raise awareness of the importance of Open Science for researchers and university leaders; and to make efforts to accelerate the transition towards a more open research system. The Open Science concept and how it will impact on research performing organisations was also emphasised. It was presented the [EUA Roadmap on Open Access to Research Publications](#). Secondly, an overview of the University of Liège (ULg) Open Access policy was made and the

conclusions from an assessment on the deposit efficiency and the strength of this University's Open Access policy were presented. The results show that using the ULg mandate there is 87% of deposit rate (50% in restricted access and 37% in Open Access). Thirdly, the outcomes of the 2015 Berlin Conference on Open Access were discussed. This was followed by a presentation on Open Access business models where an economic approach to science was discussed and issues regarding certification provided by publication in prestigious scientific journals were stressed. It was emphasised that, on the one hand, Green Open Access raised publishers pressure to reduce the costs of access to scientific knowledge whilst, on the other hand, Green Open Access has had no effect on the demand for the quality of research certification provided by scientific journals. As a result, this has fostered the emergence of publishers' policies towards Gold Open Access. Finally, the highlights of the North West Europe workshop of PASTEUR4OA were briefly presented. Key issues discussed in that workshop included policy development, policy implementation, monitoring and reporting, and evaluation, peer-review and metrics. In most North West countries, infrastructure is already in place to support the deposit of research outputs but further work is needed to promote Open Access policy development, effectiveness and alignment. Discussions held during that workshop highlighted that there is a need to 'change the publication, review and evaluation' systems.

The third session of the workshop was dedicated to work group discussions. The workshop participants split into two groups. The first group focused on discussing how to design and approve an effective institutional OA policy. The second group focused on discussing the effective implementation and monitoring of institutional Open Access policies.

The basic starting point of the first work group was that research publicly funded should be open by construct not by contract. The main discussion topics covered the following issues:

1) Awareness and research literacy: many researchers are not aware of the publication processes and its contradictions (for example: that the cost of the review process is entirely on the university). Young researchers do not know what Open Access is and how copyright issues should be treated. A policy should include also educational aspects (e.g. courses on research literacy), targeting PhD students and post-doctoral researchers. It was considered that the OpenCon conference series community is an interesting community which could provide support in raising awareness about Open Access.

2) Tools for reshaping the scholarly communication principles: right now we accept the status quo in the scholarly communication model, which is not a fair model.

- Green policies: Open Access policies have a key role in re-shaping the current scholarly communication model, which is obviously not fair. From such a perspective, the achievements made in last year's OA conference in Berlin were not very good, because they do not change the substance of the current model. Therefore inconsistencies in the current model (i.e. private business built on top of public funded research) should be cancelled with more courage (this does not endanger researchers' academic freedom to publish wherever they want). Green policies are supported by the current paradigm shift where researchers first share data, code, working papers, and pre-print papers before publishing peer-reviewed publications.
- Overlay journals and open peer-review: They share openly papers, and everybody can review them (e.g. <http://lexicon.cnr.it/> , <http://www.sjscience.org/>)
- **Gold OA**: includes subscription journals that publish articles in Open Access. Some of these journals are owned by University presses.

3) Link internal evaluation with OA: this is clearly an incentive and the key success of OA. However, how the Liège case study showed, this implies that authors should learn how to deal with copyrights, embargoes, and basic OA principles. Being everything transparent by construct, OA is also an incentive to upload only material which is scientific valid, because that helps the researcher's evaluation. If Peer review occurs, it should be indicated because it is an indicator of quality. In this context, it should be considered that papers are not the only research output: source code, teaching, proof of impact on society, are other valuable outputs that should be taken into account and made available in a transparent way.

4) Attention to the context of policy application: Open Access principles are universal, however implementing them via a university policy is a complicate and iterative process that shall be done taking into account the local context and its needs. Designing a policy is an intensive effort because it is bottom-up: it implies talking with all the stakeholders in a university (also those who do not fully agree to the OA principles) and making gradual changes at every step to the policy implementation process (that may imply adopting several versions of the policies).

The second work group, which looked at the implementation and monitoring of an effective institutional Open Access policy, mainly discussed practical issues related to the Portuguese and Spanish monitoring processes and how these experiences can be replicated in other countries such as Italy.

In Portugal researchers funded by FCT are asked to deposit their publications on one of the RCAAP network's repositories. On making the deposit, the RCAAP system is prepared so that the researchers can easily find their research project's reference and associate this reference to the publication to be deposited. On the first deposit associated with a given project, a project page is created automatically in the RCAAP portal. Every further deposited publication associated with the project adds up to this page, where all publications resulting from the project are registered. When the time comes to produce the research project's intermediate or final evaluation reports, instead of the highly inefficient method of writing down every single publication or output that that project has generated, all the researcher has to do is simply to access the project page within RCAAP and click on the button named "Generate report". This produces an HTML time-stamped report with all the publications deposited on RCAAP repositories associated to the FCT-funded project. The researcher then simply has to copy the link of this HTML report, access FCT's report management system – FCT-SIG – and, in the specific field (designed for that effect), insert the copied link. From then on, FCT's system is populated with the information relevant for evaluation purposes.

In Spain, the national legal mandate has been included in the last R&D projects calls, launched in the summer 2015. So far there are no penalties associated with a potential non-observance of such obligation. An official document titled "Recommendations for the Implementation of Article 37 of the Spanish Science, Technology and Innovation Act: Open Access Dissemination" was prepared by an expert group, where an implementation roadmap was depicted for research and development for public funding agencies, for universities and research centres, for researchers and for institutional subscribers to scientific journals. The Recommendations were published in October 2014 and distributed to the relevant stakeholders. With regards to monitoring, the Ministry has requested FECYT for an evaluation exercise on how researchers are complying with the OA mandate. FECYT is comparing the number of articles in the repositories with the number of national papers indexed in WoS and Scopus. The task is not being easy since it cannot be automatized. FECYT is about to finish and expect to find a level of compliancy between 10% and 15%.

In Italy, the lack of national orientation makes policy implementation and monitoring processes more difficult. However, efforts are being made in order to build a shared vision to implement aligned OA policies.

The regional workshop concluded with a presentation on the way forward after the end of the PASTEUR4OA Project. In the final presentation, the role of Knowledge Net was explained: a coordinated network of expert organisations across Europe to work together to promote, coordinate and contribute to aligning policies. This network has been facilitating an understanding of the current status quo in different regions and member states. It supports coordinated policymaker engagement and maintains minimum shared levels of expertise.

The main conclusions from the workshop are that there is still room for improving existing or developing new Open Access policies in South West European countries. In terms of policy design and approval, international standards and guidelines should be followed to ensure the alignment of the policies. Policies should link the deposit of publications with internal performance evaluation of researchers to ensure the effective deposit of research output. In terms of policy implementation and monitoring there should be a stronger institutional commitment to ensure an effective implementation of policies. In addition, advocacy activities and resources should be provided to raise awareness about Open Access. In most cases, research performing organisations do not have monitoring processes in place and if they have, they are being done in a rudimentary way.