

Position statement on Open Access by the Young Academies of Europe and the Global Young Academy

We welcome the European Commission's commitment to making OA models of scholarly publishing a cornerstone of its Open Science policy. We consider the transition to OA one of the key policies the European Commission and national governments should pursue in order to foster progress across academic disciplines and enable European citizens and those of other countries to benefit from publicly funded research. However, we also urge European policy makers to ensure the viability and sustainability of OA scholarly publishing. We do so speaking on behalf of the next generation(s) of researchers across Europe, who will be asked to comply with mandatory OA policies. Therefore, as OA will become (and in some cases, is already becoming) a mandate of research funding agencies at European and national levels, and building on earlier OA/Open Science statements of young academies (Scotland [2011], Sweden [2015], Young Academy of Europe [2015], Global Young Academy [2012]) as well as on similar statements of senior academic organizations (e.g., the UK Royal Society [2012], ICSU [2014]), we invite policy makers to consider the following recommendations.

1. PROTECT STANDARDS OF SCHOLARLY EXCELLENCE

High standards of quality control (peer review) and production (e.g. metadata coverage, long-term accessibility, typesetting) in scholarly publishing are central to enabling the kind of excellence to which young European researchers aspire. The transition to OA scholarly publishing must not jeopardise, but should rather stimulate, academic excellence.

2. ENSURE VIABILITY OF OA SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING FOR EVERYONE

A mandatory 'Gold' OA policy may negatively affect researchers in low-income countries, for whom it will be more difficult to procure European and national funding to pay Article and Book Processing Charges (APCs and BPCs). This problem will be even more critical for researchers who are young. Mandatory OA policies should be designed in such a way that the continued ability to publish research findings is assured for senior and young academics across Europe and beyond, instead of becoming a privilege of the affluent.

3. STIMULATE REVISION OF EVALUATION CRITERIA

OA and new media offer opportunities for innovative methods of assessing scholarly excellence. However, evaluation criteria currently employed by universities, research institutions, and funding agencies emphasise publications in established, high-impact factor publishing venues. Early career researchers often depend on these criteria more than older, established fellow academics. The move toward OA should therefore be accompanied by a careful reevaluation of these criteria.

4. ONE SIZE DOES NOT FIT ALL

There are important differences in the publishing habits of the various knowledge domains. For example, monographs remain important in the humanities and certain areas of the social sciences, but are molded less easily into an OA framework. Another example concerns certain areas of the natural and medical sciences where publications quickly supersede each other, and so embargo periods in Green Route OA publishing are less urgent, while the pressure to pre-publish results is greater. Mandatory OA policies at European and national levels, while ideally harmonizing national practices per discipline, should take such differences into account.

5. ENSURE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY

Sustainable funding models for mandatory OA publishing of publicly funded research should preempt both excessive, profit-driven APCs and untenably low APCs; they should put scholarly excellence first. OA mandates should not compromise research funding, nor should the financial, administrative, and production burden of OA publishing be placed on the shoulders of future generations of researchers. Policy makers should actively promote collaboration between the relevant stakeholders (funding agencies, commercial and non-for-profit publishers, researchers, universities, libraries, OA repositories...) to ensure the creation and adoption of fair, transparent and innovative business models for OA publishing.

Ratified by Global Young Academy, Young Academy of Europe, Young Academy of Norway, De Jonge Akademie (NL), Die Junge Akademie (Germany), Young Academy of Scotland, Young Academy of Sweden, Polish Young Academy, The Israel Young Academy, Young Academy of Belgium, Young Academy of Denmark.

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