

Statements of European Union bodies relevant for the SCOAP³ initiative¹

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In recent months, the debate on Open Access has resonated across several bodies of the European Union. This memorandum summarises events and statements of particular relevance for the SCOAP³ initiative.

1. Background

Open Access (OA). The goal of OA² is to grant anyone, anywhere and anytime, free access to the results of scientific research. The OA debate has gained considerable momentum in recent years, driven by ever-rising costs of journals and the increasing awareness that results of publicly-funded research should be made generally available. This debate has wide European and global relevance and has been closely followed by the European Commission as summarized in its Communication COM(2007)56³ and by the Council of the European Union in its 2832nd Competitiveness session.

High-Energy Physics (HEP). HEP pioneered OA through “repositories” containing collections of “pre-prints” freely accessible on the Internet. Today about 90% of HEP pre-prints are available in repositories. Thanks to the speed with which they make results available, repositories have become the lifeblood of HEP scientific information exchange. Notwithstanding this success, the HEP community needs high-quality journals to provide quality control through the peer review process and a platform for the evaluation of individual scientists, research groups and institutes.

Cost of scientific publishing. The price of an electronic journal is mainly driven by the costs of running the peer-review system and editorial processing. Most HEP publishers quote a price in the range of 1'000–2'000 Euros per published article. On this basis, the annual budget for the transition of HEP publishing to OA would amount to a maximum of 10 Million Euros per year⁴.

The SCOAP³ model.⁵ The “Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics” (SCOAP³)⁶ aims to convert high-quality HEP journals to OA. In this new model, the publishers’ subscription income from multiple institutions is replaced by income from a single financial partner, SCOAP³, a global network of HEP funding agencies, research laboratories, libraries and library consortia. Each SCOAP³ partner will recover its contribution, proportional to its scientific output, from the cancellation of its current journal subscriptions. This model avoids the obvious disadvantage of OA models in which authors are directly

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² <http://oa.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>

³ http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/communication-022007_en.pdf

⁴ <http://www.scoap3.org/files/Scoap3WPReport.pdf>

⁵ <http://www.scoap3.org/files/Scoap3ExecutiveSummary.pdf>

⁶ <http://scoap3.org>

charged for the OA publication of their articles. Provided that the SCOAP³ funding partners are ready to engage in long-term commitments, many publishers are expected to be ready to enter into negotiations along the lines proposed by the consortium.

2. Participation of the European Commission at the meeting establishing the SCOAP³ consortium

CERN, the European Organisation for Nuclear Research, the leading world laboratory in HEP has promoted, facilitated and hosted the debate on OA publishing in HEP. A pivotal event, after an articulate, year-long, debate involving scientists, publishers and funding agencies, has been a meeting⁷ of leading European HEP funding agencies, laboratories and library consortia held on November 3rd, 2006. This meeting discussed the pillars of the SCOAP³ model and resulted in the unanimous agreement of the participants to move forward with the establishment of the SCOAP³ consortium.

At this meeting, Pēteris Zilgalvis, Head of Unit, Governance and Ethics, Research Directorate-General, Science, Economy and Society Directorate presented the view of the European Commission on SCOAP³: “[the] European Commission is favorable to experimentation with new publishing models such as SCOAP³” given the “uniqueness of discipline of particle physics” and the fact that “CERN [is] perceived as pioneer of [a] new publishing paradigm”. He remarked that “SCOAP³ is seen as [a] pilot project for future developments in scientific publishing” and “Research funding bodies stand to learn from CERN’s experience”. He concluded that, in view of the “need to improve access to, and dissemination of, research results to increase cost-effectiveness of [the] EU research strategy” SCOAP³ is “perceived as an original initiative that will provide valuable experience and enrich debate”⁸.

3. The conference “Scientific Publishing in the European Research Area Access, Dissemination and Preservation in the Digital Age”

On 15 and 16 February 2007 the European Commission hosted a conference in Brussels on scientific publication issues “Scientific Publishing in the European Research Area Access, Dissemination and Preservation in the Digital Age”⁹.

The goal of the conference was to bring together stakeholders concerned with access, dissemination and preservation issues in connection with scientific publication and data in an effort to provide policy options for scientific publishing under FP7 and in the European Research Area. The Commissioner for Science and Research, Mr. Potočnik and the Commissioner for Information Society and Media, Ms. Reding opened and closed the event, respectively. The importance of the SCOAP³ model was recognized with the invitation to CERN

⁷ <http://indico.cern.ch/conferenceDisplay.py?confId=7168>

⁸ <http://indico.cern.ch/getFile.py/access?resId=0&materialId=16&confId=7168>

⁹ <http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/index.cfm?fuseaction=public.topic&id=550>
http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/conference-proceeding-022007_en.pdf

Director General, Dr. Robert Aymar, to present it at the plenary session on *New opportunities for the research community*¹⁰.

4. The Communication COM(2007)56 of the European Commission

The European Commission released in February the Communication COM(2007)56 to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee with the objective to “signal the importance and launch a policy process on access to and dissemination of scientific information”, “issues [that] have a direct impact on Europe’s capacity to compete through knowledge, a determining factor to reach the goals of the Lisbon agenda for competitiveness”¹¹. Among others, the Communication discusses the increasing use of digital content in research and dissemination and the development of the open access movement and its consequences with “publishers experimenting with the “author pays” business model, which allows free online access to readers. This business model shifts publication costs from the reader to the author, i.e. the author’s institution of funding body”. It then continues remarking the “increasing numbers of so-called hybrid journals offering both reader pay and author pay solutions”. The Communication then complements this dichotomy of models attracting in particular attention to “another model currently being experimented with [which] foresees a critical mass of journals in a specific area moving towards OA, under the sponsorship of a consortium of funding bodies. An example is the Sponsoring Consortium for Open Access Publishing in Particle Physics [SCOAP³] led by CERN”.

It is interesting to remark that the overview of actions discussed in the Communication defines “costs for publishing, including open access publishing [as] eligible costs in Community funded research projects”. Given the marginal involvement of the Community in financing HEP research, this does not imply a direct contribution to SCOAP³. However, funding is envisaged for “research on publication business models and on the scientific publication system”.

The communication concludes with the invitation to the European Parliament and Council to debate these issues.

5. The Conclusions of the 2832nd Competitiveness Council of the European Union

On November 22nd and 23rd, the 2832nd Competitiveness Council of the European Union adopted Conclusions on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation¹². The Council welcomed the Communication COM(2007)56 “as a basis for further work at the European level on the accessibility [...] of scientific information”.

¹⁰ http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/aymar-022007_en.pdf

¹¹ http://ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/document_library/pdf_06/communication-022007_en.pdf

¹² http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/intm/97236.pdf

The Conclusions contain several points relevant to the SCOAP³ initiative, as from the following excerpts. “[The Council] recognizes the strategic importance for Europe’s scientific development of current initiatives to develop sustainable models for open access [...]” and “underlines the importance of effective collaboration between different actors, including funding agencies, researchers, research institutions and scientific publishers, in relation to access [...] to, scientific publications [...]”. These principles are precisely the pillars of the SCOAP³ model. Finally, it “invites Member States to enhance the co-ordination between Member States, large research institutions and funding bodies on access [...] policies and practices” and the Commission to “monitor good practices in relation to open access to European Scientific production including those arising from large scale experiments by scientific communities and large research institution, and encourage the development of new model that could improve access to European scientific research results”.

6. The European Commission Recommendation C(2008)1329

On April 10th 2008 the European Commission released its Recommendation C(2008)1329¹³ “on the management of intellectual property in knowledge transfer activities and Code of Practice for universities and other public research organizations”. Among other points, the Commission notes that “active engagement of public research organizations in intellectual property management and knowledge transfer is essential for generating socio-economic benefits, and for attracting students, scientists and further research funding” and proceeds to recommend to Member States to “[p]romote the broad dissemination of knowledge created with public funds, by taking steps to encourage open access to research results, while enabling, where appropriate, the related intellectual property to be protected”. It then suggests a set of best practices that can guide Member States, among which “Open access implemented by public research funding bodies with regard to peer-reviewed scientific publications resulting from publicly-funded research”. Again, this vision is in line with the objectives of the SCOAP³ initiative.

¹³ http://ec.europa.eu/invest-in-research/pdf/ip_recommendation_en.pdf

