

# Uma Década de Acesso Aberto na UMinho e no Mundo

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# MedOANet: Facilitating Coordinated Open Access Policies and Strategies in Mediterranean Europe

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## Abstract

The *Mediterranean Open Access Network* supports the development of coordinated policies aligned to the European Commission's policies on access to and preservation of scientific information in Greece, Turkey, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. In two years of work the project mapped the open access landscape by performing surveys among research funders, researcher performing organizations and publishers; it developed the Open Access Tracker, an online tool that profiles countries on the basis of their available open access policies and initiatives. The project facilitated the coordination of action and policy development in each country through engagement with policymakers and coordination events and facilitated coordination at the regional level among the six countries. Finally, *MedOANet* developed guidelines for policy implementation directed to policymakers of the six countries.

## Resumo

O *Mediterranean Open Access Network* apoia o desenvolvimento de políticas coordenadas, em consonância com as políticas de Acesso Aberto e preservação da investigação científica da Comissão Europeia, na Grécia, Turquia, Itália, França, Espanha e Portugal. Em dois anos de trabalho, o MedOANet caracterizou o contexto de Acesso Aberto nestes países através de inquéritos por questionário a financiadores de ciência, organizações que realizam investigação e editores; desenvolveu o Open Access Tracker, uma ferramenta online que caracteriza os países através das suas políticas e iniciativas de acesso aberto. O projeto facilitou a coordenação de ações e políticas desenvolvidas em cada país, através do envolvimento de decisores políticos e a realização de eventos coordenados, e facilitou a coordenação a nível regional nos seis países. Finalmente, o MedOANet desenvolveu directrizes para a implementação de políticas dirigidas a decisões políticos dos seis países.

## Introduction

This paper captures the most significant outcomes of the *Mediterranean Open Access Network* (MedOANet; [www.medoanet.eu](http://www.medoanet.eu)), an FP7 project funded by the Science in Society programme and running from December 2011 until November 2013. MedOANet was designed to strengthen national open access initiatives and especially to facilitate the development of coordinated policies in six Mediterranean European countries: Greece, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal and Turkey. Nine partners participated in the project: the National Documentation Centre/NHRF (Greece, coordinator), CINECA (Italy), CNRS (France), FECYT (Spain), the University of Minho (Portugal), Hacettepe University (Turkey), ENCES (Germany), University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) and LIBER (The Netherlands).

MedOANet supports the development of policies aligned to current best practices and to the initiatives on access to and preservation of scientific information undertaken by the European Commission, most significantly, the *Recommendation and the Communication and Recommendation on access to and preservation of scientific information* (2012), the *Recommendation on the European Research Area* (2012) and the regulations provisioned regarding the access to research publications and data funded by FP7 and to be funded by Horizon 2020.

The project was designed along three lines of work: first, it mapped the open access ecosystem by performing surveys in the six countries in order to obtain a nuanced understanding of the situation, especially regarding open access policies, and to provide a basis for policymaker engagement and coordination. It also developed an online tool, the Open Access Tracker. The tool tracks the development of open access policies and initiatives (such as funder policies, repositories, etc.), by drawing data from international registries and displaying them for each country, effectively creating a country profile.

The second line of work was directed towards facilitating coordination at the national level: project partners engaged national policymakers, developed task forces, and organised national workshops, bringing stakeholders together. The third line of work comprised regional and European coordination and builds on the former two strands of work: a workshop and an international conference intensified coordinated policymaker and stakeholder engagement at the regional and European level. The project culminated with the guidelines for implementing open access policies for research funders (RFOs) and research performing organizations (RPOs). This paper presents the contribution of the project along those three lines of work, whereby the most significant project achievements are presented<sup>1</sup>.

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1 All project outcomes, documents and resources discussed here are available at the project website [www.medoanet.eu](http://www.medoanet.eu).

## Mapping the open access ecosystem

### The surveys

Three surveys were carried out in the spring and summer of 2012 in the six countries, one each among research funding organizations (RFOs), research performing organizations (RPOs) and publishers. The purpose of this mapping was to provide a more nuanced understanding of the processes and structures in place regarding Open Access, as well as relevant quantitative and qualitative data, with a view to supporting the development of coordinated open access policies aligned with the European mandates in project countries. These results and the evaluation of the mapping informed the engagement with national policy-makers and other key stakeholders in each of the countries, and the national workshops that took place within the project. They were expected to contribute to advancing the national processes towards implementing and/or improving policies, strategies and structures for Open Access. A full publication of the survey results is being released in the autumn of 2013.

The project solicited good response rates from RPOs of close to 45%, while RFOs and publishers displayed low response rates, 16% and 12%, respectively. The surveys were carried out online with follow-up phone interviews where necessary. The survey results show that open access is at a turning point in the countries under consideration: a lot of enthusiasm can be observed, and significant progress in the development of the relevant e-infrastructures, yet the lack of concrete and mandatory policies that will secure open access to publicly funded research indicates that the issue may not be high in the agenda of policymakers. Variability in the progress towards open access was observed among the six countries, which was clear at the outset of the project and the surveys, with Portugal, Spain and France leading the way both in terms of policies and e-infrastructures for open access.

In detail, with respect to the RFOs, the low level of participation in the surveys (19% or 16 funders), as well as the survey results themselves lead to the conclusion that they do not perceive securing public access to the research they fund as an integral part of their responsibility in funding research. It follows that they may have limited understanding of the significance of open access in maximizing research impact, and its effect in economy, innovation and social growth. More than half of the RFOs reported open access policies (9 out of the 16 respondents), but these are mostly voluntary and they are not monitored: they therefore lack the precision in the processes, such as implementation (when to deposit, when to make open access) and enforcement that would contribute significantly to the growth of openly accessible scholarship. Half of

them require self-archiving by authors (Green Open Access), while the rest treat self-archiving and open access publishing as equal ways of satisfying the open access requirement. Their policies are mostly not registered with the SHERPA Juliet funder registry, which makes tracking of progress difficult.

Although most funders that participated in the survey are public funders involved in policy-making, they reported not being involved in major national and/or international policy development initiatives. Immediate, systematic and sustained engagement with important national research funders is necessary to improve the situation attested through this survey.

Altogether, 221 RPOs from the six countries responded to the survey, a response rate of 44%, comprised for the greatest part universities. The RPOs that participated in the survey have made more advances in the e-infrastructures for scientific information, i.e. repositories, than in developing policies regarding open access. Approximately half of the RPOs reported open access policies, whereas 80% of them possess an institutional repository. Policies are overwhelmingly voluntary, without enforcement mechanisms, and lack specificity regarding various aspects of open access and self-archiving (timing of self-archiving and timing for openly releasing content). Policies, further, are not clearly advertised online. Policies concern PhD theses for 80% of the cases, and peer-reviewed papers for 70% of them. Policies for research data were reported only for 35% of the respondents. Most dramatically, 86% of the respondents reported no policies regarding long-term preservation in their institutions, with 63% of them having no plans for policies either. Therefore, more attention is necessary in these policy areas in the near future. A low level of involvement in open access initiatives was also recorded by the survey.

The survey results in some cases also afforded a more in depth understanding of the different practices and conditions prevalent in each of the six countries. Most significantly, Spain, Portugal and France are the three countries that present the highest proportions of institutional open access policies, with three-quarters of the participating RPOs reporting possessing such policies. Policies in these countries mostly cover peer-reviewed research, as opposed to PhD theses, while the three also feature the highest numbers of repositories. The existence of federated networks of repositories of national significance in these countries likely also play a role in promoting the uptake of the various aspects of open access, including policies.

Finally, the surveys provided facts and figures for what is already well-known, namely that academic libraries are heavily involved in the process of establishing open access the main way for communicating research through their involvement in the operation of repositories and advocacy activities.

Such overall positive developments in open access as described above create valuable opportunities to be seized and point to the direction for action. With the aim of enabling a steady growth of openly accessible scholarship, as well as of conforming with European policies and funding requirements for open access, it is imperative that existing RPO policies be improved by making open access mandatory and refining terms and processes, and that policies be developed for the remaining 50% of RPOs without policies. The significant existing investment of resources in institutional repositories further indicates that self- archiving may be the most efficient way of providing open access in RPOs, as well as an effective way to manage researcher evaluation processes and the intellectual output of the institutions. Sustained engagement with RPO policy- and decision-makers is necessary to achieve the above in a top-down approach and the same is necessary at the level of the researchers, with the libraries playing an important role in this process.

A total of 187 publishers from the six countries responded to the survey, a response rate of 12%. Most were small and medium-sized not-for-profit university presses, society and association publishers in the social sciences and the humanities. Medical, natural sciences and engineering publishers were represented in much lower numbers. Publishers were generally well-disposed towards open access and 72% reported publishing in open access. Concerns regarding open access business models and their financial viability were also expressed. Only about 37% of the publishers require publishing contracts and less than half of them require the exclusive transfer of copyright from author to publisher. Participating publishers reported very liberal attitudes towards self-archiving, with more than 84% of them permitting it. However, a lack of formalised and accessible rules, information provision for authors regarding copyright, self-archiving and other relevant matters likely prevents open access from flourishing among these publishing communities and is an obstacle to both gold and green open access. Thus, awareness-raising and instruction regarding copyright, business models and relevant matters is urgent for these publishers if the aim of securing the flourishing and growth of open access in the six countries is to be realised.

## **The Open Access Tracker**

The Open Access Tracker is an online tool that brings together information on the growth of different types of open access resources and policies in Greece, Turkey, Italy, Spain, France and Portugal, effectively creating a profile for each country. It draws together information from directories of journals and

repositories, institutional policies, funders' policies and publishers' self-archiving policies from authoritative registries, such as DOAJ, SHERPA/RoMEO, SHERPA/Juliet, OpenDOAR, ROARMAP. It presents the information on the basis of the type of the resource (e.g. self-archiving policies) and on a country-by-country basis, giving the ability to view all resources - or a specific one - for each of the countries. Further, it visually presents the growth of these different types of open access resources per country in numbers through time and per year, as recorded in these different directory services. The Tracker is the first online tool to bring together in one place in the web information from these different registries to profile each country.

More specifically, the Open Access Tracker was developed with the following aims:

- to provide an online tool for the systematic online one-stop-shop presentation of information relating to Open Access for the six project countries, which until now has only been recorded by and presented through diverse authoritative registries.
- to provide a lasting tool for continuous tracking and recording of the Open Access activities in Mediterranean Europe as they develop in such a way that data may be derived for purposes of studying and policy-making, and providing a historical record of the developments through time.
- to provide a tool that interoperates with existing major services tracking Open Access at the European and international level, receiving data and giving back data to them where necessary and possible.
- to encourage the stakeholder communities, RPOs, RFOs and publishers, to register their open access resources with these established services from which the Tracker draws information, in order to increase the accuracy of information regarding open access in the six countries.
- to build a scalable tool that may be used in the future to track other types of open access strategies or policies and countries beyond these of the project.

The Open Access Tracker was developed by CINECA (formerly called CASPUR) in Italy, and is hosted by the National Documentation Centre (EKT) in Greece, along with the project platform. The Tracker is an online expandable and interoperable database based on the open source CMS Drupal. The structure of the Tracker, the criteria for recording data, and the metadata structure have been developed by EKT and CINECA. A fundamental feature of the Tracker is represented by a content feeder. Contents are automatically ingested from the aforementioned

registries and can also be manually imported by registered users (editors) by filling a form according to the metadata structure of the data they wish to submit, e.g. a journal. Tracker editors can add new contents related to their countries, review contents proposed by external users, update and manage contents related to their countries. Finally, an export facility exposes data by Fee Rss/Atom, OAI-PMH, Open interface XML based.

Users may browse and search the Tracker. The tool can be browsed per category of resource for all six countries (e.g. funder policies), as well as per country and then by specific resource (e.g. Greece, institutional repositories). Each country page comprises a short introduction along with resources for the country in English, as well as in the language of the country. Data collected in the Tracker can also be presented as graphics, showing the resources overall and per country yearly growth. Further, subject distribution of journals and repositories can also be displayed. The search function of the tool allows the user to perform a simple search by typing one or more keywords in the search box, or to search the Tracker content by combining search and keywords and refining filters, i.e. country and type of resource.

As the project nears its end in the autumn of 2013, it is hoped that the Tracker, beyond being a one-stop-stop that brings together information otherwise presented in various registries on a per-country basis, will act as a catalyst for the harmonisation of information contained in the various local and international registries in such ways that the profile displayed in the Tracker is as accurate as possible. To this end, project partners are exploring ways to operationalise the ability to ingest into the Tracker data from other authoritative registries within the six project countries (such as the Spanish DULCINEA, a registry of publishers' copyright policies), that will complement the already existing information. Furthermore, the plan is to export these data to the appropriate international registries in order to improve the accuracy and coverage of their own information. Additionally, appropriate action will be taken in order to expand the Tracker to include more countries and more resources from which it draws information.

## **National coordination**

Coordination at the national level had the following aims:

- To enable each of the six countries to move towards coordinated national agendas on open access with a particular emphasis on facilitating the development of national strategies and policies regarding access to and preservation of scientific information by engaging the main stakeholders in each country, especially RFO and RPO policymakers.

- To forge synergies between various actors and initiatives in open access in each country, helping to maximise the impact of often disconnected activities and by enabling synergies.
- To facilitate the continuous information flow on open access developments, in particular on policy developments at the European level, in a coordinated way, in each of the six countries and between them.

Each project partner from the six countries possesses significant expertise in the field of open access, and one of the first targets in national coordination was to establish contact with key national policymakers and stakeholders and engage them. Project partners identified those key policymakers in each country, and particular attention was paid in establishing contacts with RFOs and RPOS – or strengthening them, where they already existed – to progress the project’s work.

Representatives of policymakers and stakeholders *formed national task forces* in each country as forums for discussion at the national level. They comprised representatives from RFOs, RPOs, academic and research libraries and publishers. Significantly, numerous representatives of the same stakeholders also participated in the project surveys. Coordination meetings were held in each country on how to advance the agenda on open access and to plan the national workshops that were to take place in each country.

*The national open access workshops* were a pivotal point in the national coordination process. They were designed to bring together policymakers and key stakeholders with the ability to affect change, and were aimed at increasing awareness and facilitating the development of nationally coordinated open access policies aligned with the European Commission’s Recommendations and the provisions for Horizon 2020 regarding publicly funded research. The national workshops served as platforms to present the results of the surveys in each of the six countries and discuss the national landscapes, placing them in the wider context of European policy developments, helping envelop national processes towards convergence.

The workshops took place between October 2012 and January 2013 in each of the six countries. They were usually hosted by public research institutions or universities and were single or two-day events. The diversity in their organisation and outcomes reflects the different processes at work in each of the countries, the different level of maturity characterising each of the countries regarding open access strategies and policies, and the level of awareness and involvement displayed by stakeholder decision-makers among RFOs and RPOs. National workshops in the six countries ranged from invitation-only intense workshops involving a limited number of participants to large conferences bringing together different stakeholders and initiatives within a country.

Overall, the national workshops achieved their main goals, as provisioned by the project: in each of the countries they brought together the main stakeholders for the first time, and they increased awareness and created the conditions where the synergies necessary to push forward coordinated national agendas can flourish. Thus, the foundation work has begun on which common national principles for policies on access to and preservation of scientific information can now be pursued more systematically in these six countries, particularly in view of the EC Recommendation and the upcoming Horizon 2020 research funding programme.

*Policymaker and stakeholder engagement* has been an integral component of project work since the beginning of the project. Policymakers have been kept abreast of current European developments by national project partners through the national task forces. Finally, as a result of partner engagement with national policymakers the agenda for open access policies has concrete achievements to boast of during the lifetime of the project in some countries.

For example, in Italy, after the national workshop in which the college of the rectors of the universities (CRUI) and the heads of research centers participated, the two agreed to sign a position paper that was prepared by the national task force on full implementation of open access by universities and research centres, respectively. In Greece, through engagement and discussion with the Hellenic Academic Libraries Link and the College of University rectors, it was agreed that joint action is necessary in order to expedite national policy making on open access. Policymaker engagement is becoming intense as we approach the end of the project, in view of widely and actively disseminating the guidelines for developing policies produced by the project for RPOs and RFOs and in view of this project's European conference. Engagement is expected to continue beyond the project, using the networks that were developed through it.

## **Guidelines for implementing Open Access policies**

An important achievement of the project has been the development of guidelines for the implementation of policies, directed at RFO and RPO policy and decision-makers, and produced in October 2013. Research publications form the focus of the guidelines. Separate guideline modules for RFOs and RPOs provide concise but comprehensive guidance on the following aspects to promote policy development:

- the main steps for implementing open access policies among RFOs and RPOs;

- the most significant components that a policy for RFOs and RPOs should address;
- model policies to serve as examples for RFOs and RPOs;
- best practices by RFOs and RPOs for policy implementation among the six countries;
- summaries of essential concepts in open access and the current context, especially the European policies, relevant recommendations and the provisions for Horizon 2020.

The MedOANet guidelines specifically support ‘immediate and mandatory self-archiving open access policies for peer-reviewed research’ for both RFOs and RPOs and provide an analysis of all components of such a policy. There are numerous reasons behind the recommendation for self-archiving. Self-archiving in repositories is an extremely useful tool that enables RPOs to manage their research output on their own. The systematic collection of the current research output in the institutional repository can contribute to the process of evaluation of institutions, departments and individual researchers, as well as help promote the institution and its work and maintain a live archive of the research output as an integral part of the identity of the institution through time.

In this line of argument self-archiving is best perceived as an integral component of the function both of RFOs and, especially perhaps, RPOs. This should be reflected in an institution’s bylaws and incorporated in the regular duties of research staff as an obligation towards their funder/employer. Further, providing open access through the institutional repository does not interfere with researchers’ freedom to publish their work where they consider best. Lastly, it is now clear from the MedOANet surveys and other current research that a large percentage of institutions possess repositories and therefore that significant resources have already been invested in them<sup>2</sup>. It is reasonable and cost-efficient to exploit such investments in e-infrastructures to the maximum before investing further resources for open access publishing as an alternative way to satisfy RFO and RPO open access requirements.

The guidelines developed by the project also recommend immediate and mandatory open access. Immediate open access through self-archiving makes research results available quickly to the research community and the world irrespective of the publication date. Researchers should be required to self-archive

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<sup>2</sup> For example, a recent report on *Open Access Strategies in the European Research Area*, prepared by Science Metrix (August 2013), found that 72% of the Heads of Libraries responding to the survey reported a central institutional repository.

their final copy of peer-reviewed publications (or the publisher's, where possible) immediately upon acceptance for publication. The requirement that the policy is mandatory is very important; in contrast to voluntary policies, mandatory policies which are carefully monitored, result in high compliance rates<sup>3</sup>. Immediate open access should be required for metadata as a minimum, and for the actual full content of articles where possible, depending on publisher embargoes. Publisher embargoes should be respected, but they should not exceed 6 months for natural and medical sciences and 12 months for the humanities and social sciences.

Ensuring compliance is essential in the success of the policy. In RPOs, self-archiving should be connected to performance evaluation, in other words, publication lists generated for evaluation should be drawn directly from institutional repositories and only what has been deposited there should be considered as a publication to be used for evaluation purposes at the level of individual researchers and/or departments or entire institutions. Indicatively, in the United Kingdom, the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) recently proposed to mandate immediate open access self-archiving as a condition for eligibility for the post-2014 Research Excellence Framework<sup>4</sup>. For RFOs, further funding should be contingent upon compliance for individual researchers and/or institutions to which researchers belong.

The guidelines are informed by current discourse and policy papers, recommendations and other guidelines produced recently by organisations such as UNESCO, The League of European Universities, the European University Association and Science Europe, among others<sup>5</sup>. Additionally, the guidelines are also informed by the results of the project's activities, such as the surveys that the project performed, as well as the results of the partner workshop on best practices, and of the University of Minho European workshop.

The guidelines are published in English and in all languages of the partner countries. They are to be presented to policy makers in each of the six countries that form the focus of MedOANet activities. In this respect, they have the

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3 Gargouri, Y., Hajjem, C., Lariviere, V., Gingras, Y., Brody, T., Carr, L. and Harnad, S. (2010) Self-Selected or Mandated, Open Access Increases Citation Impact for Higher Quality Research. PLOS ONE, 5 (10).e13636. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info:doi/10.1371/journal.pone.0013636>

4 The public consultation on this and the relevant document are accessible at <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2013/201316/#d.en.82765>

5 <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002158/215863e.pdf> (UNESCO guidelines); <http://www.leru.org/index.php/public/news/leru-launches-statements-on-open-access/> (LERU statements on open access to research publications and research data); <http://www.eua.be/eua-work-and-policy-area/research-and-innovation/open-access.aspx> (EUA position and recommendations on open access); [http://www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/Public%20documents%20and%20speeches/SE\\_OA\\_Pos\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.scienceeurope.org/uploads/Public%20documents%20and%20speeches/SE_OA_Pos_Statement.pdf) (Science Europe: principles on the transition to open access)

potential for significant impact in soliciting good results in terms of policymaker awareness-raising, as well as actual policy development. They are also a useful tool for academic libraries and support their work in advocating for open access policies to researchers and the administration of their home institutions. Project partners and international partners with their numerous members, such as LIBER and ENCES, help disseminate the guidelines beyond what has been provisioned by the project.

## Conclusions

During the two years provisioned for project work, the partners successfully engaged in the activities described above in order to facilitate policy development and help coordinate actions regarding open access in the six countries that form the focus of the project. The project mapped the open access landscape with an emphasis on understanding the current situation in terms of RFO and RPO policies and publisher practices in three surveys; it developed the Open Access Tracker, an online tool that brings together information on the growth of different types of open access resources and policies in the six countries; it focused on policymaker and stakeholder engagement by forming national taskforces and organising national workshops; it expanded coordination by bringing policymakers into a European workshop; finally, it produced guidelines for the implementation of open access policies directed to RFO and RPO policy- and decision-makers and disseminated widely the project results in a European conference in October 2013.

MedOANet has successfully provided the platform and the financial means through which to intensify the national processes towards the development of open access policies, as well as contributed to coordination at the national and regional level. Policymaker engagement and events at the national level have helped to put open access policy on the agenda of policy makers in all six countries. In those countries where some or significant progress had already been achieved, project activities contributed to providing further momentum towards action (Italy, France). In countries where open access policy development was not in the agenda of policymakers, the latter are now aware of the basic concepts and issues that need to be addressed on the basis of current developments and the European Commission's policies, and also in view of Horizon 2020.

Further, through the surveys and the development of the Open Access Tracker the project has stimulated discussion on open access and offered valuable data for evidence-based policy-making. Project partners and policymakers from all

six countries have had the chance to follow closely the developments in those six countries, plus other countries that are significantly more advanced in matters of the access to scientific information, and to enlarge their networks and become acquainted with new ideas and best practices to improve their work. The guidelines, translated to all six languages, serve as a means to set the minimum standards for policy development in these countries and a basis for the development of aligned policies.

Finally, the project strengthened the collaboration between the participating organisations in these countries and their capacities as networked centers of expertise that will carry this knowledge further in their respective countries. They will continue collaborating beyond the end of the project.

