

Cellule science ouverte

Paris, June 12 2023

Case followed by

Nicolas Fressengeas

nicolas.fressengeas@recherche.gouv.fr

1 rue Descartes

75231 Paris SP 05

Subject : French propositions for Open Research Europe

The French Ministry of Higher Education and Research warmly welcomes the independent report entitled [Operationalising Open Research Europe as a collective publishing enterprise](#). As a follow up to this report and the two last Council Conclusions related to open access to research publications, under French and Swedish presidency, we would like to provide some comments and way forward suggestions, as we feel Open Research Europe (ORE) is an extremely important asset for the success of science opening in Europe as well as worldwide.

The first issue we would like to address is the per article fixed cost model that is taken for granted throughout the report. The assumption of the paradigm of a “cost by article” is highly influenced by one single business model, which is the article processing charges one. We must make our best efforts to stop thinking inside this small conceptual box and consider publishing costs as a whole concept, without sticking to the model of article processing charges based on a cost per unit/article. Indeed, a more comprehensive paradigm of publishing costs for the whole editorial process would be more neutral and future-proof. As stressed by diverse international initiatives under the common name “Diamond Open Access”, it is by far not the only business model available for academic journals. To provide concrete and detailed suggestions on that matter, we publish the full details [in a comprehensive study on the ways diamond open access can be sustainably funded](#). The per unit cost should indeed not be the pivotal value in establishing the business model of a modern open access journal.

The second issue is the far too basic approach consisting of estimating a medium cost of 2,000€ per article. First, there is no evidence nor consensus around the 2,000€ per article cost¹ estimate that has been assumed by the authors. Secondly, this estimate is considered independently of the volume of publication, whereas it is highly probable that the per article cost decreases when the volume of publication increases, as is often the case. Considering only those two issues allows thus to think that the *in fine* per publication cost will be significantly lower than the assumed estimate, assuming of course that the initial platform costs are covered.

¹ See for instance : Odile Contat et Anne-Solweig Gremillet, « Publish: Whatever the Price? A Cost Structure Study for French Journals Publishing in Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) », *Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, 7 ; DOI : <https://doi.org/10.4000/rfsic.1716>

The third issue we wish to address concerns ORE publishing openness to the scientific community under the light of the recent council conclusions on academic publishing that are focusing on going beyond the “gold” model of APC-based journals. At first and though it is somehow implicit in the report, we would like to stress the fact that publishing in ORE should be at no cost for the individual researcher, in order to avoid building inequalities between researchers, disciplines and even countries. There should be a statement explicitly involving ORE in the diamond open access model, to ensure that the business model does not lead to exclusions of individuals or institutions. Furthermore, and as the report mentions, “achieving the desired rate of growth in publication volumes presents a greater challenge than securing the funding”, meaning that the success of ORE will very probably be measured in terms of quality and quantity of papers actually published, rather than on its ability to meet the cost challenges. This pleads for a wide as possible openness, in terms of who can publish in ORE : in light of the recent council conclusions and focusing on ORE readability, we thus suggest a simple worldwide opening, regardless of the researcher funding origin. We indeed feel this is politically needed to move away from the APC paradigm, which is creating a club of rich players allowed to publish, implying that there is no right to publish from outside the club. This would switch from a paywall to read to a paywall to publish. ORE, being a continental proposal, should clearly lead the way and avoid any club building. Beside political principles, this worldwide opening would not be too much of a financial risk, considering particularly the few hundreds of papers presently online and provided the review mechanisms are secured to maintain the present high scientific quality. On the contrary, this could enhance ORE attractiveness, through its equity, regardless of the researchers disciplines, countries and event continents. This would furthermore be specifically in line with UN Sustainable Development Goals, to which we are particularly devoted and for which we could bring further support in case of unexpected ORE too swift success, though this event would really be good news. We are furthermore confident in the fact that the event of a quick and massive ORE success could trigger money raising capabilities from the major key funders.

To further increase ORE attractiveness, we wonder if some room could be found to enhance and clarify its editorial policy and identity. We thus suggest a revamping of the homepage and the web design, but also considering transforming community gateways and collection into actual journals, possibly alongside a mega-journal. In the same direction, we would suggest that these journals build a strong identity, or even branding. They would thus appear and be identified as journals of the Open Research Europe publisher. These journals could thus develop an editorial policy on a common ground that ORE would set, but with a certain freedom to adapt to each discipline.

This last proposition could allow to strengthen the link between ORE and the research community by attracting editorial boards which could be offered a certain amount of liberty to develop the journal they want within the framework set by ORE. For instance, one particular way of building link and trust with the scientific communities, surely among many others, would be that ORE journals became Peer Community In² (PCI) friendly: in other words, they could put their trust in Peer Community In and publish the preprints validated by PCI, alongside their reviews.

Identifying and even branding the offer of ORE as a series of journals among the hundreds of thousands of journals worldwide has another strong advantage in terms of ORE perception by the research community. Indeed, and reaffirming our strong support to ORE as an important asset in the portfolio of the European Open Science policy, we feel that ORE should not be viewed as the one and only diamond open access European solution. We are facing a complex challenge, with multiple disciplinary, geographical and linguistic specificities, and one single platform, even very well supported and very well

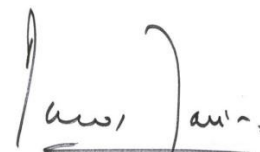
² Peer Community In (PCI) : <https://peercommunityin.org/>

designed, could never solve alone the issue. In line with the French national plan for Open Science that strongly supports bibliodiversity, ORE could thus be profitably viewed as one important solution, though among many others. As a matter of comparison, there are 12 000 academic publishers members of Crossref, and there are at least 50 000 academic journals worldwide. Therefore, alongside our support to ORE, we wish to support a vivid and diversified academic publishing ecosystem, of which ORE should be an important actor, together with other existing and coming initiatives such as the European-wide OPERAS initiative for humanities and social science. OPERAS is the Research Infrastructure supporting open scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) in the European Research Area. Its mission is to coordinate and federate resources in Europe to efficiently address the scholarly communication needs of European researchers in the field of SSH³.

We hope these propositions could further enhance the adoption of Open Research Europe by the research communities worldwide as, again, we feel this initiative holds many great promises for achieving high-quality, transparent, open, trustworthy and equitable scholarly publishing. France considers that there a necessity to contribute to its success and you will find us as supportive as possible in that direction.

National Open Science Coordinator

Marin Dacos



³ <https://operas-eu.org/about/operas-in-a-nutshell/>