

PASTEUR4OA Meeting of National Experts Working Together to Promote Open Access Policy Alignment in Europe

On 2-3 December 2014, the PASTEUR4OA project hosted a Europe-wide meeting of national experts to promote Open Access (OA) policy alignment in Europe.

The meeting brought together PASTEUR4OA project partners and members of the recently founded Knowledge Net that represent a wide variety of stakeholders – universities, research funders, libraries, associations and networks – from across 33 European countries. Three issues were among the top priorities of the meeting's agenda:

- Revisiting the Horizon 2020 (H2020) OA mandate, overviewing OA policy developments at the European and international levels, and learning from the best practices in OA policy development and implementation;
- Considering the reasons to align national OA policies with the H2020 OA mandate;
- Reflecting on the coordination of activities to promote OA policy alignment at the pan-European level through the Knowledge Net.

About the Meeting

What's going on at the European level?

The [Guidelines on Open Access to Scientific Publications and Research Data in Horizon 2020](#) adopted in December 2013 require researchers whose projects are funded by the H2020 programme to deposit their peer-reviewed articles in repositories and to ensure open access to those articles. Researchers are also encouraged to deposit the research data that validate the publications results. In parallel, the [European Commission](#) (EC) advised Member States to develop OA policies on the basis of the same principles.

Why is the H2020 OA mandate important?

Alma Swan, a partner of the PASTEUR4OA project leading research on OA policy analysis, demonstrated that policy alignment across European countries is key to:

- Enable researchers working in interdisciplinary areas or in international teams to comply with a single OA policy rather than with multiple and often divergent policies;
- Facilitate interdisciplinary research and harmonisation of practices among different academic disciplines;
- Enable researchers mobility across the European Research Area (ERA);
- Support the European Union (EU) harmonisation agenda and promote common practices and norms;
- Implement generic infrastructural services;
- Accelerate scientific research, technological progress and social well-being.



Figure 1 – Alma Swan, Enabling Open Scholarship (EOS).

Furthermore, the EC strongly recommends Member States to:

- Develop **policies** on OA;
- Ensure **consistency** between H2020 OA policy and those of MS;
- Promote **coordination** at EU level;
- **Report** on progress at MS and EU level;
- Establish multi-stakeholder **dialogue**.

What is PASTEUR4OA working towards?

Following coordinated efforts at the EU level to develop an OA mandate, it has been acknowledged that further work is required to promote OA policy development and alignment at the national level. **Victoria Tsoukala**, the PASTEUR4OA Project Coordinator, stressed the importance of PASTEUROA's work in expediting understanding and awareness about OA, in facilitating aligned OA policy development especially at the institutional and research funder levels, and in setting a pan-European network committed to promote OA policy implementation and alignment.

Of significant importance was the recognition that European countries experience different challenges and that PASTEUR4OA is striving to overcome those challenges. **Victoria Tsoukala** emphasised that there are different levels of progress in European countries in terms of policy development and implementation. In some cases, lack of awareness about OA among policymakers is a reality. In other cases, OA is not a priority for policymakers. Moreover, lack of information about OA policies effectiveness also acts as a barrier in policy making.

To address some of these challenges, the PASTEUR4OA project proposes to:

- Perform analysis on OA policies, measure OA policies effectiveness and identify policy-related gaps to provide evidence based arguments;
- Potentiate a network of national centres of expertise – the **Knowledge Net** – that collaboratively monitor and champion an aligned OA policy environment across Europe;
- Facilitate coordinated action in OA policy development in MS and neighbouring countries;
- Engage with and inform policymakers at the national level about the EU's OA policy and infrastructure;
- Liaise with related projects and activities to promote coordinated and joint efforts in advancing OA policy development and alignment.

On the whole, the PASTEUR4OA project will contribute to the coordination of OA policy development and alignment across Europe, address specific needs at the national level, and support the Knowledge Net in advancing the OA policy alignment agenda.

What is the role of the Knowledge Net?

The [Knowledge Net](#) is a pioneer network that brings together 33+ Key Node organisations from across Europe to transfer knowledge, disseminate information and advocate for OA policy development, implementation and alignment across Europe.

Eloy Rodrigues, a partner of the PASTEUR4OA project leading the development of the Knowledge Net, explained the rationale behind the development of the Knowledge Net. This is linked to the recognition that specific problems exist across Europe and that the Knowledge Net can help address them. In particular, that there are:

- Disparate levels of OA awareness, activities, infrastructures and policies;
- Lack of alignment and consistency between OA policies;
- Lack of coordination between OA initiatives, infrastructures and organisations.

As a result, the Knowledge Net aims to:

- Facilitate coordinated activities that monitor and champion an aligned OA policy environment across Europe;



Figure 2 – Victoria Tsoukala, National Documentation Centre (EKT).



Figure 3 – Eloy Rodrigues, University of Minho (UMINHO).

- Promote engagement with policymakers at the national level;
- Disseminate advocacy materials that report the evidence base on the reasons for and benefits of OA;
- Promote coordinated work among the Key Node organisations and the European Commission into the future and after the PASTEUR4OA project ends.

To advance this agenda, the PASTEUR4OA project and the Knowledge Net will work jointly in delivering workshops for research funders and institutions in 2015. These workshops will highlight the progress made towards implementation of OA policies in Europe, the importance of good policy making, and the need to align OA policies with the H2020 mandate. Advocacy materials such as [national case studies](#) will continue to be produced to address knowledge gaps on OA policy related issues. These resources will be disseminated among policymakers and shared with communities involved in or impacted by scholarly communications issues.

Eloy Rodrigues also remarked the need to consider the sustainability of the Knowledge Net in the long-term. This issue was later addressed in the work groups' sessions.

Are there examples of best practices in implementing institutional and research funders OA policies?

Across Europe there are a number of successful cases where OA policies have been adopted by national, research funding and institutional stakeholders. A common characteristic that most of these policies share is that they are aligned with the H2020 OA mandate.

Niamh Brennan, presented a case study on Ireland and illustrated how Ireland has succeeded in implementing national ([National Principles for Open Access Statement](#), 2012), institutional (e.g. [Trinity College Dublin](#), 2010) and research funders OA policies (e.g. [Health Research Board](#), 2014; [Irish Research Council](#), 2013). In Ireland's case, the reform of the Higher Education agenda and the drive to rebuild its 'innovative knowledge-based economy' increased the visibility and necessity to embrace OA. Ireland has learned from the policy, best practice and technical elements of larger countries to develop its own OA policies.

Nina Karlstrøm, introduced the Norwegian case study and showed that Norway has a strong research basis and a strong scholarly communications system. Norway has a national Current Research Information Systems (CRIS), a national research council (Norwegian Research Council, NRC), a national harvester of repositories (Norwegian Open Research Archives, NORA), a consortium for repositories covering 60 institutions, and a shared library system covering more than 100 academic libraries. Norway has strong OA policy at the national ([White Paper on Research](#), 2012-2013) and research funder's ([Norwegian Research Council](#), 2009) levels. It is at the institutional level however that more OA policies need to be implemented which are aligned with the H2020 mandate.

Bernard Rentier, made a presentation about the University of Liege which has an [OA policy](#) since 2007 and an [institutional repository](#) (ORBi) since 2008. The University of Liege OA policy is mandatory. Compliance with the University's OA policy is required and deposit of peer-reviewed articles in ORBi is a prerequisite in the internal research evaluation process. Researchers can not only deposit peer-reviewed articles in ORBi but also periodicals, book chapters, speeches, reports and other resources. The levels of compliance with the University's OA policy are high. In 2013, 86% of peer-reviewed articles were deposited in ORBi and by the end of 2014 it is expected that the total deposits will reach 90%. The total numbers of full text downloads from ORBi are also high. Between 1 January and 31 November 2014 more than 1 million downloads were made. As **Bernard Rentier** referred, compliance with the University's OA policy has been highly successful. This has had direct benefits in increasing the levels of readership and citations, in developing new metrics, in improving reporting and in increasing institutional visibility.



Figure 4 – Niamh Brennan (Trinity College Dublin); Nina Karlström (CRIStin); Bernard Rentier (University of Liege).

By and large, the PASTEUR4OA project and the Knowledge Net are determined to promote a model where national, institutional and research funders OA policies are implemented and aligned with the H2020 mandate. Drawing on the cases of best practice where national, institutional and research funders OA policies have been successfully adopted, stakeholders from across Europe can learn from these examples and draw inspiration to develop their own OA policies. It is the aspiration that national, funders and institutional OA policies will be implemented across Europe in the near future that drives the goals of PASTEUR4OA and the Knowledge Net. Ultimately, it is the aspiration that harmonised agendas will advance the EU's innovation strategy, facilitate researchers' mobility, encourage interdisciplinary research, and advance economic and social well-being across Europe that are major drivers for open access.

What role for the Knowledge Net?

A voting exercise and work groups sessions were key to explore the ways in which the Knowledge Net will succeed in achieving its mission. PASTEUR4OA partners and Key Nodes engaged in group discussions to think of ways to tackle challenges and to consider how the Knowledge Net can support them in overcoming those challenges. At the voting exercise, the challenge that was considered as priority for the Knowledge Net to address is to look into ways to maintain and sustain effective coordination at the national and EU levels. At one of the work groups sessions, participants looked at factors that will determine if the Knowledge Net will have succeeded in five years by considering what the Knowledge Net will have to do to succeed and what role the Key Nodes will have to play to ensure that the Knowledge Net meets its objectives. The work groups considered that there are two core factors that will determine the success of the Knowledge Net. The first relates to the need to define a clear work programme that focuses on promoting harmonisation and alignment of OA policies and infrastructures across Europe. The second relates to the need to further refine the management and sustainability model of the Knowledge Net to ensure its operation in the long-term.



Figure 5 – PASTEUR4OA partners and Key Nodes at the meeting.

Next Steps

The next steps for the PASTEUR4OA project partners and the Key Nodes are to:

- Refine the mission, outcomes and goals of the Knowledge Net
- Refine the programme for the workshops to be held with national funders and institutions across five regions in Europe
- Develop advocacy materials to inform OA policy alignment at the national level
- Disseminate the results of the OA policies analysis research work