



DIAMAS

Developing Institutional Open Access
Publishing Models to Advance
Scholarly Communication

Collaboration in Diamond Open Access publishing

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Consortium overview

AMU	UNIVERSITÉ D'AIX MARSEILLE	FR
PVM	PROTISVALOR MEDITERRANEE SAS	FR
OPERAS	OPEN SCHOLARLY COMMUNICATION IN THE EUROPEAN RESEARCH AREA FOR THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES	BE
CNRS	CENTRE NATIONAL DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE	FR
EIFL	STICHTING EIFL.NET	NL
FECYT	FUNDACIÓN ESPAÑOLA PARA LA CIENCIA Y LA TECNOLOGIA, F.S.P., FECYT	ES
TSV	TIETEELLISTEN SEURAIN VALTUUSKUNNASTA	FI
LIBER	STICHTING LIBER	NL
UB	UNIVERSITAT DE BARCELONA	ES
UniZD	SVEUČILIŠTE U ZADRU	HR
FFZG	SVEUČILIŠTE U ZAGREBU FILOZOFSKI FAKULTET	HR
Science Europe	SCIENCE EUROPE	BE



EUA	EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION	BE
OASPA	STICHTING OPEN ACCESS SCHOLARLY PUBLISHERS ASSOCIATION	NL
UiT	UNIVERSITETET I TROMSOE - NORGES ARKTISKE UNIVERSITET	NO
CNR	CONSIGLIO NAZIONALE DELLE RICERCHE	IT
UGOE	GEORG-AUGUST-UNIVERSITAT GOTTINGEN STIFTUNG OFFENTLICHEN RECHTS	DE
SPE	STICHTING SPARC EUROPE	NL
UU	UNIVERSITEIT UTRECHT	NL
EKT	ETHNIKO KENTRO TEKMIRIOSIS KAI ILEKTRONIKOU PERIECHOMENOU	EL
IBL PAN	INSTYTUT BADAN LITERACKICH POLSKIEJ AKADEMII NAUK	PL
ESF	FONDATION EUROPÉENNE DE LA SCIENCE	FR
JISC	JISC LBG	UK
DOAJ	INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES FOR OPEN ACCESS C I C	UK

Acronyms

AEUP	Association of European University Presses
AJOL	African Journals Online
ALMASI	Aligning and Mutualizing Nonprofit Open Access Publishing Services Internationally

APC	Article Processing Charge
BMBF	Federal Ministry of Education and Research
CLOCKSS	Controlled Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
COPE	Committee on Publication Ethics
CVTI SR	Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information
DFG	German Research Foundation (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft)
DIAMAS	Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication
DOAJ	Directory of Open Access Journals
DOAS	Diamond Open Access Standard
DOIs	Digital Object Identifiers
EASE	The European Association of Science Editors
EDCH	European Diamond Capacity Hub
EIFL	Electronic Information for Libraries



EU	European Union
FGEE	Federation of Publishers' Guilds (Federación de Gremios de Editores de España).
HUNOR	Hungarian Open Access repositories network
IPSP	Institutional Publishing Services Provider
ISSN	International Standard Serial Number
LOCKSS	Lots of Copies Keep Stuff Safe
MoUs	Memorandums of Understanding
OA	Open Access
OASPA	Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association
OJS	Open Journal Systems
OPERAS	European Research Infrastructure for the development of open scholarly communication in the social sciences and humanities
OS	Open Science
PKP	Public Knowledge Project
SAAS	Software-As-A-Service

SeDOA	Service Centre for Diamond Open Access
SSH	Social Sciences and Humanities
STEM	Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics
UMU	Universidad de Murcia
UNE	Unión de Editoriales Universitarias Españolas
ZRC SAZU	The Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts



Executive Summary

The state of collaboration in Diamond OA publishing

Collaboration in Diamond Open Access (OA) publishing offers significant individual, regional, national, and global benefits by improving efficiency, quality, problem-solving and impact. Mapping current collaboration practices in Europe reveals various dimensions of collaboration, highlighting both untapped potential and challenges. Beyond collaboration being essential to the publishing process, many Institutional Publishers and Service Providers (IPSPs) are ready to work together to reduce costs, enhance quality, increase visibility, and strengthen institutional positioning. However, collaboration opportunities can depend on the publisher's strategic goal; strategic planning should ensure sustainability, scalability, and stability in collaboration efforts.

Publishing involves multiple tasks, including editorial, production, IT, administrative, legal, and training functions. Although certain tasks can be managed internally, outsourcing to external service providers frequently proves advantageous. Collaboration can improve efficiency, helping Diamond OA publishers optimise resources and streamline workflows. Formalising collaboration by setting clearly defined roles and responsibilities in contracts or Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) can help create fertile ground for successfully working with others.

While grassroots collaboration is common, national and international coordination can provide centralised support such as copyright, marketing or policy guidance. Membership organisations such as professional publisher associations or unions can bring together IPSPs in a particular country, acting on a national level. National policies and publishing unions or university press coordination bodies, for example, foster better governance, workflows, cost sharing, knowledge building, and capacity; this can help incentivise Diamond OA. Structured networks like these exist in Germany, Spain, and Hungary. Collaborations can span public or private academic publishers, foundations, regional governments, municipalities, government ministries, university departments, professional associations, and private companies that finance the distribution of publications among their employees. However, many IPSPs believe that higher education authorities should take a more active role in promoting structured, well-supported collaboration. In some countries, such as Germany, national capacity or service centres are being developed to advise on technical standards and legal matters, maintain a registry of Diamond OA publications and infrastructure, and guide publishers and editors towards endorsed practices and standards.

IPSPs consider that on a more international level, a larger, well-organised community with clear policies, shared best practices, technical expertise, and other opportunities for collaboration among editors of journals in similar domains is advantageous. The Association of European University Presses (AEUP) partly fulfils this role but a European-level hub for Diamond OA could improve Diamond OA visibility and offer shared services for production, language editing, reviewer databases, as well as access to a variety of production tools.

Reliable IT services are critical core processes for all parts of the publishing process, and there is evidence of them being in strong supply and active collaborations exist. They support the optimisation of workflows, implement modern publishing standards and enhance discoverability. Many IPSPs outsource hosting or technical support within the parent organisation, or without via external hosting providers. Shared platforms or publishing portals can cater to a wide range of users, reduce local costs and improve efficiency, and provide extra services such as training. However, without proper coordination, technical fragmentation can occur between platforms. National platforms can be free for journals in the country in question, such as the Finnish journal.fi portal. Some also maintain lists of OA journals, collaborating with national publisher communities. Shared platforms based on the software-as-a-service (SAAS) model seem to be the most common. There is a risk of depending on external service providers too heavily, as quality may not always be guaranteed. It is also difficult to retain IT professionals due to a competitive job market.

Programmes, platforms, professional publishing associations or unions and other networks can provide training, support, and/or advice on publishing policies and best practices, including collaboration with organisations like DOAJ (Directory of Open Access Journals), which enhance publishing skills and knowledge-sharing. Some institutions create communities of practice amongst journal editors, editors-in-chief, or technical editors to build internal capacity.

Institutions provide some administrative, financial and legal support, but smaller publishers without a parent organisation often struggle with legal complexities and contract management related to EU competition law or state aid. However, due to the limited availability of legal services at institutions, this is frequently outsourced. Contract management, for example, represents a significant workload. Some IPSPs rely on tools and support developed by professional networks such as the editor, publishing networks, or unions. When more elaborate legal advice is required, IPSPs must access paid-for legal services at their own expense. This is often unaffordable for the IPSPs with smaller budgets.

In some countries, publishers seek greater collaboration between editorial, IT, and support services, particularly for language editing, to compensate for the lack of human resources and skills. Collaborative efforts in marketing, outreach, and publicity enable publishers to bridge skill gaps and reduce costs; this is a popular area for cooperation. Publishers can use external companies, in-house communication teams or media outlets for social media management; some liaise with larger networks for specific activities or campaigns. Collaboration on production services is considered valuable by many IPSPs. Collaborations can range from engaging in one-off and long-term co-publications (book series and journals) with both public and private publishers, for copy-editing, typesetting, indexing, translation, design and distribution.

Obstacles for collaboration in Diamond OA publishing and how to overcome them

We have identified eight key barriers to effective collaboration for Diamond OA publishing:

1. Service delivery and quality assurance

Difficulties in getting the expected quality of service and managing external providers make it hard for people to work together effectively. Solutions include:

- Establishing plans and specified contracts with clear expectations and penalties.
- Evaluating contract lengths to balance flexibility and reliability.
- Leveraging professional networks for service provider recommendations and shared experiences.

2. Restrictions on publicly funded organisations

Although IPSPs at publicly funded organisations operate with some autonomy, they can face administrative constraints such as procurement processes. Procurement procedures and formal tender processes often prioritise cost over quality.

Recommendations include:

- Form national or regional networks to share best practices, templates, etc.
- Engage legal experts to develop procurement processes that enable collaboration with external service providers.

3. Organisational stability and predictability

Dependence on external providers and volunteer-led work creates instability and can disrupt collaboration. Utilising in-kind resources from the parent organisation, which provides flexibility in resourcing expenses, can generate interdepartmental tensions.

Solutions include:

- Using open source tools to avoid vendor lock-in.
- Retaining control over key publishing functions.

- Periodically renewing contracts with strict service delivery clauses.
- Working towards long-term collaboration with external IT service partners to reduce risks when outsourcing central IT functions.
- Developing predictable funding models with consortia and institutional support.
- Structuring volunteer efforts to ensure long term commitment.
- Collaborating with other trusted organisations who can provide shared qualified staff, tools and services to reduce resource constraints.

4. Access to resources

Diamond OA publishing is facing severe challenges due to limited staff and funding. As a result, despite a growing demand for Diamond OA publishing, these limitations are making it difficult to meet that demand effectively. There is a strong need for more consistent and long-term financing Solutions include:

- Encouraging internal collaboration to optimise resource use.
- Institutional support to help scale up efforts.
- Funders balancing short-term innovation with long-term stability when funding.

5. Flexibility and scalability

One-size-fits-all common solutions, e.g. on national or international levels, may not suit diverse publishers without necessary – sometimes extensive – customisation. Certain IT systems can be too complex and costly for the size of the specific organisation and its publishing activities. Being too prescriptive or centralised when supporting researchers and journals can disenfranchise publishers.

Without the necessary institutional support, many journals choose to self-publish, disconnect from the institutional publisher, or move to commercial publishers.

Strategies include:

- Ensuring tools allow for customisation.
- Developing national/international collaborations for scalable support.

6. Trust, governance, and management

There is an overall challenge in getting skilled external service providers involved in the Diamond OA space. Collaboration can mitigate this, but can suffer from poor governance, weak management, a lack of trust between parties, and ineffective communication. Successful collaboration relies too much on individual initiatives. This challenge is further exacerbated by the stark division between academic and technical staff in institutions.

Solutions include:

- Establishing national or regional stakeholder networks for collective Diamond OA sector development.
- Cultivating organisational decision-making with follow-up mechanisms.
- Encouraging cross-institutional management for strategic collaboration.

7. Structures and common practices

Bureaucratic restrictions and strict funding rules are examples of barriers that hinder smooth operations and effective collaboration. Internal divisions within institutions can make collaboration with outside service providers difficult, and private sector collaborations are often challenging due to differing priorities.

The publishing ecosystem is vast and existing networks can run the risk of conducting redundant work or missing opportunities.

A fundamental force that can work against collaboration is the competitive environment of higher education institutions.

Solutions include:

- Documenting national service offerings for better coordination.
- Encouraging national collaboration to build capacity.
- Utilising platforms like the European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH) to share best practices.
- Stimulating and incentivising a culture of internal collaboration vs competition for the benefit of the institution.

8. Change of culture and perspective

Institutional publishing must be seen as a viable alternative to commercial publishing. In addition to a top down cultural change, a bottom up approach is also needed from researchers who are more involved in the governance and production processes of scholarly publishing.

Solutions include:

- Raising awareness among university management and researchers of Diamond OA publishing, using the Diamond Open Access Standard (DOAS).
- Aligning Diamond OA with research assessment reforms.
- Shifting funding models towards collaborative rather than competitive structures.

1. Introduction

The opportunities and benefits of collaboration on Diamond OA publishing can be felt on individual, regional, national and global levels. Going beyond the boundaries of only relying on one's own activities to operate, brings great advantages to improving publishing in efficiency, quality, impact, which can also facilitate the growth of even more productive collaborative opportunities in the future.

As part of its quest to see how to strengthen the Diamond OA archipelago as well as how to better sustain it financially going forward, the DIAMAS project has sought to identify existing collaboration patterns at different levels, obstacles hindering collaboration, and potential new ways for publishers to collaborate. This work includes a review of DIAMAS web survey responses, outputs from DIAMAS-led consultations with different stakeholder groups through public webinars and events, and six dedicated focus groups held with institutional publishers around Europe in multiple languages, and a bibliometric investigation on Diamond OA journals and publishers. Two DIAMAS web surveys have been central to this work: The 2023 The DIAMAS landscape survey of European institutional publishers and related service providers by Armengou, Aschehoug, Ball et al. (2023) and the 2023 follow-up survey focusing on in-depth aspects relating to financial sustainability by Brun, Pontille & Torny (2024).

This output is divided into three main sections:

- **Unlocking the potential of collaboration in Diamond OA publishing**
 - Showcases evidence for the current level and nature of collaboration between Diamond OA publishers in Europe.
 - Presents findings stemming from Diamond OA publishers in Europe on their perspectives and experiences with collaboration, structured around key publishing functions.
- **Obstacles for collaboration in Diamond OA publishing** (and how to overcome them)
 - Identifies obstacles for various types of collaboration in Diamond OA publishing and, when possible, documents how these challenges have been overcome. This is organised by obstacle type.
- **Collaboration patterns for European Diamond OA publishing**
 - Offers a bibliometric analysis of collaboration between institutional and professional publishers for Diamond OA in Europe.

A short typology of collaborations

Before we begin, it is important to address some common language and terminology to bring precision to the multifaceted nature of what we mean by the term 'collaboration'. From our work in mapping the current collaboration practices for Diamond OA publishers in Europe, we have observed different dimensions of collaboration. These dimensions lay the foundation for a more systemic understanding of different types of collaborations, which in turn helps us understand the untapped potential and approaches to overcome potential obstacles.

Through our work, talking to publishers and engaging with partners in the DIAMAS project consortium, we have unpicked some of the dimensions that are preferably specified whenever considering collaborations from a more strategic and analytical perspective. The purpose is not to introduce a heavy-handed theory to stall agile behaviour. Instead we suggest that many of these dimensions are immediately helpful in practice for publishers when considering what kind of collaborative engagements or opportunities already exist or should be established to support Diamond OA publishers.

Collaboration can range from **formal** to **informal**, depending on the circumstances and the need to document and bind to the engagement. Legally binding contracts are at the most formal end of the spectrum.

Related to the degree of formality is often how **planned** or **ad-hoc** the collaboration is. Has there been an exhaustive preparatory phase scoping out the needs and has a mapping of potential collaboration partners been charted and potentially compared? Alternatively has the collaboration emerged more spontaneously or organically over time?

Collaboration can either exist **internally** within the organisation or **externally** through interactions with external experts or organisations. Internal collaboration is essentially all activities handled with the expertise, facilities and equipment available within the publisher's own organisation. This can be quite broad for institutional publishers as support can often be given from the functions of the hosting institutions.

Another relevant dimension when considering different kinds of collaboration is the timeframe, being either **short-term** or **long-term**. There is a large discrepancy in collaboration dynamics depending on whether external expertise is drawn on as a one-off or if more ongoing service delivery is required.

Just as collaborations vary in length, they can also differ in how they relate to geographical breadth, i.e. what is the geographical scope of collaboration: from **local** to **global** in how the collaboration connects different actors.

When considering how collaboration can be perceived to fill a need in the publishers' activities, one can also consider if the type of collaboration is **horizontal** or **vertical**. In



this case, horizontal refers to engaging with collaborators in a similar position as oneself in the publishing value chain of activities. Vertical encompasses collaborations with parties providing input into either downstream or upstream processes.

It is also worth considering relationship dynamics when planning collaboration, i.e. as a **peer** or is the connection more akin to a **client-provider** relationship? Interacting as peers, where the activities and the power dynamic between the parties in the relationship are relatively equal, differs when this is not the case.

How the collaboration is designed to support the publisher can range from the **delivery of activities** or the **contribution to fixed structures** depending on whether the collaboration is about actively executing work in support of ongoing processes, or if the collaboration is more static in its dynamics in that it revolves around structural aspects. Some examples of different collaborations where this dimension differs are e.g. collaboration for the purpose of developing a commonly shared IT infrastructure among several publishers (fixed, persistent structure), and hiring external services to manage copy editing on an ongoing basis (delivery of activities).

It can also be useful to further distinguish between **tangible** and **intangible** objects of collaboration. If something can be easily observed, inspected, and assessed, it offers different circumstances (for e.g. outsourcing) compared to something that is more abstract. For example knowledge-sharing within national networks differs substantially from collaborating with external parties for accounting services, where the former is often diffuse in terms of its temporal and scope outlines, and the latter firmly rooted in producing financially and legally mandated persistent records.

Lastly, for considering whether collaborations fall into different categories for the purposes of monitoring and management, it can be helpful to distinguish between **core** and **supporting processes**, whereby core ones are those that directly relate to the chain of activities that produce the service or product that one is committed to deliver. In the context of publishing it can be argued that everything that directly relates to the critical path of producing the publishable outputs can be considered core processes (e.g. editorial tasks, copyediting, publishing and similar), while supporting aspects such as IT, financial and administrative support. The distinction is perhaps most relevant when considering which part of one's operations can be produced by highly standardised interchangeable outsourced solutions, and which need to be kept internal to retain the unique value and particular expertise that is needed for the particular profile desired by the publisher.

In no way should this list of dimensions, or any other conclusions or suggestions found in this document, be considered as final exhaustive interpretation of things. We very much welcome future work and community activity, within and beyond Europe, to perform expansions or modifications to enhance the initial picture we have been able to provide as part of this task within the DIAMAS project.

2. Unlocking the potential of collaboration in Diamond OA publishing

Publishing is an ongoing activity that involves a constellation of different tasks to be done for high-quality finished products to come out at the end. There are many areas of activity, and potential collaboration, that exist and are relevant for Diamond OA publishers independent of publisher size. Some common functions and workflows include managing activities related to editorial, production, IT, administrative (incl. legal and financial), as well as training and support processes. For smaller publishers many of these can be handled by a single person, perhaps with the help of some volunteers, but larger publishers have dedicated people specialised in these different areas. Not everything is or needs to be managed in-house within the publisher or a potential host organisation to the publisher, some parts can also be provided through an external service provider. We believe that all kinds of Diamond OA publishers would benefit from considering how they can leverage the benefits of collaboration in their activities, evidence shows that in many cases it is more beneficial to work on things together.

There are many areas of publishing activities where collaborations would help Diamond OA publishers to become more efficient. This report outlines current practices and serves as an inspirational starting point for further discussions at different levels about how Diamond OA publishing activities can best be organised and supported in the future.

The organisational context for collaboration

Mapping and understanding the organisational contexts and operational circumstances of Diamond OA publishing organisations is crucial for planning and steering collaboration.

Responses to the DIAMAS survey (Armengou, Aschehoug, Ball et al 2023) confirmed a strong presence of IPSPs operating within publicly funded organisations. Based on the responses it could be established that the IPSPs have some degree of autonomy by operating independently but have a tight administrative connection to the parent organisation. As we unpack what this might mean for collaboration in practice, these circumstances may be restrictive, e.g. related to how procurement should be organised in publicly funded organisations or what kind of services can be offered for distribution and sale on the open market.

Strategic goals

It is vital to consider the operative and strategic goal of the publisher, something which is often related to the legal entity of the organisation. From our discussions with focus



groups across Europe, it is fairly common for priorities not to lie with maximising profits, increasing rankings or growing their publication scope/volume – but rather a desire to see their activities continue on a predictable and stable basis – something which they were concerned of looking into the future with the scarce means given to smaller publishers and the high reliance on volunteer efforts to keep things running. We did also talk to publishers that were looking to scale and grow as well, but in such cases the target was not driven by economic motivations but rather growing in influence and reach.

Attitudes towards collaboration

The vast majority of DIAMAS survey IPSP respondents indicated at least one or more publishing areas in which they could collaborate and only a small share of organisations perceived cross-organisational collaboration as something that was not relevant for them.

This was echoed in our focus group discussions where we observed that there was a desire among IPSPs to collaborate to save costs. Sharing information about the forms of collaboration that can help IPSPs save costs was seen as very useful since identifying which collaboration will result in actual cost savings is not straightforward for IPSPs. Nevertheless, cost savings are not always the main driver for initiating collaboration. In our talks with the group of institutional publishers in the UK, one larger university press highlighted that collaboration is a fundamental process of publishing. For example, working with authors and editors is collaborative in nature and if managed well can increase the quality of the outputs. Some of the other key benefits mentioned during our discussions stemming from currently existing collaborations, include better visibility, stronger networks, knowledge exchange, more efficient workflows and faster problem-solving, and improved institutional positioning despite administrative barriers.

Formalising collaboration

It seems clear that some formalised regulation should be in place when liaising with external parties. Collaboration works best when contracts or MoUs provide explicit role clarity so there is no ambiguity in responsibilities or the scope and quality of the work to be conducted. IPSPs are interested in sharing information and templates and models for MoUs for such collaborations, and although they may often be context specific, their basis will be useful to others. Boilerplate or exemplary policy documents, and guidance to improve efficiency between IPSPs was acknowledged by many participants to be highly desirable.

Levels of collaboration

Collaboration often happens at the grassroots level, stimulated by the service provider or publisher, often in response to journal managers' or editors' needs (for advice, training, publishing services where available, hosting, archiving where available). For

example, a library publisher we talked with had built an effective community of practice among their journals' editors to provide support from peers and the library.

Even though the local levels are where a lot of collaboration exists and is taking shape, the essential value in initiating collaboration on the national or international levels is clear. Here, collaborations might provide centralised services for marketing or publicity; for advising on copyright; and to fill skill or knowledge gaps among many publishing libraries. A national 'Centre for Diamond OA Publishing' was imagined by several IPSPs as being highly desirable, insofar as its staff are properly resourced and available to provide services or guidance to many publishers. Germany is launching their national service point for Diamond Open Access later in 2025, and Ireland has been exploring the possibility of setting up national services along these lines. DIAMAS developed the EDCH to address this area of need.

In relation to how collaboration should be stimulated, a core message is that institutional support is needed, and preferably national initiatives should coordinate collaboration. National policies and coordination enables the formation of clearer governance structures, workflows, as well as division of responsibilities and can be a foundation for recognising and incentivising collaborative work. Many IPSPs believe that higher education authorities should take a more active role in promoting structured, well-supported collaboration. Without this, collaboration continues to rely mainly on individual efforts, which are often unsustainable in the long term.

Table 1 summarises results from the DIAMAS follow-up survey that contains the responses to the question "Does the IPSP depend on any of the following external services and how are they provided to you?" where the respondents could answer one or multiple options. There is a lot of detail to dissect in the distribution of the answers, but the key observations include:

- A highly distributed mix of service delivery mechanisms across most of the publishing functions.
- A high degree of outsourcing of IT services and production services (both over 50% of responses).
- Editorial services have the highest degree of voluntary provision (37% of responses)
- Moderately high provision of in-kind services across all functions (range 27%-39%), which suggests integrated support from the parent organisation.



	Editorial services	Production services	IT services	Communication services	Administrative, legal and financial services	Training support and / or advice on publishing policies and best practice	Other
In-kind	31.9	30.3	34.2	33.8	38.9	26.5	6.6
Outsourced	21.7	55.1	55.6	10.9	15.2	16.2	39.3
Voluntary	37.3	15.5	9.7	23.4	10.3	20.8	3.3
Don't know	1.6	0.6	1.3	3.2	4.2	4.4	9.8
None/Not applicable	28.8	20.1	16.7	37.5	36.6	40.7	44.3
N	451	472	473	432	429	427	61

Field: European IPSPs

Question: Does the IPSP depend on any of the following external services and how are they provided to you? (multiple answers allowed)

Source: DIAMAS follow-up survey

Table 1 – External services provision ([Brun, Pontille & Torny \(2024\)](#): Page 59)

Coordination (regional, national or international)

Deliberate actions to facilitate collaboration at levels beyond an individual institution can be an important complement to ad-hoc bottom-up action. Higher level coordination can lay a common foundation that can benefit many in different ways.

Membership organisations that bring together publishing organisations in a particular country often act on a national level, but it is not clear as to what extent Diamond OA publishers take advantage of such collaborative networks. The DIAMAS survey revealed that only around 25% of IPSPs are part of a national-level association, with memberships to international ones OASPA, COPE, AEUP and EASE coming in even lower. Overall the results for membership were fairly low, but if it is due to IPSPs not finding such membership meaningful or valuable or if it is rather due to the lack of suitable organisations taking on such a role is unclear.

On a regional level, many university libraries in Germany serve several universities, e.g. within a single city or region, and in such cases the aims and resourcing for any collaborations engaged needs to take this into account. It is not just important for

publishers to maintain a 1-1 relationship to their host institution but it is a broader collaborative effort.

National coordination

We were also able to gain some insights into national networks through our discussions with German publishers. The AG Universitätsverlage (<https://ag-univerlage.de/>) serves university publishers in Germany, which aims for publishing organisations to support and learn from one another, identifying trends and exploring specific ways of publishing. It contains different user groups for OJS users or those interested in sustainability issues for example. There has been an ongoing discussion as to whether the network should become a formal organisation with a legal status since currently it is not possible to apply for funding nor to distribute any funding. This limits collaboration to mostly an information-sharing and advocacy network. The network has issued position papers that have aimed at influencing how funders distribute funding to these kinds of publishers.

Another collaborative network that has existed for many years in Germany is the OA network (<https://open-access.network/en/home>), that also includes sub-groups for specific types of publishing. This is perceived as a complementary group to the earlier mentioned network for university presses. It was started and is still running with the support from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) until the end of 2025 after which it will be running on funding provided by the members of the network. The network organises the annual OA Tage conference, which has become very significant over time. The web page of the network pulls together relevant information and best practices about OA publishing activities in Germany, and includes a discussion forum: some kind of national Diamond capacity centre.

Similar to Germany, Spanish university publishers have a strong network through their UNE (Unión de Editoriales Universitarias Españolas) and other professional federations where they foster collaboration in almost all areas of the publishing lifecycle: distribution, IT development, promotion, and training. Despite this, however, each institution operates independently, with its own administrative and cultural barriers to collaboration. In Spain there has been a very high spirit of collaboration amongst Spanish publishers as they share costs and fund monographs, book series, or journals, i.e. where various entities collaborate if there is a shared interest in publishing certain content. These collaborations can span public or private academic publishers, foundations, regional governments, municipalities, ministries, university departments, professional associations, and private companies that finance the distribution of publications among their employees.

Similar national networking can be observed in Hungary where the Hungarian Open Access repositories network (HUNOR) has been set up to hold regular meetings to discuss use cases and best practices for Diamond OA among other topics. A HUNOR working group also maintains a list of OA journals, from which it can be concluded that most institutional journals are Diamond OA (approx. 60%).



New exciting prospects are on the horizon in some countries such as Germany where efforts are underway to coordinate multiple different stakeholders on the national level through the establishment of the National service center for Diamond OA via the SedOA project (<https://diamond-open-access.de>). This launches in May 2025 and acts as a national node to the new EDCH. The service is funded by the main German national research funder, DFG, through a special funding initiative not part of any existing funding program. DFG's goal is to set up a national hub covering many of the aspects that have been pointed out as lacking in many countries earlier in this section. The new national service centre will advise on technical standards and legal matters, maintain a registry of Diamond OA publications and infrastructure, and also guide publishers and editors. A small group of people will be part of an innovation lab to explore new opportunities on a variety of topics. The funding enables project partners to hire additional staff to help with development so that publishing services can be scaled up. Having a national center helps to establish nationally endorsed practices and standards within local Diamond OA publishing communities.

International coordination

On a more international level, when speaking to publishers from various countries, many have expressed a need for more collaboration for information-sharing and pooling knowledge from the national and European communities of Diamond OA publishers. For example, Finnish publishers signalled the need for a persistent forum for sharing good practices and solutions to common problems. Such collaboration can occur amongst Nordic publishers and forums but this mostly happens on an individual level rather than as something structural or formal initiated by the organisation or publisher.

Publishers across several countries state that they would like their Diamond OA journals to be more visible, especially those that publish articles in English and could become established on an European level rather than mainly a national one. A common European Diamond OA hub could be seen as beneficial for furthering this goal, functioning as a multi-country focus group. Some further ideas that were suggested as something that European collaboration could look into to serve many are: 1) Free/reduced access to production tools, e.g. typesetting tools to be able to publish in proper digital formats (not just PDFs) or making it easier to register with Crossref (XML references), ensuring compatibility with accessibility requirements, 2) Tools to support language editing in English, and 3) Shared databases and tools to find reviewers. (multi-country focus group). In Serbia for example, some publishers signalled that establishing a comprehensive and well-recognised index of Diamond OA journals, together with the European endorsement of Diamond OA through funding policies, could significantly enhance the visibility and accessibility of journals that are mostly visible on the national level. Journals could also use such communication channels to distribute calls for papers, showcase published articles, and potentially some supporting activities arranged for researchers (e.g. seminars). So far, no structured community support exists in Serbia as it relies on individual networking for interorganizational collaborations. A larger, well-organized community with clear policies is needed that could offer benefits like sharing best practices, technical expertise sharing, and collaboration among editors of journals with similar topics.

On the European level, the AEUP is a similar network to many of the national ones mentioned in this section, but with an international scope.

The following sections will focus on collaboration on specific functions - administrative, IT, editorial etc.

Collaboration on publishing platforms and IT services

Highly reliable IT-related functions are of paramount importance to Diamond OA publishing to optimize workflows for handling materials and to implement modern publishing standards to prevent the need for increased manual work and discoverability issues. “IT services” was the most prevalent publishing work process area where DIAMAS Survey respondents expressed an interest in collaborating, coming in at 46%. Additionally, the DIAMAS follow-up survey showed that 34% of IPSPs depended on the in-kind delivery of IT services but 56% outsourced them. Such IT-related functions seem to be characteristic in that many OA publishers see IT as an area where collaboration can be envisioned, and many have already engaged in this by relying on outsourcing or in-kind delivery.

The good news is that it seems as though IT support is provided by a number of service providers and that some supply for the demand is therefore feasible. Taking one more indicative metric derived from the DIAMAS survey, filtering to only the survey responses of the 139 service providers, the most common service provided was IT, followed by training, support and/or advice, with production coming in third place as shown in Figure 1. This further affirms that in relation to other functions, there is a strong supply of service providers for IT-related functions and collaboration on this level is quite active.

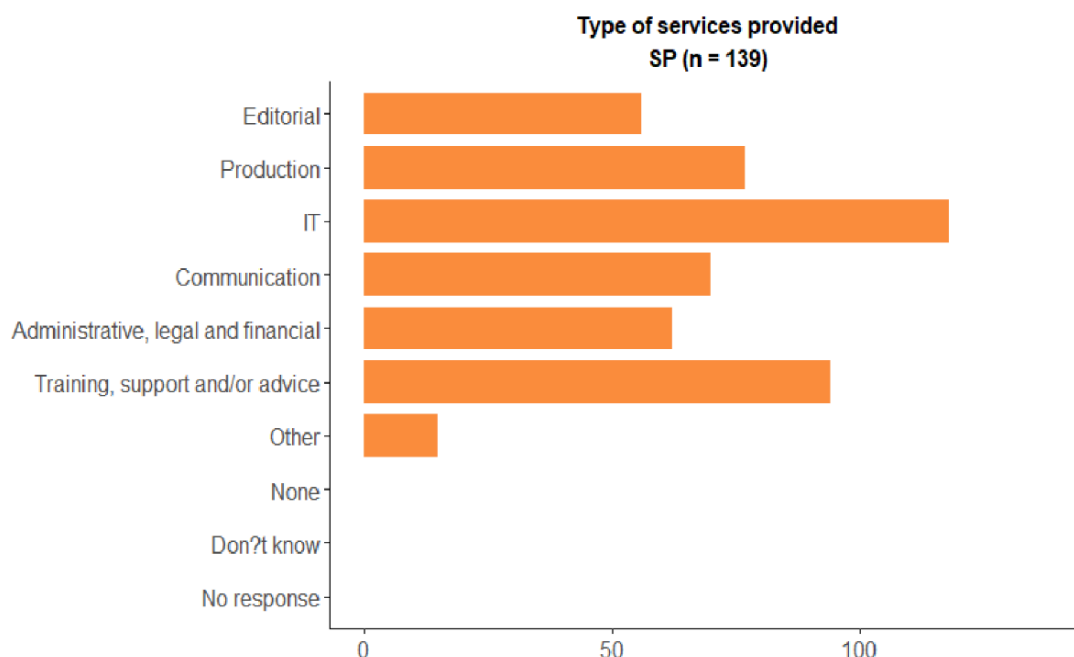


Figure 1 - Type of service provided by service providers to institutional publishers ([Armengou, Aschehoug, Ball et al \(2023\)](#): Page 50)

Several examples exist of successful collaboration through nationally-organised technical infrastructures that enable and advance Diamond OA publishing in different national contexts , e.g. as seen in the ten national overviews of the DIAMAS project ([Taşkın, Melinščak Zlodi, Laakso et al 2024](#)).

In the discussions with the German publishers, the importance of the parent organisation is clear as IPSPs closely depend on their IT departments to host their services or support.

In the UK, publishers we talked to all outsourced their hosting to providers of hosting platforms. One of the IPSPs hosted their Diamond OA journals on a platform operated by an international commercial publisher, the other three used open source platforms to support their operations, including arXiv, Janeway, Open Journal Systems (OJS), or Scholastica. The better-resourced university press also used the open source platform Portico to archive and preserve their inactive journals. Buying into these platforms is an act of collaboration (serving many organisations), which can lead to further collaboration when the platforms offer additional services such as technical support, training, and initiatives such as to co-create a publication guide or to pilot new publishing projects. One IPSP began an inter-institutional collaboration to relieve some of the burden of offering a Diamond OA hosting service, so that more library publishers are able to share the same IT service from OJS.

One publisher that shares a publishing platform with another institution was able to free its own library staff from the provision of training resources, which was important to a publisher whose operation costs are covered by the general library budget. Utilising a centrally hosted platform saves on the cost of building a hosting platform of one's own. The nature of that collaboration depends on whether the IPSP offers only hosting or a full array of publishing services. When only offering a hosting service, this collaboration can be outlined by a MoU that promises services only to the extent that the IPSP has capacity to offer them. These services can be extended to also include advising (on best practices, setting up DOIs, indexing) in addition to provision of a hosting platform.

The French focus group reiterated the call for greater collaboration between editorial, IT and support services for smoother and more cost-efficient operations. Discussions also highlighted the lack of coordination between various parallel platforms each developing their own solutions/technologies without centralisation. Structures such as incubators are primarily developed internally under the leadership of staff with IT skills, and then rely on the university's IT and documentation services. Platform maintenance is a major issue for infrastructure. There can be a heavy dependence on external service providers, often shared between several organisations (for example, the network of incubators shares the same service provider to maintain and develop their sites). Discussions are underway about the possibility of a common server to host the platforms, but there are obstacles linked to the coordination of updates and expected functionalities. There is also a need to establish a constant dialogue between all levels and scales of infrastructure (developers, digital engineers and publishers).

From France we also recorded observations of skill and competence-related issues concerning IT service collaboration. There can also be a perception of having untapped potential in-house IT skills as the financial cost of maintaining these platforms is high. For some, however, the national calls for projects have been less successful precisely because of this desire to internalise skills; it would have been better to pool service providers. There is a persistent challenge of recruiting IT specialists for academic projects, people with in-house skills leave projects to become independent service providers, which pays more. There is a need for an attractive and stable framework to retain skilled specialists. One example for this was given by one IPSP, which has managed to stabilise a team of IT specialists on permanent contracts within a development structure, with a good balance between pooling and diversity of projects. One Spanish publisher collaborated with PKP to provide translations and participates in the PKP technology committee.

The focus group discussions we conducted revealed a variety of collaboration and service provision models, ranging from fragmented single-journal platforms to centralised national initiatives. Shared platforms based on the SAAS model seem to be the most common model. From the UK focus group we can observe a wide spectrum of different publishing platforms being used to support Diamond OA publishing, with each being different in the nature of the collaboration involved (OJS, Scholastica, arXiv, Janeway, and commercial platforms like Digital Commons).



The Masaryk University OJS platform (<https://journals.muni.cz/>) in the Czech Republic went through a long process to onboard the 50 journals it now hosts, spanning seven years in total and including a series of both successful and unsuccessful actions. Some journals use the platform only for publishing, dissemination and discovery whereas others use the complete workflow for managing the publication process (from submission to editorial work, review process to publishing and distribution). Today, the university also hosts a platform for publishing OA books (<https://munispace.muni.cz/library/>).

In Serbia, some publishers note a lack of centralized support, which has led to technical fragmentation and a reliance on individual initiatives and enthusiasts to drive forward initiatives. Other symptoms of this lack of centralized support were issues related to running OJS on a local server with buggy workflows, editors being hesitant to use the functions in the system where it can lead to often only the front-end part being used. There is a need for centralized support to improve this situation.

In Slovakia, the Slovak Centre of Scientific and Technical Information (CVTI SR) operates an OS Support Department which also acts as a National Node for OA and has implemented OJS as a national platform for Diamond OA. In addition to technical hosting, the department also has dialogues with journal editors, strengthens the community, and organises free webinars and workshops. They have experienced some limitations in their operations by the technical support for the platform being outsourced rather than being maintained in-house (and their support is necessary for upgrades). In addition to hosting journals themselves, the service maintains a list of OA journals, where over 200 journals are Diamond OA out of 250 OA journals published in the country. (<https://otvorenaveda.cvtisr.sk/en-gb/slovakfg1-open-access-journals/>)

Slovenia's ZRC SAZU, a National Node for OPERAS, operates an OJS platform with 14 journals, collaborating with the University of Primorska to establish an OJS platform for journals that do not yet have a platform. For them, OJS software has been the right choice even though issues have been encountered during version upgrades (e.g. some plugins not functioning in new versions). They are engaging with PKP through projects. (<https://zalozba.zrc-sazu.si/en/predstavitev>)

Finnish Diamond OA publishers, for example, highlight the importance of the national portal (<https://journal.fi>). Its value is demonstrated by publishing over 100 Diamond OA journals, most within the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH) and for many learned societies: free to use for any OA journal published in Finland.

In Lithuania, Vilnius University Press (<https://www.journals.vu.lt>) hosts 45 Diamond OA journals on a single OJS platform. The operations have been set up so that a publishing department functions under the Vice Rector for Science, who is responsible for managing the resources. Journals typically have their own budgets which includes financial support from faculties, and potentially national projects. There are two hosted journals that are not Diamond OA, and four of the journals are hosted on behalf of other universities on the basis of an agreement. A publishing committee oversees and

discusses aspects such as new journal proposals, publishing ethics, and connects copy editors and typesetters with journals as needed.

A recent scholarly article provides an extensive analysis of the adoption of publishing software adoption among scholarly journals in Lithuania ([Grigas, Gudiničius, Petreikis et al 2023](#)). The following excerpt from the article summarises some of the key findings related to OJS: "Lithuanian publishers of scientific journals have been significantly more active, by 30%, in using open-source software for publishing compared to the global trend observed in high-income countries. Thus, Lithuania, classified as a high-income country, uses OJS 2.5 times more than the global average. This may be attributed to the fact that only a minority of Lithuanian journals charge authors for publication or other fees, and they rely on often unstable sources of income such as university budgets or projects. The success of the OJS can be attributed to the fact that when many Lithuanian journals made a decision on transition to electronic publishing in 2011, the EIFL initiative and financial support offered the opportunity to start using this software, and training was provided to administrators".

Collaboration on training, support and/or advice on publishing policies and best practice

Training and support are important supporting activities that ensure that individuals involved have the skills and information needed to successfully complete their tasks whether that concerns quality or following specific policies. Forty-five percent of DIAMAS survey respondents indicated that they could collaborate with others on "Training, support and/or advice on publishing policies and best practice", which was the second-highest scoring category just after IT services although in a follow-up survey 27% of IPSPs reported receiving this support in-kind delivery.

From the UK publisher focus group we documented that training services can be provided in-house or by collaborating with hosting platforms used by IPSPs or other service providers, such as DOAJ. One IPSP was able to upscale its training offer when it began collaborating with another IPSP to use a single publishing platform that contains training services and resources), instead of needing to provide all training to journal managers and editors in-house. IPSPs can also initiate collaboration amongst journal editors at the institution by forming communities of practice, e.g. to raise publishing standards. Meeting twice annually, the journal editors can benefit from each other's expertise and from training co-ordinated by the IPSP, for example, with a guest speaker from DOAJ.

Publishers in the Spanish focus group reported that they collaborated with UNE on training programmes, other booksellers' and publishers' associations, and the Federation of Spanish Publishers to attend training courses and participate as speakers. Collaborations were also recorded in the form of a publisher participating in the design of training courses and a Knowledge Transfer Group led by the Universidad



de Murcia (UMU). One publisher mentioned managing the OJS-ES forum and providing training to editorial teams in OJS as being activities they are involved with.

Collaborations on administrative, legal and financial services

This group of activities includes the processes necessary to maintain any kind of formal organisation and as such they are not something specifically unique to the area of publishing. The DIAMAS survey included a multiple choice question where responding organisations could indicate in which areas of their activities they could consider collaboration with other organisations. Administrative, legal, and financial services scored the lowest of all functions with only 19% of respondents indicating consideration for collaboration with these functions. This indicates that these are functions that organisations keep closely integrated, and in many cases handle through internal collaboration with the associated functions of the parent organisation. This notion is supported by the DIAMAS follow-up survey which found that 39% of IPSPs reported in-kind delivery of services relating to this category, 15% having them outsourced, 10% provided through voluntary effort, with 4% not knowing and 37% reporting 'None/not applicable'.

IPSPs that have a parent organisation can be strongly backed by their institutions through the provision of financial, legal, and technical expertise. Legal help can for example ensure that publishing activities follow EU competition law for public organisations concerning state aid, that services that might be interpreted to compete with commercial actors are not subsidised with state aid and thus influence the free market competition. Internally, services can be offered for free to the organisation's own researchers or e.g. journals that they are involved in running.

Legal services

The need and provision for legal services varies a lot across IPSPs and is not necessarily tied to any particular patterns in relation to geographical location. Within the Finnish publisher group the dimension of legal considerations and processes was not something that any of the participating publishers had any experience of actively managing, either in-house or through collaboration with some other organisation, suggesting that such expertise could also be delivered externally on a rare as-needed basis, as long as the provider is someone familiar with the particulars of the scholarly publishing environment to make the threshold low and collaboration smooth.

Among the UK IPSPs we found that publishers with larger budgets and institutional support for their Diamond OA publishing activities have access to limited legal services provided by their institutions. When more elaborate legal advice is required, these IPSPs must access paid-for legal services at their own expense. IPSPs with smaller budgets and/or those who must actively convince institutional management of the value of Diamond OA publishing did not have such access to legal services.

From the discussions with the French group of publishers we recorded that legal support is often outsourced, and that there are firms specialized in open access that facilitate such collaboration. Some publishers perceive that contract management represents a significant workload and that many journals do not have the resources to implement and manage such processes. Some IPSPs rely on tools and support developed by professional networks (such as the editors network in France) and universities to simplify contract management.

In Spain publishers reported among other approaches collaboration with the UNE legal department and the institution's legal team on intellectual property matters. Matters mentioned in addition to publishing contracts included e.g. developing an institutional strategy to protect journal ownership. Publishers collaborate together to create framework agreements for journal layout services. While a formal consortium cannot be formed due to incompatible administrations, the aim is to reach similar benefits by allowing publishers to join a framework agreement set by another publisher directly without a legal body acting as an intermediary. The publishers also exchange tender documents for various services and share experiences on procedures and service providers.

Financial services

In our discussions with Finnish publishers we found that the publishing activities often had intertwined finances with their respective backing organisations, and to various degrees relied on additional funds coming from the backing organisation. It was commonly the responsibility for the editor in chief to manage funding streams for the journals, together with the person responsible for the finances of the parent organisation. The Finnish publishers indicated that the vast majority of all work that goes into operating their publications is volunteer-based, and no monetary compensation is provided. While the popular journal.fi infrastructure does not cost anything for journals using it, the main expense for the publishers were for editorial secretaries who take care of copyediting of manuscripts and some communication tasks with authors.

Organisational challenges

The degree to which the publishing functions are integrated into the support functions and information flows was seen to vary a lot across organisations, potentially leading to challenges if there is a gap and the individuals running the journals are separated from the board and the meetings of the organisation outside of a few individuals (usually the editor in chief and/or secretary) participating in the meetings. Here careful consideration for internal collaboration could help mitigate some of those challenges so that the publishing services are more fully supported by the parent organisation.

In some regions there might be targeted funding available to support publishing works in e.g. specific national languages, which creates the need for someone at the publisher



to monitor and apply for that funding when it becomes available. Relationships to external distributors of physical copies also need to be managed and maintained somehow.

Collaboration on editorial tasks

In the DIAMAS survey, 29% of respondents indicated that they could consider collaborating on “Editorial services”. Since institutional publishers are frequently relatively small, editorial tasks are often to a high degree handled by the academic editors themselves rather than via separate editorial assistants or staff.

Editorial tasks seem unique in some respects in how they interact with the context of collaboration. The DIAMAS follow-up survey gathered that 32% of IPSPs reported in-kind delivery of services relating to this category, 22% had them outsourced, 37% provided these services through voluntary effort, with 2% not knowing and 29% None/not applicable. Compared to other functions this is a relatively high share of in-kind delivery and low share of outsourcing respectively.

From our discussions with French publishers we were informed of a need for broader and greater collaboration between editorial, IT and support services, to compensate for the lack of human resources and skills. Problems have been encountered when aligning IT and publishing decisions, e.g. when decisions are made without taking into account the more specific needs of publishers, who have to adapt to unsuitable solutions. The dependence on external service providers for tasks that need to accommodate specific customisations is therefore challenging due to the high financial stakes that are also involved in such external collaborations.

In Finland it is common practice that societies use funds received to compensate an editorial secretary for their journals. This is in many cases done by a doctoral student as part-time work in addition to other commitments. This secretary handles the technical copyediting and uploads published materials to the journal website. However, some publications can be multilingual, which is where collaboration can make sense to support that aspect: some publishers expressed a wish for having more resources to pay for language checking through native speakers to ensure that a high enough standard is maintained across all languages. Finnish publishers were positive towards there being some centralised, competitively-priced, language checking services for journals using the national journal platform journal.fi as reliance on sporadic external service providers is not always reliable.

In Hungary, the University of Debrecen and the National Library have had good experiences with OJS since 2016, spanning 39 journals (<https://ojs.lib.unideb.hu/>). They have implemented a model for community-building for editors-in-chiefs and technical editors: a space to talk to each other to discuss issues and solutions, which has worked well. Technical issues are sometimes encountered as the platform goes through upgrades but this has been managed by working closely together with the editors before, during and after the upgrade.

Collaboration on marketing and communication

Marketing and communication are key supporting functions for creating awareness for one's publishing activities, building communities, and disseminating relevant calls and outputs to prospective authors and readers. Thirty-eight percent of respondents of the DIAMAS survey stated that they would consider collaborating with others in "Communication services", which was among the higher-scoring categories. The DIAMAS follow-up survey found that 34% of IPSPs reported in-kind delivery of services relating to this category, 11% had them outsourced, 23% provided these services through voluntary effort, with 3% not knowing and 38% None/not applicable. These figures suggest that there is some degree of interest in exploring collaborations in this domain and that currently most activities are conducted as in-kind or voluntary effort.

From the Finnish focus group the overall message was that communication was managed very sporadically by institutional publishers when there was time over for it, with no person specifically dedicated to the task. Posting on new issues/calls for papers were made through social media accounts and mailing lists but nothing that would involve external actors or any paid-for advertising. Facebook and the different disciplinary groups were mentioned as useful channels. One idea was to organise a tour across Finnish universities to create awareness and network among scholars in the national community, but so far this has not been possible.

For some UK publishers the advantages of collaborating on marketing and publicity were clear for many IPSPs as these activities require costly skills that library publishers would otherwise have to learn. Some IPSPs are able to pay for some external marketing services while they offer others in-house. Collaboration can save costs and human resources when it creates more efficiency.

Spanish publishers sketch out diverse approaches in this area from some publishers not conducting marketing activities at all to others using external companies for social media management, media outlets or the institution's communication service. One publisher collaborated with specialised units within their organisation for social media management, and then with organisations like the UNE for specific campaigns and events (Madrid Book Fair, Open Access, Science Week, etc.), ministries, and the Federation of Publishers' Guilds (Federación de Gremios de Editores de España). One should note that the term "marketing" can feel misplaced for the kind of activities that publishers do in some cases, and "outreach" can be considered more fitting.



Collaboration on production services

The scope of production services can vary somewhat between publishers depending on the technical sophistication of the published outputs and if print is offered. “Production services” was something that 42% of the DIAMAS survey respondents indicated that they could consider collaborating on, which was among the highest scoring categories. In the DIAMAS follow-up survey, 55% of publishers indicate that production is outsourced although 30% acquire them via in-kind support. From our discussions with publisher focus groups, we were able to get a glimpse into what approaches publishers in different countries have implemented to manage their production processes and how they perceive such collaboration fits in their contexts.

Spanish publishers describe how they engage in both one-off and long-term co-publications (book series and journals) with both public and private publishers. They can contract professionals for editing, translation, and design; and for distributing publications.

One German publisher we talked to handled the technical copyediting processes in-house and to make the work manageable, the publisher enforces the use of specific Word or LaTeX templates. Another German publisher described how they set up two distinctly separate processes for journals and books. On the one hand, for books they work together with familiar copy editors who know the quality level expected. On the other, they provide the journals they host with policy support and quality guidance, particularly related to metadata standards, but they do not get involved in the content-creation process on a detailed level. The university caters to a very broad scope of disciplines and topics, and they are not able to support every discipline on the content level. Both publishers have a very standardised service offering and do not offer customization as they want a scalable workflow to keep the work manageable with the resources that they have at their disposal. If publishers need more than this, they are directed to other external publishing services.

In the UK group, a larger university press described how they have outsourced their print on demand processes. In addition to print-on-demand services, the university press also contracts companies of freelance professionals for various editorial and production tasks, such as copy-editing, proofreading, typesetting, and indexing. Project management for books and journals is also handled externally. The press outsources third-party platforms and services to manage website development, title management (Consonance), and the journal management system (Janeway).

3. Obstacles for collaboration in Diamond OA publishing (and how to overcome them)

One of the tasks of the DIAMAS project has been to focus on identifying obstacles for different types of collaboration in relation to Diamond OA publishing in Europe and, when possible, to document ways that such challenges have been overcome. DIAMAS data have been leveraged and re-interpreted from this particular perspective to inform this work. In addition, we organised dedicated focus groups with European IPSPs involved in Diamond OA publishing in 2024 and 2025, specifically querying both successful collaborations and obstacles discovered within their activities.

The extensive DIAMAS web survey conducted in 2023 that garnered 685 organisational responses is a starting foundation for this work. The full survey dataset is available as Kramer & George (2024), the general overview report of the results as Armengou, Aschehoug, Ball et al. (2023), and individual country reports for select countries as Agnoloni, Bargheer, Bosman et al. (2024). On a closer analysis of the full dataset, we found 50 open-text responses to the question of observed obstacles or failed collaboration. Reviewing the responses thematically and by the specific function they relate to, some interesting insights emerged.

This analysis is structured into thematic sections relating to the various obstacles identified. These sections go from presenting different types of obstacles to suggesting actions on how to overcome them or at least mitigate their influence.

Service delivery and quality assurance

A common obstacle to collaboration with external service providers is problems related to service delivery and quality assurance, where the delivered product or service is not provided as expected. This was the most common type of failure in collaboration reported in the DIAMAS survey data with 14 different organisations describing examples concerning the lack of service quality often related to printing, publishing, IT services or editing services. These operations are usually time-sensitive core activities of the publisher, e.g. sending out printed copies within a predictable timeframe and being responsive in IT or editing services. Maintaining specific schedules and quality levels is also critical as any problems quickly become visible outside of back office activities.

In our discussions with institutional publishers based in the UK, both publishers, large and small, agreed that a barrier to collaboration is the effort required for relationship management and quality assurance. If a publisher enters into a collaboration with proper planning, there can be distinct positive gains from the quality of external services. On the other hand, collaboration also runs the risk that the quality expected by one collaborator is not maintained by the other. One example was when a journal switched publishers, incurring a lengthier and more complicated process than was initially foreseen. Inter-institutional collaboration involving the journal transfer from



one publisher to another or from one platform to another can introduce barriers when the IT services offered by one publisher differ.

We suggest the following steps that can be taken to protect against poor service delivery:

1. Set up sufficient planning and contracts – preferably using legal support – to specify services and products procured with well-defined schedules and potential penalties for deviations.
2. Assess the pros and cons of different contract lengths, where long contracts with new parties can be detrimental should problems occur.
3. Use professional networks to discover reliable service providers and share needs and experiences to support others in similar situations.

Restrictions imposed on publicly funded organisations

The second most common reason for failed collaboration in the DIAMAS survey was procurement processes. Respondents in particular pointed out the challenges introduced by having to follow public procurement procedures and dealing with formal tender processes that often focus on the lowest price as the leading procurement criterion. Such an approach can in some instances impose restrictions on collaboration and being able to select the most optimal collaboration partner.

Procurement processes that create obstacles for collaboration or cause failure can relate to the legal environment, administrative burden, complicated processes, and government restrictions as observed in DIAMAS survey data. From our discussions with publishers in different countries, we were able to gather that many Diamond OA publishers have a desire and need to engage with external service providers in an accessible way. However, for such collaborations to be smoothly set up in practice they would need to accommodate for the restrictions that publishers supported by public sources of funding have to adhere to. One should also point out that some publishers may also become ineligible to bid for public funding if they have partnered with certain types of stakeholders. Data privacy regulation in procurement processes can also cause obstacles for collaboration with certain partners as well as unclear contract terms.

To add to the complexity of legal aspects related to how publicly funded institutions can engage with external collaborators or service providers, this regulation can also vary across countries. During our discussions, publishers described this aspect within Germany's federated environment. Different regions of Germany have different rules and interpretations of the law to restrictions on what public service providers such as university presses, as they are connected to publicly funded universities can and cannot do. An example mentioned during our discussions with German university

publishers was that as publicly funded organisations they have to ensure that they are providing services that are within the organisations legal mandate if they are provided free of charge into a market where there commercial competition also exists (such as there is within scholarly publishing). This necessitates having some named faculty from the institution involved in each journal publication endeavour in order for it to have a direct connection to serving the institution. It is possible to offer publication services also beyond the legal mandate if it happens at full costs with included profit, but this is difficult for many institutions.

Research libraries in Germany have different approaches to their budget spending. In addition to traditional and established spending on acquisition of materials, some use the remaining funding for financing their own institutional publishing functions, while others fund Diamond OA publishing via commercial actors. If at some point, ambitions emerge for a more concerted collective effort to guide funding into specific types of solutions, gaining the support of senior managers and policymakers is crucial, as highlighted in our interviews. For building towards larger solutions within the federated environment of Germany, active leadership at the institutional and regional level is key since there are no direct incentives to make that happen on a national level like other countries might have.

We do not aim to advise on specific legal aspects but there are some actions that publishers and service providers could consider when approaching the above-mentioned challenges as a publicly funded institution:

1. Form national and regional networks to share practices, templates, and approaches on collaboration and budget spending.
2. Engage with legal experts within the institution to establish compatible procurement processes that enable the use of external service providers where needed.

Organisational stability and predictability of operations

Collaboration, particularly when it comes to involving external service providers in the execution of certain key processes, builds on creating some level of dependency between parties. The service provider's organisational stability was highlighted in several DIAMAS survey responses as a point of failure in collaboration. Examples include content distribution providers becoming bankrupt, publishers being acquired, or IT platform providers ceasing their operations with no contingency available for further system development or migration of content to another platform due to proprietary software being used. Changes like this often carry permanent implications for the collaboration and necessitate swift action to recover from to keep critical publishing operations running.



However, concerns about stability are not exclusive to external collaborations, but are also highly relevant on the internal level. Institutional publishers that are relatively small in their scale of operations often rely on a small group of key individuals to take care of core operations flexibly and collaboratively. When changes to such circumstances occur for one reason or another, it can create obstacles to continued collaboration. This is for example the case where an institutional publication can be heavily under the control of specific individuals rather than governed by the institution itself. This can lead to critical problems when such key individuals change institutions or jobs when there is an attempt to migrate the publication or it is left to wither due to a lack of internal support. Obstacles pertaining to this dimension can also concern the staffing overall, where the challenge of dealing with staff that is only working short-term with the publication, can lead to a loss of knowledge and continuity.

The Finnish publishers we talked with mentioned that there has sometimes been a struggle to find volunteers for the editorial positions for their journals and referees. This work is very demanding and comes on top of other work that people do as part of their primary employment, with many editorial tasks consisting of many small tasks that need to be done frequently, followed up throughout the weeks and months. Internally, these publishers are very collaborative in the sense that they rely on the efforts of individuals without payment or signed service contracts. Still, they do not actively look for new collaborations outside the established service providers, e.g. the national publication platform (<https://journal.fi/>) for managing the entire publishing workflow. Some publishers expressed significant uncertainty concerning how sustainable this kind of publishing is in the long run when resources are scarce. If something were to happen to the small streams of funding or the provision of free national services, the future of the publications would likely be in grave danger.

In our discussions with French publishers, we were given insight into challenges emerging in collaborations between partners whose operative budgets are tight, which can compromise the continuity of activities and generate significant uncertainty. Utilising in-kind resources from the parent organisation, which provides flexibility in resourcing expenses, can also generate interdepartmental tensions. Interdepartmental allocation and the management of funding amongst, e.g. libraries, digital departments and financial services, can lead to blockages and administrative delays if not appropriately managed.

Other examples of instability and unpredictability disrupting collaborations were mentioned within UK responses to the DIAMAS survey. These included an external contractor failing to deliver a website, and in another case, a collaborative OA business model failed to raise enough funds, causing the cessation of one journal due to loss of editorial staff.

While it is impossible to completely shield the institutional publisher from the impacts of events stemming from organisational instability, be they internal or external, some steps can be taken to at least control the risks of such events and minimise their negative impact.

For external collaborations, we recommend publishers and service providers:

1. Utilise open source solutions to avoid software-based lock-in to a specific provider.
2. Use external services for specific parts of the publishing process, retaining more control and ownership of the delivery to avoid excessive reliance on any party.
3. Periodically renew contracts with external publishers with strict service delivery clauses for the duration of the agreement.
4. Work towards long-term collaboration with IT service partners to manage exposure to financial risks when outsourcing central IT functions.
5. Collaborate with university consortia and institutional sponsors to create predictable resourcing models for Diamond OA publishers.

For internal collaborations, we recommend that publishers and service providers:

1. Map volunteer-based efforts that contribute to publication activities and create governance structures to support ongoing work to ensure that individuals remain sufficiently committed and involved.
2. Collaborate with other trusted organizations who can provide shared qualified staff, tools and services to reduce resource constraints. Volunteers can complement this paid staffing, but some investment in paid staff is needed to maintain service quality and efficiency.

Access to resources

A fundamental obstacle to engaging with certain types of collaboration, particularly those involving external service providers, is a lack of resources. High costs and the lack of resources came up several times in DIAMAS survey responses: mainly split between external publishing services or IT services.

As library-based Diamond OA services do not necessarily operate with dedicated full-time staff, getting university senior management to see the value of Diamond OA publishing is essential. Without such support, there can be a lack of prioritisation for publishing tasks in favour of other library work, which can be a barrier to forming and maintaining collaborations. Limited resources can also prevent university presses from meeting the demand for Diamond OA journal publishing, i.e. scaling up, as experienced by the group of institutional publishers interviewed from the UK.



In our discussions with French publishers, we recorded a strong need for funding resources to be more consistent and long-term. It was perceived that there is sufficient project-based funding available to start new initiatives. Such an approach can lead to wasted effort, individual projects disconnected from each other and a more long-term plan, making the results hard to sustain in the long term. For example, it was seen as a strong positive that funds are made available for projects through the French National Fund for Open Science (OS). Still, there was a feeling that the strong emphasis on innovation rather than the sustainability of what is produced should be reconsidered to enable stronger support for ongoing publishing collaborations.

A lack of resources can also come unexpectedly and at short notice. Within the UK focus group, a failed funding collaboration was described whereby a collective funding model failed to collect even 50% of its funds during its previous year. This kind of fluctuating resourcing, both for the organisations in the role of providing funding and for the organisation that would use the funding to realise the publishing activities, is not a positive factor for building sustainable and resilient collaboration networks.

We recommend the following actions to mitigate these resourcing obstacles:

1. Internally explore how collaboration and coordination could help mitigate the lack of resources.
2. Institutions support and promote internal collaboration on institutional publishing to help scale up efforts.
3. Funders introduce and maintain financial instruments for short-term innovation projects as well as mechanisms to support longer-term engagements in Diamond OA publishing.

Flexibility and scalability

Wide-scale collaboration, e.g. on national or international levels, often involves developing common solutions that are targeted to serve as many as possible without extensive individual customisation. However, it is well known from previous work in DIAMAS and beyond that institutional publishers are quite diverse, so working on solutions revolving around the lowest common denominator might not always lead to outcomes that are suitable to specific publishing environments. Some DIAMAS survey responses indicated that solutions offered by external providers were incompatible or sub-optimal for supporting their operations. One Spanish response in particular stated, “each journal operates differently, we share a management platform, and it lacks efficiency as it attempts to generate a standard model”. This pinpoints a problem in that currently existing management platforms developed for wide adoption are not always conducive to doing things outside of the system logic.

Further Spanish responses indicated that some tools can be problematic in meeting the needs of the organisations intended to use them. Tools need to be adapted to the structures and their rate of publication, making them less attractive as options to adopt as a natural choice in some cases. Certain IT systems are too complex and expensive for the size of the specific organisation and publishing activities. This was echoed during the French IPSP group discussion: differences in the scale of operations among publishers have led to tools being unsuitable in their design, resulting in a barrier to collaboration for some actors.

On another level, being too prescriptive when supporting researchers and journals can disenfranchise university publishers, as reported by a Hungarian university publisher where attempting to centralize things on the faculty level had created adverse outcomes. Rather than attempting change through this kind of top-down authoritarian way, there was a suggestion that more flexible and collaborative approaches would be tried instead, with which they have had better success.

Another obstacle to collaboration related to flexibility and scalability can be observed in the intersection between individual publications and the services that the institution can provide. This obstacle between smaller institutional publishers and journals can occur when the journal needs full publishing services and the local institutional publisher cannot provide it all. This barrier can grow over time and might become fully apparent when Diamond OA journals are looking to scale up their services. Without scalability in alternative funding streams or local support for Diamond OA, many journals choose to self-publish, disconnect from the institutional publisher, or move to commercial publishers when the institution cannot take them on or cannot offer the services that those journals seek.

Scale does not always equal efficiency unless some uniformity is present in the technical environment. We were told of an example where two collaborating publishers shared hosting services but were utilising two different versions of OJS. This solution was slower and more labour-intensive than it would have optimally been if a standardised technical environment would have been in place for both.

To avoid aspects related to flexibility and scalability becoming obstacles to collaboration, we recommend that:

1. Services produced as part of wider collaborative networks should be either flexible enough to allow for easy customization or low-level enough that implementing the solutions into diverse publishing environments does not become impossible.
2. Institutional publishers cannot always be expected to provide full-service publishing for high-volume Diamond OA journals. Larger collaborative solutions on the national and international levels are needed to cater to journals that want

to grow without having to sign up with commercial publishers as the only viable solution.

Trust, governance, and management

Collaboration is fundamentally a social process that requires the alignment of interests and efforts from multiple actors, an effort that can run into challenges in many different stages (e.g. initiation, execution) and levels of operation (e.g. individual, organisational). Such failed collaborations were noted in DIAMAS survey responses. Reasons included a lack of a) trust and commitment, b) support and governance, c) internal collaboration d) communication and e) experience as well as weak management.

In survey responses from Spain, a few indicated a perceived overall lack of supply of professionals as an obstacle, and in some cases, motivation and engagement on the individual level within the journal editing space, e.g. "There is little involvement, little creativity, little dedication from professionals who work as employees in the journal's editing" and "it is difficult to find freelance professionals who, on the one hand, can work in Spanish [...] and on the other, are sufficiently qualified to edit complex texts with the tool we use."

One of the biggest obstacles is governance, particularly relating to more intensive internal collaboration. Many institutions lack formal processes to support collaboration, and bureaucracy slows things down when something new is initiated. Successful collaboration relies too much on individual initiatives as institutional structures were seen to fail in providing necessary support in Spain. Limited financial and human resources also make it difficult to commit to long-term projects. This challenge is further exacerbated by the stark division between academic and technical staff in universities, making teamwork less frequent than desired. One symptom of this has been the lack of inclusion of technical staff in strategic planning. The cultural divide between academic and technical staff prevents efficient teamwork in universities as technical staff are also often excluded from decision-making.

To help overcome the obstacles relating to these social, governance, and managerial aspects we recommend the following actions:

1. Establish or engage in national or regional networks of different stakeholders with an interest in Diamond OA publishing to collaborate and develop the sector together.
2. Cultivate organisational decision-making and clear structures that invite proposals for new initiatives, with sufficient follow-up and support for adopted ideas.

3. Set up operational cross-institutional governance structures for collaborative activities, involve all partners in the strategic planning and ensure clear communication among them.

Structures and common practices for facilitating collaboration

A theme that emerged in the discussion concerning obstacles among several publishers in our discussions was how external actors can be smoothly integrated into the activities of institutional publishing, something which had been attempted but with varied levels of success. Some reasons for why negative outcomes were sometimes encountered was that private sector collaborations were often experienced as challenging due to differing priorities, and administrative barriers, e.g. bureaucratic restrictions and rigid funding rules. In addition, each institution works in its own way and internal divisions within universities make collaboration with outside service providers harder.

In the discussions with French IPSPs, a real problem was having an overview of the existing networks, where the ecosystem is vast (with local, national and international networks) and difficult to grasp, particularly for very small IPSPs. It would be essential to have a coherent and strong coordination of activities; otherwise, there is a risk of conducting redundant work and there may be missed opportunities for collaboration for IPSPs. In OS alone, many services are on offer, and it can be complicated to navigate them all. Collaboration was seen as needing to move beyond a compartmentalised approach (such as closed institutional and technical networks) since that limits the reach and impact collaborations might have. A lack of coordination could lead to a loss of bearings and a dispersal of efforts.

In the discussions with the UK institutional publishers, smaller publishers in particular indicated a desire for more collaboration with other institutional publishing services. The main obstacle to this type of collaboration seems to be a lack of structure to set things up in an accessible and organised way. Publishers stated that they were willing to share and see each other's contracts, policies, and other publishing information documents to learn from each other's expertise. However, currently, there is no one way for these to be shared in a convenient and controlled way. A publisher proposed licensing such materials with a CC BY licence, which would facilitate better inter-institutional collaboration at a low threshold.

A fundamental force that can work against collaborations is the competitive environment that higher education institutions are part of, competing for both resourcing directly and concerning scholarly output quantity and quality. In the Spanish focus group, that competitive aspect was reported to sometimes introduce friction into collaboration. In libraries, this can be circumvented somewhat since there is a common goal and no direct competition between two libraries even though the parent organisation's institutions may compete. Even beyond this competitive aspect, there was a general climate of resistance to change within institutions that was seen to be

related to difficulties in gaining trust from academic staff and a lack of incentives for collaboration.

To help overcome these obstacles, we recommend the following actions:

1. Document the service offering and expertise to support Diamond OA on the country level.
2. Stimulate the national co-ordination of Diamond OA to foster more collaboration and help build capacity by sharing good practices, practical tools, etc.
3. Use the European Diamond Capacity Hub to coordinate activities and share experiences and current practices across Europe.
4. Stimulate and incentivise a culture of internal collaboration vs competition for the benefit of the institution.

Change of culture and perspective

A hard obstacle for any individual actor to tackle is that of cultural change within the higher education sector, necessitating widespread action to release some of the anchors holding back collaborative approaches to boost the presence and weight of institutional Diamond OA publishing. Cultural change is needed to support institutional publishing to grow significantly in volume and to become a serious alternative to international commercial publishing. Most international journals are completely outsourced to commercial providers, involving minimal researcher involvement outside of essential editorial decision-making tasks. Institutional publishing operations, however, commonly include responsibilities and tasks for researchers related to operating and governing the journals.

During our discussions, one German IPSP agreed that change would need to happen bottom-up from the level of researchers. It cannot and should not be something that is attempted to be forced top-down, and rather should be incentivised or encouraged. Support services and infrastructures already exist, but there needs to be more of a concerted demand from researchers to move in the direction of scholars becoming more involved in the governance and production processes in scholarly publishing. Another IPSP argued that the incentive structure for researchers would need to change. However, there is still a strong appetite for collaboration, as demonstrated by the different information-sharing networks that are present in Germany, Spain, the UK and beyond.

Another German university publisher emphasised the need to keep a Diamond OA mindset rather than a purely economic one and does not want to use the word “business model” in these kinds of contexts, but focuses on framing that emphasizes keeping things running and sustainable. The Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment

(CoARA) was also perceived to be assisting in this regard, which many European institutions have already signed, shifting some focus away from quantification and making operations consider the other values that operating institutional publishing can bring with it for the organisation's profile.

In the discussion with French IPSPs, the point was made that differences in visions and goals on projects must also be considered to facilitate successful collaborations. There are differences in perspective on successful results with, e.g. some actors expecting financial return on certain services, which has previously become a source of disagreement. More generally, issues can arise where differences in philosophy and positioning can jeopardise initially promising collaborations, e.g. a French university we talked to wanted to set up a publishing network but was unable to do so because it did not want to position itself at the same level as the university press. The distinction between publishers and journals can also create tensions within the framework of a joint project. It can be complicated to navigate between the different political positions of each partner. It was reported that there can also be tensions between national OS policies and more local journal incubation objectives, which can jeopardise the project's long-term viability if a consensus is not reached.

To help overcome these obstacles, we recommend the following actions:

1. Raise university management and researcher awareness of Diamond OA publishing, using DOAS as one of the quality measures.
2. Explore how Diamond OA publishing advances research assessment reform.
3. Define success measures at the beginning of the collaborative project and not at the end.
4. Reshape existing funding mechanisms towards supporting collaborative projects rather than putting journals in the position to compete for funding.

4. Collaboration patterns for European Diamond OA publishing

The evolving landscape of Diamond OA publishing in Europe is shaped by intricate collaboration patterns between academic institutions, learned societies, and publishing platforms. This section examines these dynamics by analysing bibliometric data from the ISSN Portal and DOAJ, focusing on university-led and society-led Diamond OA journals. Our methodological approach integrates data from multiple sources to construct a comprehensive overview of collaboration structures. The ISSN Portal dataset, collected in September 2023, includes language, country-specific information, and other relevant metadata fields such as publisher details and indexing status, derived from a deduplicated compilation of 178,000 unique serials sourced from scholarly databases including Crossref, PKP, Ulrichsweb, and Scopus. The analysis considers these fields as potential indicators of collaboration, though this assumption cannot be verified with certainty. Complementing this, the DOAJ dataset,¹ retrieved in December 2024, provides detailed characteristics of registered OA journals. By mapping these datasets, we identify institutional networks, cross-border collaborations, and publishing trends that influence the sustainability and impact of Diamond OA publishing across Europe. The findings contribute to a broader understanding of the role of academic and societal institutions in shaping non-commercial OA models and inform strategies for strengthening collaborative publishing frameworks.

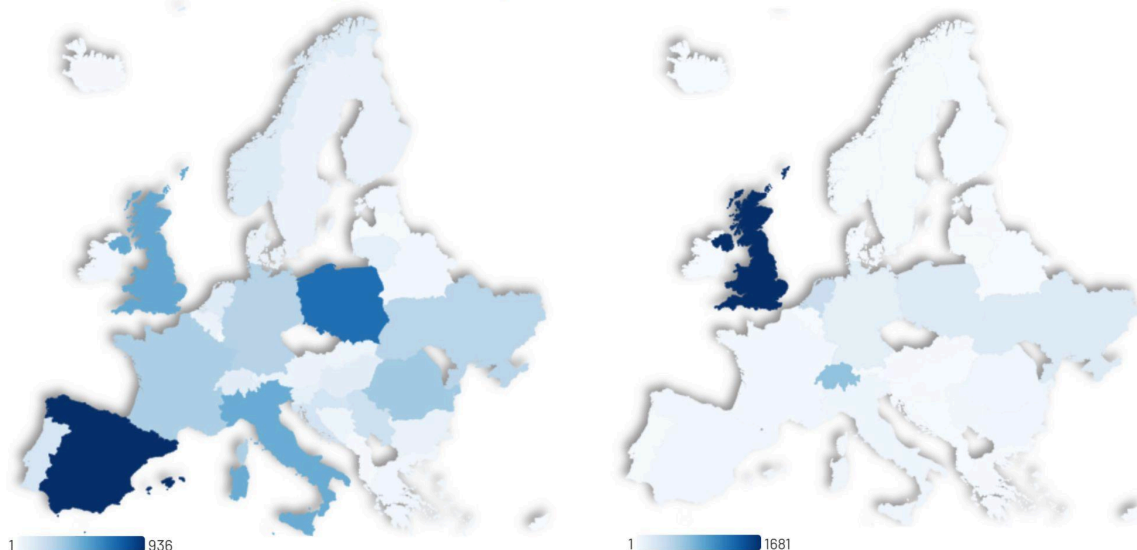
The distribution of Diamond OA journals across Europe

Figure 1 highlights the distribution of Diamond OA journals across Europe, emphasising the diverse presence of non-English-speaking countries in the Diamond OA ecosystem. Countries such as France, Poland and Spain have significant numbers of Diamond OA journals, demonstrating the strong role of local academic and scholarly communities in supporting non-profit publishing. Unlike the dominant presence of APC-based journals in English-speaking regions, these journals often lack the same level of recognition and financial support, as they are not typically indexed in international databases or acknowledged by national research assessment bodies. Strengthening collaborative networks and providing institutional backing are essential to ensure the sustainability and impact of non-commercial publishing models within the European Research Area. This analysis is a starting point to advocate for greater support mechanisms and both institutional, national and international cooperation in fostering an equitable, multilingual, open-access publishing landscape.

¹ doaj.org/csv

The number of Diamond OA journals in Europe

The number of APC journals in Europe



Data source: DOAJ

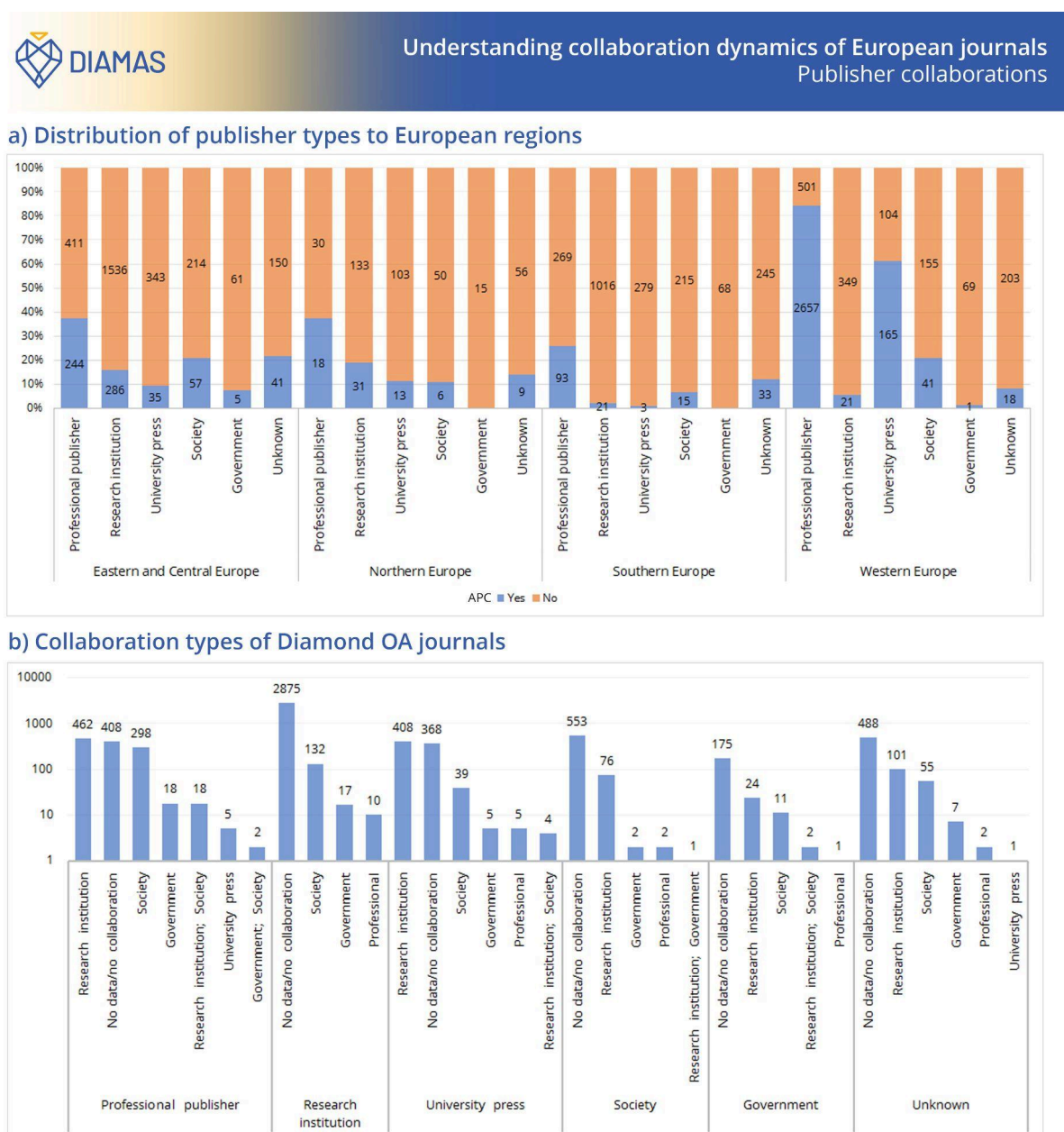
Figure 1. Diamond OA journals in Europe

Publisher types of Diamond OA journals and collaborations between publishers

Professional publishers, i.e. dedicated publishing organisations that manage journals with editorial and production staff and processes, primarily operate OA journal publishing through APC fees, making journals financially sustainable but commercially driven. In contrast, research institutions, university presses, societies, and government entities overwhelmingly support Diamond OA publishing without charging authors. These Diamond OA publishers often rely on voluntary contributions and institutional backing, with collaboration potentially playing an important role in sustaining their operations, even if not all are aware of its significance. The data highlights a regional variation in publisher distribution, with professional publishers dominating in Western countries while non-commercial publishers play a significant role in others. Identifying potential areas for collaboration across institutions, societies, and government-backed initiatives is essential to ensure a robust and sustainable Diamond OA ecosystem (See Figure 2-a).

Figure 2-a illustrates the distribution of publisher types across different European regions, highlighting the predominance of professional publishers and research institutions. The data also reveals significant regional variations in the adoption of APC-based models, with professional publishers more frequently operating on APCs compared to other types. This variation is particularly interesting as it suggests

potential disparities in funding models and institutional support for OA publishing across Europe. The collaboration landscape of Diamond OA journals varies significantly across publisher types (See Figure 2-b). The chart demonstrates that research institutions are the most common collaborators, while other types, such as societies and government-backed journals, often have limited or no collaboration data available. This observation indicates a potential gap in partnership opportunities that could be strategically addressed to enhance the sustainability of Diamond OA publishing.



Data source: DOAJ

Figure 2-a. Distribution of Publisher Types Across European Regions, 2-b. Collaboration Types of Diamond OA Journals

Potential role of national libraries in supporting Diamond OA publishing

National libraries could play a more significant role in supporting non-commercial scholarly publishing by providing infrastructure services such as long-term preservation, persistent identifiers, and archiving (see Figure 3). The data reveals notable differences in institutional backing across different publisher types. While research institutions benefit from relatively higher support, societies, university presses, and government-backed publishers often report limited collaboration with national libraries. This lack of engagement may restrict their visibility, sustainability, and access to critical resources.

Focusing initially on existing collaborations using the “Preservation Service: national library” field of DOAJ, the data suggests potential areas for development where national libraries could expand their role. Strengthening partnerships between national libraries and Diamond OA publishers might enhance the long-term sustainability of non-profit scholarly publishing. By fostering closer collaboration, national organizations could help ensure a more equitable and resilient OA ecosystem.

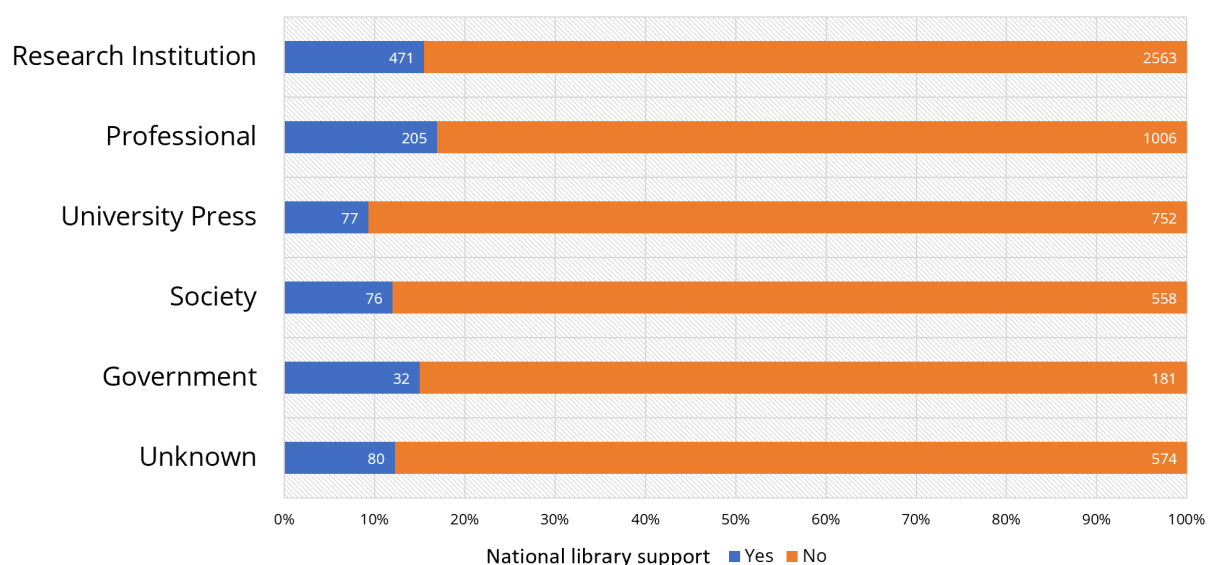


Figure 3. National library support for Diamond OA publishing (data source: DOAJ)

Preservation services as a form of collaboration

Preservation services play a crucial role as a collaborative mechanism within the Diamond OA publishing landscape. Different types of publishers rely on various preservation networks to ensure long-term access to their content, forming partnerships with both institutional and commercial services. Based on data from the DOAJ, research institutions and university presses use PKP Preservation Network,

LOCKSS, and Portico; societies - Portico, PKP, and the Internet Archive and professional publishers Portico, CLOCKSS, and LOCKSS. Professional publishers tend to partner with Portico, CLOCKSS, and LOCKSS, utilising commercial and community-driven solutions. These collaborations ensure that Diamond OA journals remain accessible, highlighting the importance of preservation networks in sustaining open-access publishing over time. Figure 4 presents a word cloud of the most commonly used preservation services.

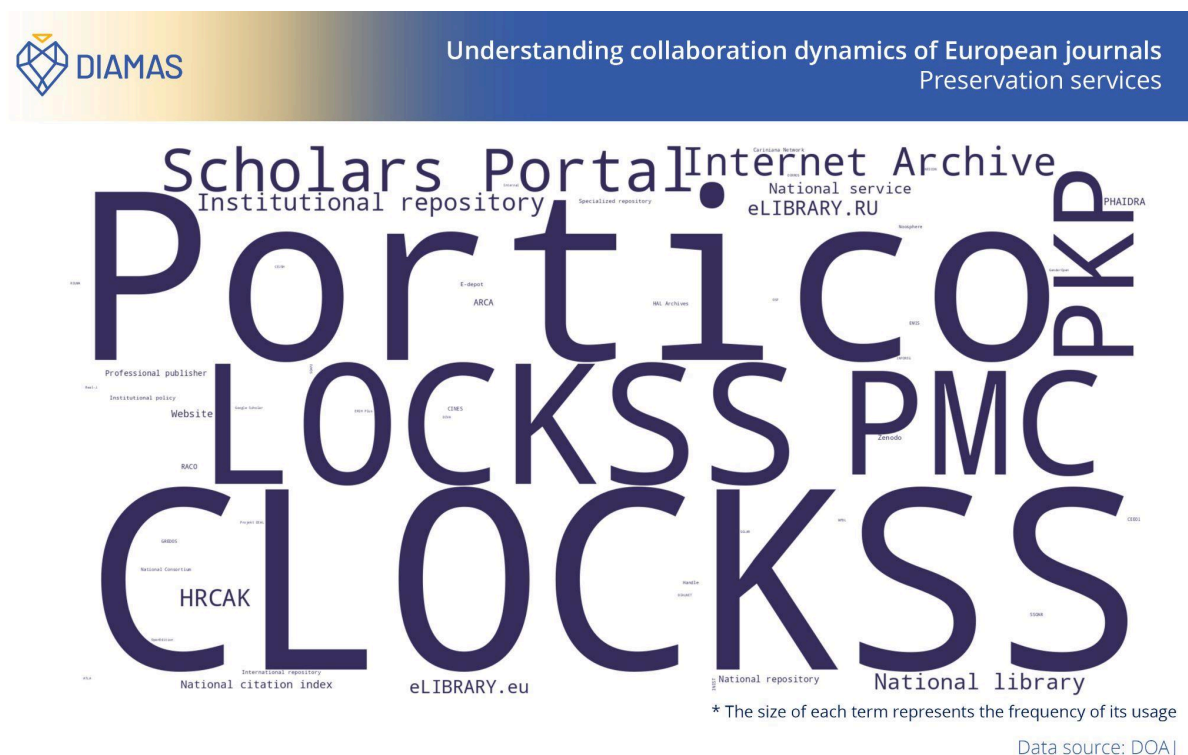


Figure 4. Commonly used preservation services

Scholarly societies as publishers

Learned societies play a crucial role in scholarly publishing by contributing to a diverse and sustainable open-access ecosystem. The data suggests that European learned society journals demonstrate a relatively balanced mix of independent and collaborative publishing, particularly with research organizations and professional publishers (see Figure 5). This observation is evident in the higher proportions of collaborative publishing compared to other regions, indicating a more diversified approach to sustaining open-access journals. However, the figures also show that a significant portion of society journals in Europe still engage in autonomous publishing—operating without recorded collaborations—suggesting there is room for expanding partnerships.

Autonomous publishing in this context refers to society journals that operate independently without documented collaborations with other types of publishers or institutions. This term is used to describe cases where no collaboration data is available, rather than implying a lack of professionalism or quality.

In contrast, the data reveals that Africa and the Middle East have notably lower levels of documented collaboration among society journals, but we acknowledge that this may not fully reflect the reality on the ground. Many of these journals may collaborate through regional platforms such as AJOL or national portals, which might not be captured comprehensively in the ISSN data.

Meanwhile, the data for South/Latin America suggests a notable involvement of both governmental and research organizations in scholarly publishing, indicating a mixed approach to sustainability. However, the figures also highlight that Asia exhibits a similar pattern, with significant engagement from both types of organizations. This observation suggests that regional approaches to sustainability might be more diverse and complex than previously assumed. Further research is needed to understand the underlying reasons for these patterns, which the ALMASI Project aims to explore, particularly focusing on Africa, Latin America, and Europe.

Understanding these regional differences is essential for fostering strategic collaborations that can strengthen society-led publishing, enhance journal visibility, and improve the long-term sustainability of Diamond OA initiatives worldwide. However, it is also clear that more knowledge is needed to uncover why these patterns exist and how they can inform future policy and support mechanisms.

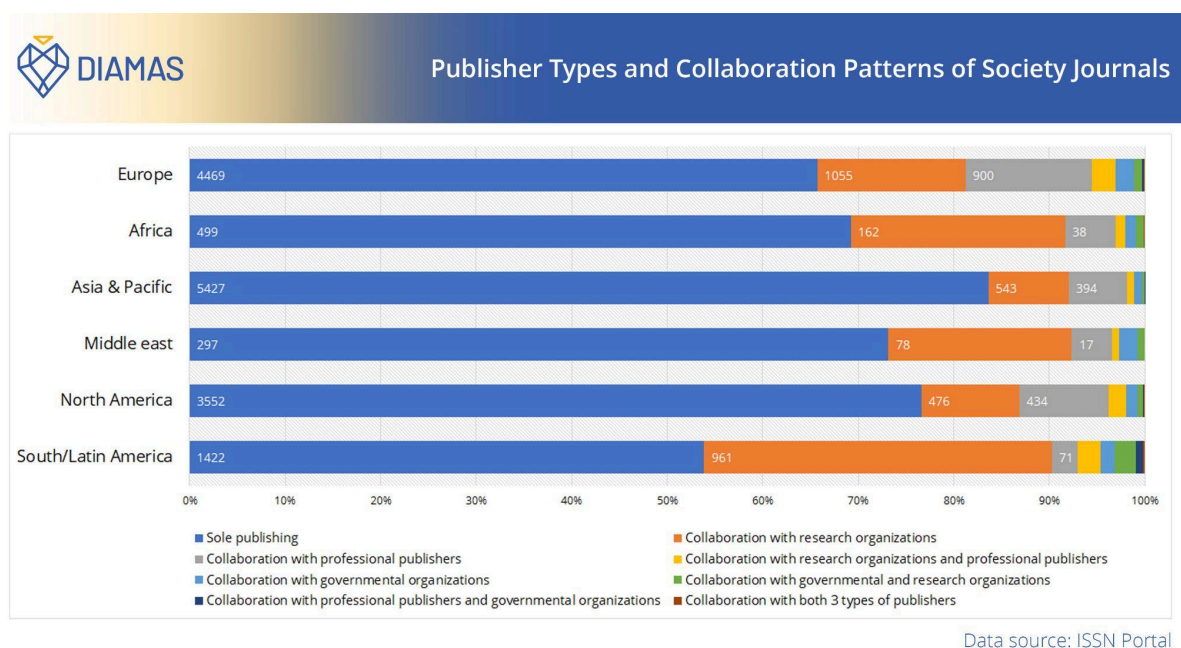


Figure 5. Collaboration patterns of society journals

Languages and collaborative practices of society journals

In Europe, when society journals publish in languages other than English, collaboration appears to play a role in their sustainability (see Figure 6). The data shows that journals publishing in multiple languages and non-English languages exhibit a more diverse range of collaborative practices compared to those publishing solely in English. Notably, collaborations with research organizations and governmental organizations are more prominent for non-English language journals, suggesting that such partnerships may be essential for maintaining their visibility and credibility.

Non-English language journals rely on collaborations more often than journals published solely in English, which might indicate a need for additional support to access broader scholarly networks. These collaborations can provide essential infrastructure, indexing, and funding mechanisms that help overcome the challenges associated with limited international reach. Partnerships with governmental organizations (such as ministries, museums, governmental agencies), in particular, seem to be a key factor, as shown in the data. This highlights the significant role of governmental backing in ensuring the sustainability of multilingual scholarship.

By fostering a variety of collaborative relationships, non-English language journals can strengthen multilingual scholarship, promoting diverse research contributions while maintaining the integrity and accessibility of scholarly communication. Understanding these patterns of collaboration is essential for developing strategies to support society-led publishing across different linguistic contexts.

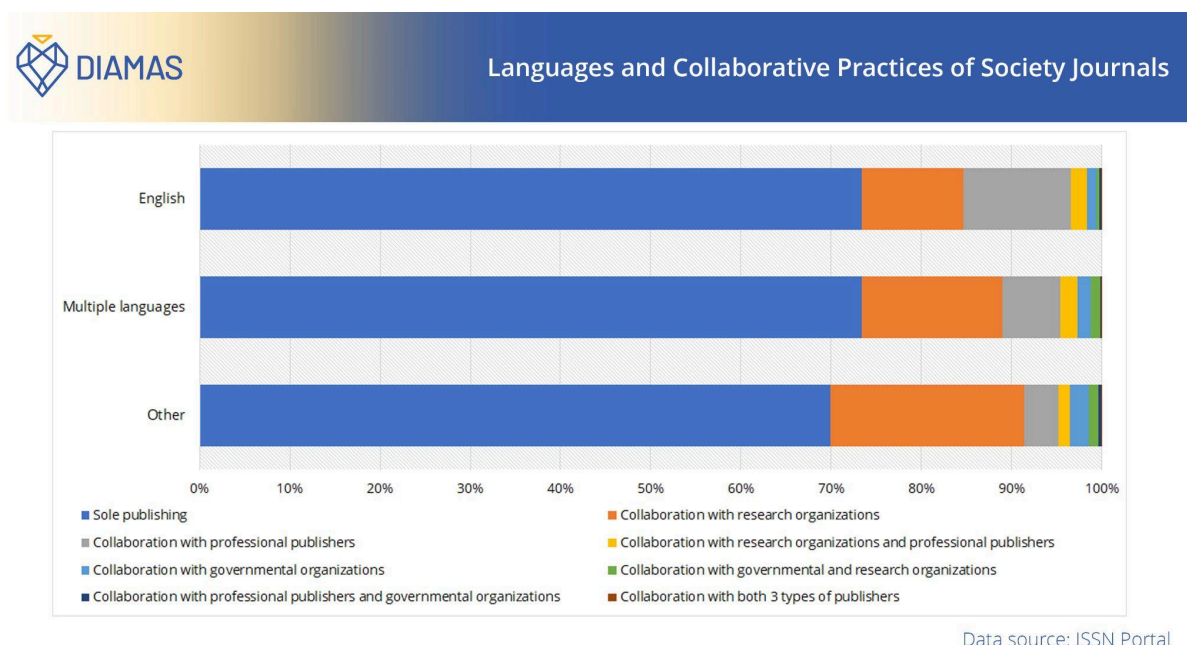


Figure 6. Languages and collaborative practices of society journals

Collaboration practices of SSH and STEM society journals

The data suggests that SSH journals published by scholarly societies engage in collaborative publishing with research organizations more frequently than STEM journals do (see Figure 7). However, the overall levels of collaboration for SSH journals are still relatively modest, indicating that there is potential for strengthening these partnerships further. The prevalence of collaborations with research organizations among SSH journals may reflect the interdisciplinary and community-driven nature of social science and humanities research, where institutional support can play a crucial role.

In contrast, STEM journals appear to rely more heavily on autonomous publishing without documented collaborations, suggesting a different model of sustainability that may depend more on individual or institutional funding rather than inter-organizational partnerships. The lower levels of collaboration in STEM fields might also be influenced by the prevalence of large author teams and established funding mechanisms, which can reduce the immediate need for external collaborations.

Journals that bridge both STEM and SSH disciplines show moderate levels of collaboration, highlighting the potential for cross-disciplinary partnerships that could enhance sustainability and visibility. Expanding research-driven collaborations, particularly within SSH society journals, could help to ensure their long-term sustainability, improve access to funding, and foster a more diverse and resilient scholarly publishing ecosystem.

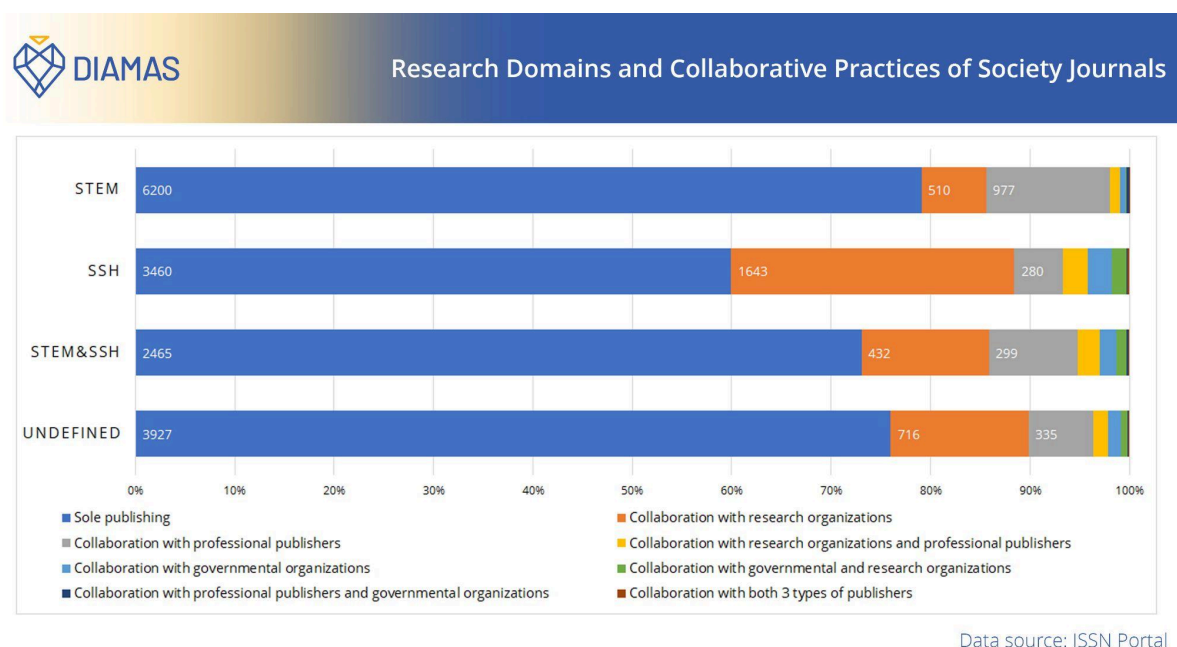


Figure 7. Research domains and collaborative practices of society journals

Key findings

This bibliometric analysis of collaboration patterns in Diamond OA publishing across Europe reveals a complex and regionally diverse landscape. The data highlights that while research institutions play a pivotal role in supporting Diamond OA journals, there are significant variations in the involvement of governmental organizations, professional publishers, and learned societies. These differences suggest that a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting Diamond OA publishing may be insufficient.

The findings indicate that collaborations are more prevalent among non-English language journals and those within the SSH fields, emphasizing the importance of tailored support mechanisms to enhance their sustainability. In contrast, STEM journals appear to operate more independently, pointing to different funding models and collaboration needs.

The notable involvement of governmental organizations in regions such as South/Latin America and Asia suggests alternative pathways to sustainability that deserve further investigation. Understanding these regional dynamics more deeply, as planned by the ALMASI Project, could help inform policies aimed at strengthening non-commercial OA publishing globally.

To advance the sustainability and impact of Diamond OA publishing, it is essential to foster cross-institutional collaborations and explore new partnerships that address specific regional and disciplinary challenges. Supporting a diverse, multilingual, and equitable OA ecosystem will require coordinated efforts among research institutions, governments, and learned societies.

In summary, the study underscores the need for a nuanced approach to supporting Diamond OA publishing – one that recognizes regional particularities, fosters collaboration, and promotes a sustainable and inclusive future for scholarly communication.

5. Conclusions

This study has uncovered a wide range of perspectives on the current state of collaboration in the context of European Diamond OA publishers and service providers. Overall, we believe that organisations active in this space are very open to collaborative activities in most of their functions. We gained increased clarity into the kinds of Diamond OA publisher collaborations to maintain and develop their operations from European focus groups and DIAMAS survey responses. Some functions are outsourced if low-cost options or funding are available (e.g. publishing IT platforms), while others (e.g. editorial tasks) rely on formal or informal knowledge-sharing networks.

Where we discovered low levels of collaboration or interest therein, this was often connected to a lack of time and resources for such future-oriented tasks. Many Diamond OA publishers and service providers are operating with scarce resources, and keeping up with ongoing operations is taxing for many. More research and informed action is needed to understand how best to target publisher support and opportunities for collaboration in such situations. Collaborating with others should not be perceived as an additional administrative burden but rather as an immediately useful mechanism to support operations.

Many European Diamond OA collaborations have emerged organically through bottom-up demand and activity. Substantial initiative and experimentation are required to find and establish valuable relationships and networks. We see benefits in creating more environments that facilitate and encourage collaboration to a higher extent whilst maintaining autonomy, which is key. For example, we see the potential in many countries to create stronger national networks for knowledge sharing, pooling of resources, and for the provision of shared services that would have widespread benefits in strengthening the national Diamond OA community. At the international level, a similar approach would be beneficial to activate key collective action in a landscape that is currently very fragmented. Such work could start by considering how some of the obstacles to collaboration that we identified could be overcome or mitigated. This could unlock the potential of collaboration on a larger scale, making it accessible to even more actors in the Diamond OA landscape. Important work in this direction has been put into motion through the launch of the European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH) and associated national Diamond OA capacity centres. This is one way of creating fertile ground and building bridges within and across communities, but a commitment to supporting the cause is also needed by policymakers and funders to continue this momentum.

Creating increased possibilities and opportunities to collaborate on different levels will also boost the scale of Diamond OA and its impact on the overall scholarly publishing landscape. It is now on a range of different actors, locally, regionally, and internationally, to tune their activities to improve the circumstances for collaboration in the Diamond OA space. This has the potential to both benefit them directly and locally and to contribute to the development of a more vital and thriving Diamond OA ecosystem.



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