

On 4 September 2018, Science Europe, an association of funders, announced the formation of cOAlition S and presented Plan S, a program whose aim is to achieve *“full and immediate Open Access to publications from publicly funded research”*.

Although this statement is surely commendable and Plan S written with best intentions, it has caused many concerns inside Europe and outside. An example is the open letter *“Reactions of Researchers to Plan S: Too Far, Too Risky”* by British researchers who clearly explain the problems that Plan S would cause. Among these they underline that the complete ban on hybrid (learned society – LS) journals of high quality would make the access to these journals impossible for researchers who would not be allowed to legally read the most important LS journals such as those of APS (American Physical Society), ACS (American Chemical Society) in the USA, and RSC (Royal Society of Chemistry) in the UK.

As Leah Poffenberger writes in her article *“Plan S Tries to Flip the Open Access Switch”* published in APS NEWS (December 2018, Vol. 27, No. 11), although three of the twelve APS primary research journals are published fully OA, the hybrid model remains the commonest one. This means that according to the requirements of Plan S and despite the actions that publishers such as Springer Nature, Wiley and Elsevier are already taking, researchers would be banned from publishing in about 85% of the existing journals.

This point leads to the consideration made by Matthew Salter (APS Publisher) who claims that *“the restriction to publish only in full OA journals brings up critical questions around author freedom and choice, and could have a profound effect on the way researchers collaborate across international boundaries”*. The reason for this, of course, is that Plan S does not immediately concern and involve research-intensive areas such as America and Asia.

The financial aspects of Plan S are of uttermost importance, too. The model supported by Plan S is indeed a way of changing academic publishing but it also expresses the clear will to move away and *“to eliminate the commercial viability of subscription journal publishing”* as written by Michael Clarke in his interesting article *“Plan S: Impact on Society Publishers”* (The Scholarly Kitchen, 5 December 2018, <https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2018/12/05/plan-s-impact-on-society-publishers/>). In this sense, despite the restrictions stated in Plan S, it will be very likely that article processing charges (APCs) will increase. It is therefore reasonable to share the worry of the British researchers who claim in their open letter that under Plan S *“with its strong focus on the Gold OA publication model, in which researchers pay high APCs for each publication, the total costs of scholarly dissemination will likely rise instead of reduce”*.

In the light of these considerations the Italian Physical Society (SIF) supports the fundamental intention of Plan S and explicitly welcomes some of the principles formulated therein. The SIF, as a non-profit association with the aim to promote, favour and protect the progress of Physics in Italy and worldwide, commits itself to the promotion of scientific publishing and information dissemination and supports all activities that serve this purpose, in particular Open Access. However, the SIF is convinced that these activities must serve the advancement

of science, must not restrict or disadvantage authors and must be based on resilient and sustainable business models. Therefore, the SIF shares the position that the legitimate aim of making scientific results freely accessible to all must not be compromised by unwanted consequences that might be detrimental to science.

A possible way of implementation of Plan S, not to jeopardise the scientific publishing system, would be to set up international task forces, made of authors (researchers and stakeholders, in general) and publishers, in order to explore the actual feasibility of pilot projects in various research areas, from science to humanities. An interesting model (albeit not the only one) is certainly SCOAP3 at CERN for which a careful analysis of advantages, drawbacks, limits and perspectives should be carefully made.