

Project Information and Informed Consent Form

Frontiers Project “Open Science – Crucial for effective COVID research”

Interviews

About the project

Open science, in particular open access scientific publications and data sharing, have sometimes been depicted as key assets in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular as regards the unprecedented speed in which vaccines have been developed. However, concrete evidence for this assertion is lacking and a number of other factors could also have played a role.

In the project “Open Science – Crucial for effective COVID research?”, funded by Frontiers and conducted by an independent researcher, Daniel Spichtinger (see bio below), we provide empirical evidence to explore whether and to what extent open science practices, most notably open access to publications and open research data have influenced the speed of COVID related research in general and the development of COVID vaccines in particular.

Results so far

A google scholar search of scientific publication with search terms related to “speed” and open science practices (open access / data sharing) provides interesting insights how “speed” sits at the nexus of a heated debate within the scientific community concerning the (potentially) systemic changes the production and dissemination of scientific knowledge in times of COVID has brought. Compared to rather positive policy statements, a number of voices in the scientific community express significant doubts whether “faster always means better”.

These results were then field tested in a survey (N=208) of (mostly) Frontiers authors, which showed that a large majority of respondents was satisfied with access to COVID relevant literature. In the survey speeding up peer review of COVID related literature was largely seen in a positive light too, with participants seeing a continuing need to reform peer review. Respondents were rather split on the question whether speeding up the production of knowledge had negative effects on the quality of research, another issue hotly debated in the literature.

As concerns access to COVID data respondents were by and large also satisfied, although the percentage of those very satisfied and satisfied is significantly lower than for access to publications. While two thirds of respondents agreed that the COVID pandemic has improved data sharing practices, an even larger percentage (91%) see the need to further improve data sharing practices. Furthermore, 69% agree that further open science practices beyond publications and data are needed, with 77% agreeing that research assessment needs be changed. Overall, however, the respondents were positive about the way the scientific system has coped with the challenges of COVID.

Your consent

In part two of our project, we conduct qualitative interviews with six key researchers, working on COVID to obtain further input and feedback to the research question.

You have been selected as a potential respondent, since you indicated in your survey response that you would be available for such an interview and due to the fact that you have engaged in COVID related research.

We would be delighted if you would be available for such an interview. The interview would be conducted online (probably through Zoom), recorded and used in the context of the study and its follow up. Selected parts of the interview may also be published on its own. Please note that the interviews will not be anonymous, except if this is explicitly requested from your side.

Participation in the interview is of course voluntary and in line with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you may refuse to take part or exit the interview any time without penalty. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer for any reason. The information collected will not be used for any other purpose than this research. We do not anticipate any significant risks to you or your employer by providing your consent.

If you agree please sign or sign or e-sign the form and send it back to dspichtinger@outlook.com

Signing this form indicates that

- (i) you have read the above information
- (ii) that you voluntarily agree to the interview under the conditions outlined above.

Name, Date, Place

Signature

Redress

In line with the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) you are entitled to rights of information, correction, deletion, restriction of processing and objection to use your personal data. In case you would like to do so, please contact Daniel Spichtinger (dspichtinger@outlook.com), in his role as the project manager for this specific project. Please note that Daniel Spichtinger is not an employee of Frontiers and is not responsible for data protection issues at Frontiers other than for the data of this specific study. If you believe that the processing of your data violates data protection law or that your data protection rights have otherwise been violated in any way, you can complain to the responsible supervisory authority.

About the researcher

Daniel Spichtinger is an independent expert and researcher working on open science, including open access and data management policies. From 2012-2018 he was a member of the unit dealing with open science in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. After finishing his 6-year contract, he returned to Vienna and has been working as a self-employed expert for Open Science and EU Research Policy since 2018.