

# Towards Sustainable Cooperative and Non-APC Publishing Models



January 2020

Advancing Open Scholarship

## D6.2 – Best Practice Guide for Co-Operative Models of Publishing

Version 1.0 – Final  
PUBLIC

### Abstract

This OpenAIRE report is based on input from the publishing and library community collected during and in connection with the OpenAIRE workshop on “Sustainable non-APC Open Access Publishing Models”, held at Bielefeld University on February 26-27, 2019. It seeks to: 1) Showcase and review selected non-APC and collaborative publication models in the context of the current Open Access publishing landscape. 2) Suggest a set of recommendations aimed at research funders, policymakers and the publishing community, for moving towards a more sustainable and diverse Open Access publishing future, one where collaborative and non-APC publishing could represent a viable, cost and resource effective alternative to APC-based business models for Open Access publishing.



H2020-EINFRA-2017  
Grant Agreement 777541

## Document Description

### D6.2 – Best Practice Guide for Co-Operative Models of Publishing

WP6 – TOWARDS A SCHOLARLY COMMONS	
WP participating organizations: UGOE, CNR, ARC, UMINHO, EIFL, UNIT, COAR e.V., CLARA, KNAW, UEDIN, NHRF (EIE), RBI, JISC	
Contractual Delivery Date: 09/2019	Actual Delivery Date: 01/2020
Nature: Report	Version: 1.0 (Final)
Public Deliverable	

#### Preparation Slip

	Name	Organisation	Date
<b>From</b>	Jens H. Aasheim Jochen Schirrwagen Iryna Kuchma Gwen Franck Emilie Hermans Najla Rettberg Tobias Steiner	UNIT UNIBI EIFL EIFL UGENT UGOE UGOE	01/2020
<b>Edited by</b>			
<b>Reviewed by</b>	Birgit Schmidt Niamh Brennan and OpenAIRE NOADs and workshop participants	UGOE Trinity College Dublin	10/2019
<b>Approved by</b>	Natalia Manola	ARC	01/2020
<b>For delivery</b>	Mike Hatzopoulos	UOA	02/2020

## Revision History

Issue	Item	Reason for Change	Author	Organization
V0.1	Draft version	First draft	Jens H. Aasheim <i>et al.</i>	Unit
V0.2	Internal and external review	Restructuring and partial rewriting in preparation for review	Jens H. Aasheim <i>et al.</i>	Unit
V1.0	Final version	Review feedback	Jens H. Aasheim <i>et al.</i>	Unit

# Table of Contents

<b>1  INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>8</b>
1.1 SCOPE	8
1.2 BACKGROUND	8
1.3 POLICY	9
<b>2  THE PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1 CONTEXT	11
2.2 COLLABORATIVE NON-APC PUBLISHING MODEL REVIEW	14
2.2.1 LIBRARY PUBLISHING PROGRAMS	14
2.2.2 INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND THIRD-PARTY FUNDING	15
2.2.3 NATIONAL COLLABORATIVE FUNDING AND PUBLISHING	16
2.2.4 INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIVE FUNDING AND PUBLISHING	18
2.2.5 COLLABORATIVE PUBLICATION SUPPORT SERVICES	21
<b>3  THE PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE</b>	<b>22</b>
3.1 WHAT CAN BE CONSIDERED SUSTAINABLE?	22
3.2 CURRENT ISSUES FACING USERS/INITIATIVES/INSTITUTIONS, FUNDERS AND POLICY MAKERS	22
3.3 SUGGESTIONS FROM THE OPENAIRE WORKSHOP TO MITIGATE THESE ISSUES	24
<b>4  CONCLUSIONS</b>	<b>27</b>
4.1 RECOMMENDATIONS	27
4.2 NEXT STEPS	29
<b>5  ANNEX 1 - TOWS STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES MATRIX</b>	<b>30</b>

# Table of Tables

<i>Table 1 – Sustainability matrix: Overview/Abstract of stakeholders, issues and potential solutions</i>	25
<i>Table 2 – A1.1 Organizational aspects: Collaborations, staffing, processes and workflows</i>	30
<i>Table 3 – A1.2 Organizational aspects: Collaborations, staffing, processes and workflows</i>	31

## Disclaimer

---

This document contains description of the OpenAIRE-Advance project findings, work and products. Certain parts of it might be under partner Intellectual Property Right (IPR) rules so, prior to using its content please contact the consortium head for approval.

In case you believe that this document harms in any way IPR held by you as a person or as a representative of an entity, please do notify us immediately.

The authors of this document have taken any available measure in order for its content to be accurate, consistent and lawful. However, neither the project consortium as a whole nor the individual partners that implicitly or explicitly participated in the creation and publication of this document hold any sort of responsibility that might occur as a result of using its content.

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The content of this publication is the sole responsibility of the OpenAIRE-Advance consortium and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

OpenAIRE-Advance is a project funded by the European Union (Grant Agreement No 777541).



## Acronyms

---

APC	Article Processing Charges
BPC	Book Processing Charges
COAR	Confederation of Open Access Repositories
DOAJ	Directory of Open Access Journals
OJS	Open Journal Systems
RDA	Research Data Alliance

# Publishable Summary

---

This OpenAIRE<sup>1</sup> report is based on input from the publishing and library community collected during and in connection with the OpenAIRE workshop on “*Sustainable non-APC Open Access Publishing Models*”, held at Bielefeld University on February 26-27, 2019.<sup>2</sup> It seeks to:

- Showcase and review selected non-APC and collaborative publication models in the context of the current Open Access publishing landscape.
- Suggest a set of recommendations aimed at research funders, policymakers and the publishing community, for moving towards a more sustainable and diverse Open Access publishing future, one where collaborative and non-APC publishing could represent a viable, cost and resource effective alternative to APC-based business models for Open Access publishing.

In the current landscape collaborative and non-APC Open Access publishing channels are facing several challenges: Predictable access to funding and resources to finance these models and medium to long term planning and stability. Moreover, visibility and reputation of these channels compete with APC-based and subscription channels for the research community’s perception of quality and prestige as well as for the awareness of research funders and institutions.

To advance, strengthen and move towards a sustainable non-APC and collaborative Open Access publishing market this report recommends:

## 1) *Funding*

Research funders, institutions and policymakers should recognize, endorse and support collaborative and non-APC Open Access publishing as a valid and equivalent road to Open Access. This will not only contribute to awareness and recognition, but also help foster a more diverse and long-term sustainable Open Access publishing ecosystem and alternatives to the APC-model. They offer more cost-effective solutions and require less administrative resources, without sacrificing quality.

## 2) *Quality Control and Publication Practices*

In the extensive and fast-moving research publication market, evaluating credibility and reliability of both new and existing publication channels is a major challenge. This can be an issue in terms of research evaluation processes, as well as for the individual researcher looking for relevant and trustworthy places to publish research papers. One way of addressing this problem in general, and the commonly misconceived quality of collaborative and non-APC publishing in particular, is if trusted bodies evaluate publication channels. Indexing, support and approval of non-APC

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu/sustainable-non-apc-publishing-models-workshop>

publication channels by trusted bodies and research evaluation organizations will increase trust and visibility and make it easier to identify and select high quality journals.

### *3) Strengthen Partnership and Community*

Currently the field of collaborative and non-APC Open Access publishing consists of smaller publishers and initiatives lacking the influence and resources of the large traditional publishers that are either subscription- or APC-based. Partnership and communities can provide tools and opportunities to increase visibility and leveraging power with funders, institutions and policymakers. Through shared infrastructure and services this can also lower the strain on limited resources and allow for a distribution of know-how and expertise.

### *4) Next Steps*

Topics that were beyond the reach and scope of this report, but should be investigated further, include the development of universal standards for evaluation and assessment of research publication channels and the implementation of a concept such as trusted bodies. It would require a substantial effort and backing from a wide variety of stakeholders, but the possible benefits for the entire community serves as valid motivation.

The Open Access community expressed the wish for best practice guidelines for collaborative and non-APC publishing. Based on the current complexity and diversity of relevant publication models, this task was judged to be outside the resources and expertise of this report. It is therefore recommended that the concept of a potential best practice guide is revisited at a later date and with a focus on community involvement.



## 1 | INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Scope

The sustainability of Open Access publishing infrastructures and initiatives is becoming increasingly important. For reasons of diversity, innovation and cost management, research publishing should be part of the research community and supported by learned societies, publishers and libraries. With the risk of increasing costs and administrative burden often associated with APC-based publishing models, they are increasingly viewed with a critical eye. While there are successful non-APC Open Access publishing models, they are not properly addressed in Open Access policies. Additionally, they are at a disadvantage in the competition for funding and often either invisible to researchers or perceived as a lower quality option.

This report is based on the outcomes of the OpenAIRE workshop on “*Sustainable non-APC Open Access Publishing Models*”<sup>3</sup>, held at Bielefeld University on February 26-27, 2019. It is further supported by SWOT<sup>4</sup>-analyses of several Open Access publishing initiatives that attended the workshop. The participants identified gaps and provided best practice solutions that can sustain cooperative publishing models.

Based on a snapshot of the current publication landscape, this report analyses a selection of non-APC and collaborative publishing models. It compares organizational, technical and financial aspects, assesses their relative strengths and weaknesses, and conducts a cross-disciplinary analysis of their efficacy in different academic contexts. The title and text of this report specifically mentions non-APC and article-based publishing, but it is important to note that the workshop and analysis also included monograph and book publishing. Additionally, the relevant conclusions and recommendations also apply to non-Book Processing Charges (BPC) publishing.

Finally, challenges and issues in terms of sustainability and scalability of non-APC and collaborative publication models are considered from the perspective of the major stakeholders.

As a result, concrete recommendations can be made.

### 1.2 Background

This report is part of the scholarly communication activities in the current OpenAIRE Advance (2018–2020) project. These include a number of tasks to examine changes in the research communication landscape, particularly non-APC publishing models that can foster a more transparent, equitable publishing market.<sup>5</sup> These are complemented by studies that look into

---

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu/sustainable-non-apc-publishing-models-workshop> and <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/results-fp7-post-grant-open-access-pilot>

<sup>4</sup> SWOT: strength, weaknesses, opportunities, threats : a framework to assess internal (strength, weaknesses) and external (opportunities, threats) factors that influence an organisation or business

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu/beyond-apcs-alternative-open-access-publishing-business-models>

interoperability aspects of publishing platforms, and, correspondingly, leveraging repositories as a means to build value-added services for the scholarly publishing realm.

As an infrastructure for scholarly communication, OpenAIRE's core activities include the establishment of a European repository network, exposing and harvesting content from trusted institutional sources, and unlocking the potential of deposited outputs, publications, data and software. Moreover, OpenAIRE has also carried out studies on the Open Access publishing arena, primarily via its FP7 post-grant pilot study during the OpenAIRE2020 project.<sup>6</sup> This pilot ran from 2015 to 2018 and was set up to explore policy guidelines and data gathering for publishing payments within the context of a particular funding grant. Workflows, pre-payment processes and conditions were established and almost 1,000 publications were processed. One significant report that resulted from these efforts is the roadmap document "*Towards a competitive and sustainable Open Access publishing market in Europe*"<sup>7</sup>, which explores the current status of the Open Access publishing market. The report was written to evaluate the FP7 pilot, and also to provide a roadmap for a more sustainable market. In addition to this study and pilot there was also a decision to include a study into alternative funding mechanisms and to provide grants for non-fee-based platforms to be developed. This in particular looked at how institutional repositories could be leveraged as a mechanism for Open Access publishing. Hence, we deem it important to read this current report against the backdrop of, and in connection with the FP7 pilot report, as there was a clear momentum from the wider OpenAIRE community to continue these dialogues and efforts to highlight alternative business models.

### 1.3 Policy

One of the most impactful recent policies for a large-scale transition and implementation of Open Access is Plan S, initiated by cOAlition S, an international group of research funding organisations.<sup>8</sup> Plan S contains binding principles and guidelines designed to accelerate structural change in the research publishing system towards Open Access. Since its first announcement on 4th September 2018, and its revised release on 31st May 2019, it has been discussed among research publishers, the research community and the Open Access movement worldwide. While the need for a transition to Open Access is generally agreed upon, the critical questions of how and who still remains.<sup>9</sup>

An important issue in this regard is whether the Plan S strategy will further cement the structure of the current publication system with large commercial players gaining ever more control. Or whether it will succeed in fostering a more diverse and open research publication system that supports a scholarly commons, thus empowering the scholarly community. While Plan S offers an

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu/public-documents/public-project-documents/fp7-goldoa-pilot>

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, Rob, Fosci, Mattia, Chiarelli, Andrea, Pinfield, Stephen, & Jubb, Michael. (2017, February 28). Towards a Competitive and Sustainable OA Market in Europe - A Study of the Open Access Market and Policy Environment. Zenodo. doi: [10.5281/zenodo.401029](https://zenodo.org/record/401029#.XR8jmY9cJPY) <https://zenodo.org/record/401029#.XR8jmY9cJPY>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation/>

<sup>9</sup> Debat H, Babini D. 2019. Plan S in Latin America: A precautionary note. PeerJ Preprints 7:e27834v2 doi: [10.7287/peerj.preprints.27834v2](https://doi.org/10.7287/peerj.preprints.27834v2)

opportunity for the expansion of cooperative publishing models in Open Access, it also increases the requirements for a sustainable long-term financing and operating model. Publishers currently adopting a hybrid model will need to convert to a fully Open Access model through transformative agreements within a relatively short period of time. The currently widespread solution of APC-based Open Access publishing is demanding and requires a lot of administrative overhead.<sup>10</sup> Collaborative and non-APC Open Access publishing models represent important contributions to the development of scholarly communication and could potentially offer viable and cost-effective alternatives.<sup>11</sup> A number of funders (e.g. in Austria, Croatia, Canada, France, Norway, Switzerland and Latin America) already provide funding for Open Access publishing infrastructures and venues that do not charge APCs, as highlighted in the *“Future of scholarly publishing and scholarly communication - Report of the Expert Group to the European Commission”*<sup>12</sup>.

---

<sup>10</sup> Research Consulting (2014). Counting the costs of Open Access. Report on behalf of London Higher and SPARC Europe. <http://www.researchconsulting.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Research-Consulting-Counting-the-Costs-of-OA-Final.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Becerril-García, A. (2019). AmeliCA vs Plan S: Same target, two different strategies to achieve Open Access. <http://amelica.org/index.php/en/2019/02/10/amelica-vs-plan-s-same-target-two-different-strategies-to-achieve-open-access>

<sup>12</sup> <https://publications.europa.eu/s/m59T>

## 2 | THE PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE

To help place this report within the current body of work on Open Access publishing models and present a non-exhaustive overview of contemporary collaborative and non-APC publishing, the following section reviews a selection of relevant literature and publishing models. The analysis of publication models and channels discussed in this chapter is based on information obtained through a voluntary SWOT analysis form and the OpenAIRE workshop “*Sustainable non-APC Open Access publishing models*”.<sup>13</sup> For an aggregated summary of the SWOT analyses please see *Annex 1*.<sup>14</sup>

### 2.1 Context

The *OPERAS*<sup>15</sup> (*Open Access in the European Research Area through Scholarly Communication*) White Paper “*Open Access Business Models*”<sup>16</sup> describes the current landscape in which there are multiple approaches to Open Access publishing from the publishers and service providers points of view. It analyses the pros and cons of different models and concludes with some suggestions for ways of bringing greater stability and sustainability to Open Access publishing models. The models identified include:

- **Article Processing Charges (APCs) and Book Processing Charges (BPCs)** paid by the author, their funder or institution to cover publishing costs.
- **Freemium:** publishers (or service providers) make one online version free, and charge for other formats and additional functionalities, e.g. PDF, enhanced HTML, e-pub/mobi formats for e-readers. Examples include *OpenEdition*<sup>17</sup>, *OECD*<sup>18</sup>, *Open Book Publishers*<sup>19</sup>.
- **Collaboration/Coalition:** by joining forces, institutions and organisations bring different skills and funding sources together to boost Open Access publishing. This can be at subject level, library level, national level, and international level e.g. *OPERAS*.
- **Community:** academic-led presses operating on a community/voluntary basis, for example, *Meson Press*<sup>20</sup>, *Mayfly Press*<sup>21</sup>, *Language Science Press*.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu/sustainable-non-apc-publishing-models-workshop>

<sup>14</sup> Analysis of received SWOT’s performed by: Katia Corsi, Ph.D., Full Professor in Business Administration and Accounting, Department of Economics and Business, University of Sassari (Italy)

<sup>15</sup> <https://operas.hypotheses.org>

<sup>16</sup> Lara Speicher, Lorenzo Armando, Margo Bargheer, Martin Paul Eve, Sven Fund, Delfim Leão, ... Irakleitos Souyiultzoglou. (2018, July 30). *OPERAS Open Access Business Models White Paper*. Zenodo. doi: [doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1323708](https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1323708)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.openedition.org>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.oecd.org>

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.openbookpublishers.com>

<sup>20</sup> <https://meson.press>

<sup>21</sup> <http://newwritingnorth.com/projects/mayfly-press>

<sup>22</sup> <http://langsci-press.org>

- **Grants** to launch or support new Open Access ventures and projects.
- **Endowments**, for example US university presses receive regular endowments to fund part of their operations, for both Open Access and traditional publishing.
- **Library funding**: some publishers and publishing service companies such as Knowledge Unlatched operate library funding schemes to secure library contributions to make books and journals available Open Access at the point of use.
- **Institutional**: university presses in Europe receive funding from their institutions to cover varying degrees of their publishing costs and also benefit from in-kind support from their institution in the form of the use of professional services, staff and infrastructure. Often, this support is provided so university presses can publish the work of their own academics.
- **Revenues: Services**: some publishers offer publishing services to other presses or institutions, alongside publishing books and journals in their own imprint.
- **Revenues: Sales of print**: selling print copies to support publishing activities, while offering Open Access versions online.

Alicia Wise and Lorraine Estelle in their report *“Society Publishers Accelerating Open Access and Plan S (SPA-OPS)”*<sup>23</sup> describe seven categories of Open Access approaches and models that are Plan S compliant, that can be used alone or creatively in combination:

1. **Transformative Models** – “These approaches repurpose existing institutional spend with publishers in order to open content”
2. **Cooperative Infrastructure + Funding Models** – “These are close, strategic partnerships between libraries and publishers to jointly fund, and provide, open content and its supporting infrastructure.”
3. **Immediate sharing with CC-BY licence** – “It is possible to continue to operate journals fully funded by the subscription model and comply with Plan S by permitting authors to immediately self-archive their accepted manuscripts or final articles under a CC BY licence. This green OA approach is dependent on either final published journal articles or author accepted manuscripts being shared with a CC BY licence at the time of publication.”
4. **Article Transaction Models** – “Author payments such as APCs and submission fees can work perfectly well to underpin an OA transition strategy in titles where the large majority of authors are well funded and support such payments. These models might work for a society publisher with a steady flow of articles, and the infrastructure to administer many small transactions.”

---

<sup>23</sup> Wise, A., & Estelle, L.. (2019, September 11). Society Publishers Accelerating Open Access and Plan S - Final Project Report (Version 1). Figshare. doi: [doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.9805007.v1](https://doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.9805007.v1)

5. **Open Publishing Platforms** – “For the purpose of Plan S, Open Access platforms are publishing platforms for the original publication of research output (such as Wellcome Open Research or Gates Open Research), and not platforms that aggregate grey literature or re-publish content that has already been published elsewhere.”
6. **Other Revenue Models** – “Examples include advertising; crowdfunding; bequests, donations, endowments, and subsidies; freemium; and syndication.”
7. **Cost Reduction** – “Efficiency gains can always help, and there are some well-established ‘tricks of the trade’ that remain viable, whether that’s changing round journals, collaborating, or outsourcing.”

The “*Future of scholarly publishing and scholarly communication - Report of the Expert Group to the European Commission*”<sup>24</sup> highlights equity, diversity and inclusivity and points out that ‘... APCs, like subscriptions, create a financial barrier hampering communication between researchers. They are particularly detrimental to lower-income countries - a point that should be kept in mind in view of the economic disparities affecting the member states of the European Community.’

In November 2019, COAR (Confederation of Open Access Repositories)<sup>25</sup> released the second version of the “Pubfair: A distributed framework for open publishing services” paper: “Pubfair is a conceptual model for a modular, distributed open source publishing framework which builds upon the content contained in the network of repositories to enable the dissemination and quality-control of a range of research outputs including publications, data, and more. It enables different stakeholders (funders, institutions, scholarly societies, individual scientists) to access a suite of functionalities to create their own dissemination channels, with built in open review and transparent processes. The model minimizes publishing costs while maintaining academic standards by connecting communities with iterative publishing services linked to their preferred repository. Such a publishing environment has the capacity to transform the scholarly communication system, making it more research-centric, dissemination-oriented and open to and supportive of innovation, while also collectively managed by the scholarly community. COAR will continue to work on these details through the Next Generation Repositories Expert Group in collaboration with other initiatives that are interested in progressing this framework. In addition, COAR will actively seek out researchers and research communities that are interested in adopting new models of scholarly communication and will work with them to ensure that Pubfair reflects their needs.”<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup><https://publications.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/464477b3-2559-11e9-8d04-01aa75ed71a1>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.coar-repositories.org>

<sup>26</sup>Pubfair: A distributed framework for open publishing services. Version 2, November 27, 2019. Authored by Tony Ross-Hellauer, Benedikt Fecher, Kathleen Shearer, and Eloy Rodrigues <https://www.coar-repositories.org/files/Pubfair-version-2-November-27-2019.pdf>

## 2.2 Collaborative Non-APC Publishing Model Review

The *OpenAIRE workshop on Sustainable non-APC Open Access publishing models* focused on collaborative and consortia models assessing their relative strengths and weaknesses, conducting cross-disciplinary analyses of their efficacy in different academic contexts and discussing cost sharing and joint sustainability strategies.<sup>27</sup>

Participants of the workshop were asked to submit a form containing a SWOT analysis of their respective non-APC publishing model including:

- A short description of the business model
- Target audience (interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary or discipline specific)
- How are the publishing costs covered?
- Collaborations (publishers, libraries, etc)
- Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats: What are the internal strengths of the model? What are the internal weaknesses of the model? What external opportunities are there for this model to succeed? What are the external threats for this model?

Below is an overview of non-APC publishing models from the SWOTs submitted including information on how the costs are covered and how support is provided. It broadens the two SPA-OPS project categories, Cooperative Infrastructure & Funding Models and Other Revenue Models.

### 2.2.1 Library publishing programs

**Uopen Journals**<sup>28</sup> (Utrecht University, the Netherlands) supports ambitious researchers and starting editorial boards in publishing academic journals in Open Access. With the help of this platform, the strategic publishing advice and practical management support, boards can strengthen their journals and let them grow. Within the boundaries of the incubator model the library team offers tools and expertise in editorial workflow, business models, marketing, sustainable archiving and other domains.<sup>29</sup> So far, they have supported over 25 peer-reviewed journals. The costs are covered partly by editorial boards and partly by the University Library. Collaboration is ongoing with Ubiquity Press for incubator infrastructure and other potential publishers interested in (start-up) journals from Utrecht University.

**The University of Debrecen University and National Library** (Hungary) hosts an OJS platform for university journals.<sup>30</sup> The library promotes the service, helps to set up new journals, provides training, answers operational questions and maintains the platform. The library, in cooperation with the editorial offices, is also trying to increase the visibility of journals. And the university

---

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu/blogs/sustainable-non-apc-oa-workshop>

<sup>28</sup> <https://www.uopenjournals.org>

<sup>29</sup> [https://www.uopenjournals.org/site/journal\\_development](https://www.uopenjournals.org/site/journal_development)

<sup>30</sup> <https://ojs.lib.unideb.hu>



created the financial framework in September 2019 that supports the publication and development costs of 24 peer-reviewed - open access - university journals.

**Sui Generis**<sup>31</sup> (Switzerland) is an open access journal for legal scholars. Libraries and the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences pay an annual contribution. The journal website is hosted by the Hauptbibliothek Open Publishing Environment (<https://www.hope.uzh.ch/>).

## 2.2.2 Institutional support and third-party funding

**Open Gender Journal**<sup>32</sup> (Germany) relies on the institutional support (e.g. providing proof-readers, editors, etc.) of several research facilities in Germany as well as third party funding. The third-party funding is provided within a pilot project “Open Gender Platform” (BMBF funding period: June 2018-May 2020; two part-time research positions). Editors work pro bono. Editorial management, copyediting, and layout are provided mainly by the Margherita-von-Brentano-Center and through the “Open Gender Platform”. Hosting (OJS 3) is free of charge via the *Center for Digital Systems (CeDiS)*<sup>33</sup> at the Freie Universität and the university library (FU Berlin). The journal collaborates with the German Gender Studies Association and several research facilities in Germany related to Gender/Women’s Studies. On a technical level they also collaborate with the GenderOpen Repository and German National Library.

**META** “Middle East - Topics & Arguments”<sup>34</sup> (Germany), has a business model based on 1) institutional support by University Marburg which is not covering expenses; 2) Third party funding by the DFG (2016-2019) which allows to employ two people (50% software developer / 50% editor). The work at META is done by research fellows at the Centre for Near and Middle Eastern Studies (CNMS) who are allocated a specific amount of time at META beside their regular workload at the department. This is to ensure that their labor at META is paid. Additionally, there are international guest editors whose labor is not paid. There is also some collaboration with the University Library at University Marburg and with the Digital Humanities Institute Beirut.

**ZBW**<sup>35</sup> – At the end of 2017, the Leibniz Information Center for Economics (Germany) began publishing the first journal dedicated to the replication studies in economics. Successful replications as well as failed replication attempts qualify for publication in the “International Journal for Re-Views in Empirical Economics” (IREE)<sup>36</sup>. The selection of published articles is based on technical and formal criteria but not with regard to the qualitative and quantitative results. In doing so, IREE intends to improve the knowledge on robust and generalizable findings of empirical economics research. During the first project phase from 11/2016 to 04/2018 they were funded by the *German Research Foundation (DFG)*<sup>37</sup>. Now – in the pilot phase – they are funded for two and

---

<sup>31</sup> <https://sui-generis.ch>

<sup>32</sup> <https://opengenderjournal.de>

<sup>33</sup> <https://www.fu-berlin.de/en/einrichtungen/verwaltung/cedis/index.html>

<sup>34</sup> <https://meta-journal.net>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.zbw.eu>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.iree.eu>

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.dfg.de>



a half more years jointly by the ZBW – Leibniz Information Center for Economics and the Joachim Herz Foundation<sup>38</sup>. Both institutions currently cover all costs for this journal. For the future they aim to build an international financial consortium with several institutional (probably also individual) members who pay on a monthly basis. Ideally, IREE will be completely financed by the consortium and thus stay independent from any publishers and without charging any APCs. They use some infrastructure developed by the ZBW such as EconStor and the ZBW Journal Data Archive<sup>39</sup>. They are independent from any publishers and it is their goal to keep it this way.

### 2.2.3 National Collaborative funding and publishing

**HRČAK**<sup>40</sup> (Croatia) – Portal of Croatian Scientific and Professional Journals is a system that provides a platform for journal management and publishing in Open Access. SRCE - University of Zagreb, University Computing Centre<sup>41</sup> develops and maintains HRČAK publishing platform (SRCE is funded from the state budget in the partnership with the community of editors, librarians and information specialists). Journal editors and publishers use HRČAK free of charge and are responsible for the journal's content on HRČAK. The National and University Library in Zagreb provides DOIs to selected journals (11 journals at the moment but the plans are that they will include more journals). Academic and research librarians skilled in Open Access publishing provide training and support. 368 active Open Access journals are included in HRČAK at the present offering published content, as well as 38 journals which stopped their publishing. Most of the journals are non-APC journals, still about 20 journals introduced APC recently.

**Journal.fi**<sup>42</sup> (Finland) is a new journal management and publishing service provided by the Federation of *Finnish Learned Societies*<sup>43</sup>. The site features 75 Finnish scholarly journals, with more to come. Journal.fi is designed to meet the needs of authors, readers, publishers and funders in the age of Open Access journals. The service is using the *Open Journal Systems 3.1*<sup>44</sup> software. The next step will be a funding model for domestic Open Access scholarly journals. Finnish scholarly journals generate income mostly from three different sources: (1) ⅓ from subscription fees (those not yet Open Access); (2) ⅓ from a learned society, eg. *Sosiologia* journal gets funding from the Westermarck society; and (3) ⅓ state subsidy. The aim of this initiative is to find funding for journals so they can easily flip to immediate Open Access: if there will be no replacement of the funding that comes from subscription fees, many journals cannot be published any more. Most of the journals are published 4-6 times per year; the number of published articles varies between 4–20 per issue. In order to make Open Access the standard in Finland, stakeholders decided to create a consortium that funds Open Access-publishing, and a consortial budget to be collected from the stakeholders that benefit from the existence of these journals. Mainly the funds will be collected from HEIs (including universities and universities of applied sciences) as they get part of their

---

<sup>38</sup> <https://www.joachim-herz-stiftung.de/en/who-we-are/joachim-herz/>

<sup>39</sup> <http://journaldata.zbw.eu>

<sup>40</sup> <https://hrcak.srce.hr>

<sup>41</sup> <https://www.srce.unizg.hr/en/university-zagreb-university-computing-centre-srce>

<sup>42</sup> <https://journal.fi>

<sup>43</sup> <https://tsv.fi>

<sup>44</sup> <https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs>

funding based on the amount of their staff's publications. This is a collaboration of journals, the Academy of Finland, the Ministry of Education and Culture, university libraries, libraries for universities of applied sciences, and publishers. Early enthusiasm with the proposed model was dampened by day-to-day operational issues and emerging conflicts. Negotiations are currently stalled due to concerns about costs for universities and their libraries. However, there is agreement that this model is preferable to one based on APCs

**Episciences.org**<sup>45</sup> (France) provides a technical platform of peer-reviewing; its purpose is to promote the emergence of “epijournals” or overlay journals, namely Open Access electronic journals taking their contents from preprints deposited in open archives such as arXiv<sup>46</sup> or HAL<sup>47</sup>. The project proposes an alternative to existing economic models, without competing with traditional publishers. It offers a reliable, easy and fast open access publishing venue, which is free for readers and authors. The platform benefits from a strong commitment of multiple French public institutions, mostly through an in-kind support for editorial support, software development and “Epi-committees”. Epi-committees are made up of experts who are recognised in their field. Their role is to promote the creation of editorial committees which set up new epi-journals and then to monitor the content and quality levels of such journals. The IT infrastructure and some code libraries are shared with the HAL open archive.

**The Consortium for Norwegian SSH Open Access Journals**<sup>48</sup> (Norway) has been administering a new model for transformation from subscription-based journals to Open Access in Norwegian on social sciences and humanities since 2018. The selection process for the journals 2018–2020 was based on an application where the society/publisher filled out an application form and estimated costs to be covered. The submitted journals were then subject to an evaluation by a committee consisting of scholars (university deans and rectors) from both the humanities and social sciences. The library consortium administration at Unit was initially given a clear mandate to negotiate with the publishers. Of 41 applicants, 25 journals were granted support and became openly available in 2018. This arrangement runs for a three-year period starting 2018. The model is in the process of evaluation, which will form a basis for a possible future funding model. There is funding in place mainly from The Research Council of Norway, but also from the Ministry of Education and Research, and most of the universities and university colleges in Norway contribute. The latter agreed to give a sum comparable to their former subscription costs for these journals. The Ministry has requested that other institutions (e.g. research institutes, public libraries) also contribute with funding equivalent to that of their previous subscription costs.

**SCIndeks**<sup>49</sup> (Serbia) is a publishing platform and a full-text database combined with a national citation index owned and maintained by the NGO CEON/CEES (Centre for Evaluation in Education and Science)<sup>50</sup>. The current concept of the platform was defined in 2009 and it was fully publicly funded until 2014. In 2015, the business model changed due to the cessation of public funding,

---

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.episciences.org>

<sup>46</sup> <https://arxiv.org>

<sup>47</sup> <https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr>

<sup>48</sup> <https://www.openaccess.no/english/humsam>

<sup>49</sup> <http://scindeks.ceon.rs>

<sup>50</sup> <https://www.ceon.rs>

and the platform is currently funded through subscriptions paid by publishers (publishers subscribe to a specific service package) and funds raised by the owner through projects. The platform covers 211 unique titles, out of which 169 are available in full text, and 76 are covered by screening for plagiarism; for 137 journals information on bibliometric performance and views and downloads is provided. The subscribing journals have access to the bibliometric analysis performed annually by CEON/CEES, which covers 572 Serbian journals. For Serbian journals, SCIndeks<sup>51</sup> is currently the main gateway to DOAJ (66 journals are indexed in DOAJ through SCIndeks). And over 8,000 articles with funding information are harvested by OpenAIRE<sup>52</sup> and BASE.

## 2.2.4 International collaborative funding and publishing

**Open Library of Humanities (OLH)**<sup>53</sup> (UK) is a charitable organisation dedicated to publishing Open Access scholarship without APCs. The OLH publishing platform supports academic journals from across the humanities disciplines, as well as hosting its own multidisciplinary journal. Launched by Martin Eve and Caroline Edwards in 2015, the OLH to date has received two substantial grants from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation<sup>54</sup>, and has established a sustainable business model with its partner libraries.

The model proposed by the OLH is one where publication costs do not fall on the institution or researchers but are instead financed collaboratively through an international library consortium, where each member pays an annual fee according to the country and the size of the institution. Reducing and distributing the costs of publication across its members, with an economy of scale that improves as more institutions join. The international consortium of libraries is comprised of more than 200 institutions that collectively fund the platform including Harvard, Cambridge, Yale, Princeton, and many others.

OLH collaborates with member libraries and the OLH Academic Board which together vote on the inclusion of new journals. They are also in partnership with *LingOA*<sup>55</sup> and *Ubiquity Press*<sup>56</sup> which publish some of their flipped journals and provide long-term sustainability for these. In addition, the OLH is also currently in partnership with *Liverpool University Press*<sup>57</sup> with whom they publish two journals: *Quaker Studies*<sup>58</sup> and *Francosphères*<sup>59</sup>.

**Annual Reviews**<sup>60</sup> is a non-profit publishing organization (USA) that publishes 52 review journals across the biomedical and life sciences, physical and social sciences. For 2020, Annual Reviews will

---

<sup>51</sup> <https://scindeks.ceon.rs>

<sup>52</sup> <https://www.openaire.eu>

<sup>53</sup> <https://www.openlibhums.org>

<sup>54</sup> <https://mellon.org>

<sup>55</sup> <https://www.lingoa.eu>

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.ubiquitypress.com>

<sup>57</sup> <https://www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk>

<sup>58</sup> <https://online.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/loi/quaker>

<sup>59</sup> <https://online.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk/loi/franc>

<sup>60</sup> <https://www.annualreviews.org>

introduce ‘Subscribe to Open’<sup>61</sup>, an Open Access program that aims to transition existing transactional relationships between libraries and publishers to Open Access support - leveraging the economics, workflows and relationships of subscriptions to sustainably fund content. The key features of Subscribe to Open for library participation include:

- A commitment to Open Access for a key scholarly resource;
- Financial incentives for institutions to participate;
- A sustainable long-term plan for Open Access journal publication; and
- A process consistent with institutional procurement policies.

Each year, subscribers will be offered Subscribe to Open titles at a 5% discount on the price of the regular (gated) subscription price. If all current subscribers participate, securing the funds required for publication, Annual Reviews will make that year’s content available Open Access. If participation levels are not sufficient — that is, if some institutions choose not to participate or delay renewing — Annual Reviews will exercise the option of not making the journal Open Access, obligating institutions who have not committed to receive the content to subscribe at the regular (undiscounted) price.

As the participation of all current subscribers in Subscribe to Open is required to open the content, this program is the only mechanism through which an institution can ensure access to new journal content. It allows libraries to utilize existing subscription payments towards supporting Open Access publishing, rather than relying on the availability of dedicated Open Access funds. The offer will be repeated each year, and Annual Reviews will request a moving three-year statement of intention to participate in Subscribe to Open to optimize planning for maintaining the journals Open Access.

Subscribe to Open will be introduced in 2019 for the 2020 subscription year, covering five Annual Reviews titles. If this is successful, the program will be refined and expanded to include more titles in subsequent years.

**Knowledge Unlatched** (KU)<sup>62</sup> (Germany) is another example which provides a central place for libraries, institutions and publishers to collaborate. KU raises support from the library community, inviting libraries to ‘pledge’ their support for an APC-free Open Access model. Provided KU raises enough support, the publisher agrees to make the journal(s) Open Access free of any APCs (within a certain output level) and will instead receive payment from the library community via KU. Typically, the approaches are data-driven, looking at:

- Historic submission and publication data for each institution and their affiliated authors.
- Historic sales-data and subscription data.
- General interests. Etc.

---

<sup>61</sup> <https://www.annualreviews.org/page/subscriptions/subscribe-to-open>

<sup>62</sup> <http://knowledgeunlatched.org>

To date, 23 journals were made Open Access via this approach (since early 2018), APC-free (all pre-financed) for a three-year period. In addition, KU is now working with Berghahn Journals<sup>63</sup> on a subscribe-to-open model to flip a total of 13 journals in Anthropology.

**SCOAP<sup>3</sup>**<sup>64</sup> (International) has since its creation in 2014 become a partnership of over three thousand libraries, key funding agencies and research centres in 43 countries and 3 intergovernmental organisations. Working with leading publishers, SCOAP<sup>3</sup> has converted key journals in the field of high-energy physics (HEP) to Open Access at no cost for authors. SCOAP<sup>3</sup> centrally pays publishers for costs involved in providing Open Access, publishers in turn reduce subscription fees to all their customers, who can redirect these funds to contribute to SCOAP<sup>3</sup>. Each country contributes in a way commensurate to its research output in the field. In addition, existing Open Access journals are also centrally supported, removing any existing financial barrier for authors. The SCOAP<sup>3</sup> model is based on a central administration which started with the APC model as a part of the basic contractual framework with publishers, but moved away from the APC focus in 2017 and now negotiates with publishers total amounts for the conversion of the entire journal content. Participating libraries redirect the money, previously used for subscribing the SCOAP<sup>3</sup> journals, into a common fund, from which the publication costs are paid. Respecting the diverse landscape amongst the SCOAP<sup>3</sup> partners, there are several different country-internal mechanisms to steer the financial contributions of partners to SCOAP<sup>3</sup> fund such as central payment by a single funder, libraries contributing exactly the amounts previously used for subscriptions, libraries paying based on the institutions research output, or a combination of all the above mentioned.

**Language Science Press**<sup>65</sup> (Germany) produces ~30 books/year in the field of linguistics (monographs and edited volumes). Each book has to appear in a series, of which they have 21, ranging from phonetics to computational linguistics. Each series is autonomous. LangSciPress is funded by a network of 103 institutions worldwide, each providing 1000€/year. Funding is handled via Knowledge Unlatched. The publisher's estimated costs per book are at around 3500€, and they can arrive at this rather low figure by streamlining their workflows and by close integration with the community, e.g. via community proofreading. They have a network of about 1000 linguists who support them. Their IT is hosted by CeDiS at the Freie Universität Berlin<sup>66</sup>. They are happy to share their content, software and business processes with the whole world, e.g. the *Cookbook for Open Access books*<sup>67</sup>.

**transcript OPEN Library Political Science**<sup>68</sup> (Germany) is a pilot project launched in 2018 by the National Contact Point Open Access OA2020-DE<sup>69</sup> in cooperation with the transcript publishing house and Knowledge Unlatched and supported by the Political Science Information Service (FID

---

<sup>63</sup> <https://berghahnjournals.com>

<sup>64</sup> <https://scoap3.org>

<sup>65</sup> <http://langsci-press.org>

<sup>66</sup> <https://www.cedis.fu-berlin.de>

<sup>67</sup> <https://zenodo.org/record/1286925>

<sup>68</sup> <https://www.transcript-publishing.com/open-library-politikwissenschaft>

<sup>69</sup> <https://www.oa2020-de.org>

Pollux) at Bremen State and University Library (Germany)<sup>70</sup>. The aim of the pilot project is the development of a publisher and library equally manageable, transparent and economically sustainable Open Access e-book business model. This means that instead of buying the e-books, the participating libraries enable the Open Access publication of all forthcoming books "Political Science at transcript 2019" (20 titles) via a fee in the crowdfunding model. Through that, the library budgets unlash the titles to the benefit of everybody instead of supporting isolated access for single institutions. It's a collaboration between a publisher (transcript), intermediary (Knowledge Unlatched), Special Information Service (FID Pollux) and participating libraries.

## 2.2.5 Collaborative Publication Support Services

For example, the network *OJS-de.net*<sup>71</sup> connects OJS service providers at German-speaking universities and research institutions. It is an association of infrastructures providing OJS for several research Open Access journals. Software developers at these institutions expand OJS and adapt it to the needs of German-language journals.

*CeDiS (Center for Digital Systems)*<sup>72</sup>, Freie Universität Berlin (Germany), is another example that supports Open Access publishing by providing software solutions enabling publishing independently from publishing companies (*Open Journal Systems*<sup>73</sup>, *Open Monograph Press*<sup>74</sup>). CeDiS offers hosting of academic journals using OJS software and provides software support and training of editorial staff as well as networking with other hosting providers and relevant infrastructure institutions. The support services are free of charge to the editorial staff members affiliated with the Freie Universität. For external partners hosting services are provided at cost price. The services of CeDiS are covered by the overall budget of Freie Universität. As such, the service offered may be viewed as part of a business model of academic journals. CeDiS provides hosting service, whereas responsibility for covering the costs of editorial work / publishing costs stays with the journals.

---

<sup>70</sup> <https://www.pollux-fid.de>

<sup>71</sup> <https://www.ojs-de.net>

<sup>72</sup> <http://www.cedis.fu-berlin.de/services/e-publishing>

<sup>73</sup> <https://pkp.sfu.ca/ojs>

<sup>74</sup> <https://pkp.sfu.ca/omp>

## 3 | THE PUBLISHING LANDSCAPE

### 3.1 What can be considered sustainable?

There are many factors and aspects when considering sustainability, for example:

1) Financial aspects such as funding, establishing a balance of costs vs earnings and cash flow. 2) Human and technical resources. 3) Time is also a factor in assessing sustainability, which is often itself dependent on other factors and aspects. E.g. what is a suitable time window?

Another important point is sustainability for whom. In order to be truly sustainable all sides need to be balanced. The supply side needs to cover costs and be able to keep up with new demands and developments. The demand side needs affordable and reliable services. And all stakeholders need a stable, scalable, dependable and well-functioning market that enables high quality and efficient dissemination of research and scientific results.

### 3.2 Current issues facing users/initiatives/institutions, funders and policy makers

**Users:** User uptake of non-APC based publishing options has been inhibited by a number of issues, which in turn has an influence on the sustainability of (especially) emerging initiatives. Although some of these issues are directly related to uptake levels of Open Access publishing in general, such as the misconception of Open Access publishing being of lower quality, non-APC publishers face some additional problems. One, ironically, seems to be caused exactly by the fact that these outlets do not charge APCs - leaving researchers to wonder whether it is possible to deliver a qualitative editorial process if not supported by APCs. This misperception is enforced by a general ignorance or invisibility of non-APC based business models. Constructions such as the library subsidy model remain largely unknown to individual researchers.

**New and emerging publishing initiatives:** The publishing initiatives themselves face a number of challenges as well. One of the most mentioned problems is that it remains difficult for new and emerging initiatives to establish themselves as a trustworthy brand. Even when stepping away from traditional and biased measuring mechanisms such as the Journal Impact Factor, proving impact and trustworthiness requires indexation and traffic towards the article/outlet. For this, inevitably, a level of quantity needs to be achieved - which in its turn can be difficult with limited infrastructure and staff, provided that certain quality standards are to be maintained. One of the obstacles frequently mentioned by non-APC publishing initiatives themselves is the limitation of grant funding. While in most cases necessary at start-up phase, it is often reported that chasing grants is time-consuming in relation to the actual outcome (i.e. short, limited grants). Another issue reported is the lack of quality staff, or at least the funding to employ them. For tech and administrative support, there's often no budget to hire full time qualified staff. Due to the scale of many publishing initiatives, a lack of leverage power is also an issue. In negotiations with libraries (e.g. when establishing library subsidy models), or with policy makers - these small initiatives do



not have the same lobby power as the ‘big ones’. The lack of knowledge about non-APC business models (as mentioned above), proves to be an additional challenge when communicating to researchers. Small initiatives are often met with distrust, not only regarding their business model in general (how to deliver quality), but also related to their funding sources.

**Institutions:** Libraries and institutions often have acquisition rules and systems built or adapted to the traditional subscription way of publishing. In many cases this can serve as an obstacle for non-APC and other alternative publishing models. An example that illustrates this is several libraries reporting their acquisitions systems do not allow financial support for an open and free journal. When the same journal does not charge an APC, there is no transaction to justify a payment, making it difficult for the library to provide funding for the journal. In addition, institutions and consortia are not rigged to handle the different business models, or they often lack sufficient resources to manage a large number of small publishers and initiatives. Establishing and maintaining workflows for handling and administration of agreements with multiple small publishers with just one or a handful of journals can be time consuming and work intensive. With a surge of new publishers and publishing initiatives, it can be difficult to properly evaluate the quality and select the most scientifically relevant publication outlets for an institution to support.

Much has been said about the use of Journal Impact Factor, and other metrics, in research assessment and evaluation. Even with a growing number of institutions expressing support for alternative forms of research evaluation not focused on the quality of the publication channel, such as signing the *DORA declaration*<sup>75</sup>, the majority of institutions still have a clear preference for traditional publication models and long-established journals when assessing research.

The current acquisition budgets of most institutional libraries are mainly allocated to existing agreements, leaving little room for new publication models. It can be challenging to reallocate funds to new initiatives and business models on a large or medium scale.

**Funders and policy makers:** The vast number of existing and emerging publication channels can present a challenge when it comes to evaluation and selection in terms of support and funding. With the plethora of publishers, initiatives, platforms and journals it is a time and resource demanding task to keep up to date on recent developments and new players entering the field. It can be challenging to provide a framework for funding with the necessary stability, predictability and consistency needed to allow publishers and initiatives to commit required resources and enable them to plan sufficiently ahead.

Another issue, however real or perceived, is how the evaluation of research is either based on or influenced by the standing and quality of the specific journal or publication channel it is published in. It is still a widespread view that Open Access publication channels often contain research and papers of lower quality. This can especially be an issue for non-APC publication channels, even though the typical arguments for this reasoning is often based upon the notion of a connection between low rejection rates and the payment of an APC, as well as between high rejection rates and high quality. This mistaken impression of the low standing of non-APC and collaborative Open

---

<sup>75</sup> DORA, Declaration on Research Assessment <https://sfedora.org>



Access publication channels can be strengthened by the fact that these are often relatively new and not yet as well established as their traditional publishing counterparts.

### 3.3 Suggestions from the OpenAIRE Workshop to mitigate these issues

**Users:** In general, just as with all Open Access publishing, trusted bodies that pre-select and evaluate the quality of publishing outlets remain largely under the radar and need more support and visibility - as well as an increase in usability so that individual researchers can find their way to these control mechanisms.

One can assume that knowledge about non-APC business models, would increase demand for and uptake of these constructions. One suggestion from the Bielefeld workshop which received a lot of support from the participating community was the establishment of a marketplace for non-APC Open Access publishing initiatives describing the scale, disciplinary reach, whether it's a new initiative or continuation of an existing one, technology used, financial aspects and governance.

**New and emerging publishing initiatives:** The duration of grant funding should be longer, at least initial funding. Especially in early stages predictable funding would be beneficial and provide needed stability. As one initiative expressed it: *“Funding for one year is not sufficient, any decent business plan starts from a five-year perspective”*. In many cases, shared and permanent infrastructural support would be more cost-effective. Pooling of resources should be considered in order to serve multiple initiatives. Knowledge sharing and administrative assistance are other potentially valuable aids. Many small publishers and publishing initiatives could benefit from joining forces, perhaps even experiment with joint venture/meta publisher arrangements.

**Institutions & funders and policymakers:** The potential benefit of trusted bodies to function as a seal of approval in terms of legitimacy or the quality of the publication channels, i.e. editorial work and peer review process, is not only something that would aid researchers and end-users. It could also be of considerable help to research institutions and research funders in acquisition, evaluation or funding processes. As funders and institutions move towards a more direct funding of publication channels through paying for their researchers right to publish in a specific publication channel, the legitimacy and validity of the publication channel becomes even more essential. The effort needed to perform such an evaluation, with the required rigor and care, in a timely fashion takes both resources and expertise. It is also a task that is well suited for a joint and collaborative approach, as opposed to each organization having to repeat the same process and evaluate the same publication channel as many others have already evaluated.

TABLE 1 – SUSTAINABILITY MATRIX: OVERVIEW/ABSTRACT OF STAKEHOLDERS, ISSUES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS.

Level	Inhibiting factors for sustainable non-APC publishing	Possible solution
User	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reputation/status of initiative Evaluation/selection</li> <li>- (Mis)conceptions about OA and quality Funding (not all quality OA journals are APC based, lots of people don't know this) Funding bias?</li> <li>- OA status: how open is it?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trusted bodies (DOAJ, OA2020, SCOSS, etc.) could assess new initiatives</li> <li>- Increase knowledge</li> <li>- Marketplace</li> <li>- Clear funding streams</li> </ul>
Publishers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Branding ('Get verified') - difficult for new initiatives to establish a reputation and visibility</li> <li>- Suitable for scale-up                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resources, staff, infrastructure</li> <li>- Quality vs quantity</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Stability - Short term grant funding is not enough, lots of effort go into chasing small funds</li> <li>- Free riding - library subsidy model (some pay, and everybody gets access)</li> <li>- Non-APC business model is invisible for end user                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Neutral funding? Conflict of interest?</li> <li>- Perceived quality issues, especially for non-APC based initiatives</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Limited leverage power for grassroots initiatives                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Policymakers (Difficult to present a united front)</li> <li>- Libraries-deal making power</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Visibility towards end users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperative meta-publisher / joint venture for smaller publishers</li> <li>- 'Subscribe to open' model</li> <li>- Institutional support for staff and infrastructure (libraries?)</li> <li>- Find a unique selling point</li> <li>- Expert guidance for SEO and indexing</li> <li>- Exporting working models</li> <li>- Pooling resources</li> </ul>
Institution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acquisition policy based on traditional publishing                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Acquisition systems not rigged for non-APC</li> <li>- Lobby power</li> <li>- Workload/flow</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Budget allocation and limited available funds</li> <li>- Research evaluation culture</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trusted bodies (DOAJ, OA2020, SCOSS, etc.) to assess new initiatives</li> <li>- Evaluation criteria/requirements (alt)Metrics</li> <li>- Role of libraries (trust in their discretionary capability)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evaluation and selection of non-APC initiatives</li> <li>- Willingness to help with staff and infrastructure vs capability (in time of budget cuts)</li> </ul>	
Funder/ Policymaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Concern about OA</li> <li>- Funding               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short term vs long term</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Quality vs quantity</li> <li>- Research evaluation culture</li> <li>- Evaluation and selection of initiatives</li> <li>- Reputation of initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Trusted bodies (DOAJ, OA2020, SCOSS, etc.) could assess new initiatives</li> <li>- Evaluation criteria/requirements</li> <li>- Public scholcomm infrastructure</li> </ul>

## 4 | CONCLUSIONS

Discussions throughout the OpenAIRE workshop on “*Sustainable non-APC Open Access Publishing Models*” showcased the variety of challenges collaborative and non-APC publishers are facing. Flexibility, variety and experimentation in publishing models and their implementation provides a wide range of possible routes towards a sustainable model for Open Access publishing. Another issue that became clear during the workshop was that different publishing models face different challenges. And that in today’s heterogeneous publishing landscape - in scale, discipline, business models and per region - no one model will fit all disciplines and overcome all obstacles. It is therefore considered beneficial to cultivate different Open Access publishing models in an attempt to maintain a robust and diverse research publishing ecosystem that is able to cater to the needs of all fields of research and to all stakeholders. A stronger awareness and concerted support effort for collaborative and non-APC publishing models, could foster sustainable and competitive alternatives to APC-based Open Access publishing.

Despite differences in both models and approaches, some challenges were shared by many of the participants of the workshop, such as securing appropriate funding and resources, visibility, scalability, predictability and long-term development.

There are three main resources that are vital for sustainable collaborative and non-APC publishing:

- 1) Institutions such as the government, funders and universities for financial and technical support.
- 2) The community as a means of social cohesion and academic support.
- 3) Reputable publishing standards and practices.

Cooperation and pooling of resources is one-way small publishers and initiatives can achieve better visibility and scalability, but also improve their standing in terms of financial support. Shared resources and information can help alleviate administrative challenges, but perhaps even more important, simplify funding streams and make it easier for funding institutions to provide financial support through memberships/donations/etc.

### 4.1 Recommendations

#### 1. Funding - Endorsement and awareness

Funders should acknowledge and endorse collaborative and non-APC Open Access publishing as a valid and equivalent road to Open Access. This includes making researchers aware of the option of non-APC publication channels in policies and mandates, as non-APC initiatives are still a relatively invisible alternative. The funders of cOAlition S have listed as one of their principles that “*cOAlition S acknowledges the existing range of high-quality Open Access journals and platforms and the importance of a diversity of business models, including Open Access publications venues that do not charge Article Processing Charges (APCs)*”. Endorsement of non-APC initiatives is also necessary to improve their perceived reputation and will raise awareness of alternatives to the prevalent APC-based Open Access publishing model.

An important issue in this regard is the opportunity for more transparency throughout all research publishing models. Clarification of offered publication services and the structure of the initiatives can inform the community and funders, providing an opportunity for more openness.

Since it's the aim of cOAlition S and Plan S to help make the nature and prices of Open Access publishing services more transparent, whilst supporting the diversity of business models, there is a strong incentive for funders to support and endorse non-APC initiatives. Funders should be aware of their agency to empower and promote good practices in scholarly communication.

Another measure to address the issues of reputation is the use of trusted bodies to evaluate existing and new publication channels to assist researchers, research funders and research performing institutions navigate a constantly growing and evolving publishing market by providing quality assured publication channels.

Institutions and funders can also aid in the sustainability of collaborative and non-APC publishing by providing more stability through medium- and long-term funding. Currently large amounts of funding are being directed towards APCs, with the aim of providing Open Access publishing options for researchers. A lack of attention on other options, such as non-APC, can result in strong incentives for rigging systems towards an APC based system with potential adverse and detrimental effects on research publishing and evaluation. In turn, this can make alternative Open Access publication models vulnerable to under-development. Predictable and stable funding opportunities will allow non-APC publishers to set up the needed infrastructure or give the journal/platform a chance to build the reputation necessary to meet the high standards of the research community. Inclusiveness is key here, for different content types that does not only include articles but also books and platforms, and for different levels of maturity and size. In addition, infrastructure is often insufficiently funded for proper or full long-term development.

## *2. Quality Control - Sound publication practices*

New publishing initiatives face challenges when it comes to gaining attention and a reputation for good quality. Since academic publishing is susceptible to high ranking and recognizability, new initiatives struggle to build the same credibility fast enough to survive. In addition, non-APC publishing models face prejudice against the perceived quality of Open Access publishing in general, and Free-To-Publish Open Access in particular. Indexing, support and approval of non-APC publication channels by trusted bodies and research evaluation organizations could increase trust and visibility as it will make it easier to identify and select high quality journals. Ideally this should be done by a standardized and transparent process, according to a set of universal criteria for healthy editorial practices and robust peer-review processes. In addition, this could also serve as a guide to help researchers find suitable, relevant and trustworthy publication channels easier and with less effort. To investigate the development of such evaluation standards and trusted bodies, as well as how to best engage the wider research community, is beyond the scope and resources of this report. It is therefore recommended that this topic is explored further.

## *3. Strengthen partnership and community*

In contrast to the large, commercial academic publishers, collaborative and non-APC publication channels often lack the leveraging and lobbying power to influence policies and publishing culture. The lack of an unambiguous and united form to present the field leaves it more opaque to funders, institutions and researchers. Partnership and communities can provide tools and opportunities to determine a clear path towards a sustainable future and help give smaller Open Access publishers more leveraging power with funders, institutions and policy makers.

Shared infrastructure, centralized services and platforms can lower the strain on, often, limited resources and alleviate the need for each publisher or initiative to cover the wide range of expertise needed in-house. In addition, a shared community-based voice will increase the impact both in the academic world and with funders looking for possible alternative publishing possibilities.

The discussions in the breakout groups also made it clear that there is a need for a place or platform to share and discuss best practices, ideas and expertise within the collaborative and non-APC publishing community.

## 4.2 Next Steps

As a final recommendation this report would suggest some next steps and items to follow up.

The potential in developing community wide standards for evaluating and assessing research publication channels, and implementation of trusted bodies, is something that should motivate further investigation and exploration. As this task would require extensive support and backing from major players and several stakeholders, it is far beyond the scope and resources of this report.

One of the topics discussed at the Bielefeld workshop was the possibility of a Best Practice guide to non-APC and collaborative publishing. This idea was met with anticipation and initially received a lot of backing and positive feedback. But as the discussions progressed and more insight was gained into the practical aspects of publishing for publishers, initiatives and platforms the complexity of such a task became apparent. This complexity can also be seen in the inherent difficulty of categorizing and establishing a clear nomenclature for different Open Access and non-APC publishing models. It is therefore the conclusion of this report that the creation of a Best Practice guide could be a further community task bringing its wide and diverse perspectives together.

## 5 | ANNEX 1- TOWS STRATEGIC ALTERNATIVES MATRIX

Relevant participants of the workshop “*Sustainable non-APC Open Access Publishing Models*” were asked to submit a SWOT for their organization/initiative. These were then analysed, in kind contribution by Katia Corsi and Federico Rotondo.<sup>76</sup> The aggregated results are presented in the tables below.

**TABLE 2 – A1.1 ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS: COLLABORATIONS, STAFFING, PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS**

<p><b>Internal Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The network of stakeholders involved and shared workload.</li> <li>2. Partnership with publishers/editorial boards, the trust of partners and reputation of journals.</li> <li>3. The community cohesion and clear researchers roles: strong support from disciplinary networks.</li> <li>4. Strong commitment.</li> <li>5. Cooperative effort, efficient cooperation and editorial processes, motivated personal, large user base, mutual reinforcement effect, not dependant on collective behaviour.</li> <li>6. Quality control and visibility.</li> <li>7. Autonomy and independence, community driven, distributed, flexible and easy to adjust, transparent and compliant with Plan S.</li> <li>8. Mission driven: high on OA value.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities and minimize threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Collaborations and partnerships</li> <li>2. New approaches to research assessment and evaluation, e.g. Article Level Metrics, etc.</li> <li>3. Community ownership and governance</li> <li>4. Funders recognize and endorse non-APC OA publishers as a valid and full road to OA publishing</li> </ol>
<p><b>Internal Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Limited staff and lack of expertise, especially technical.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Strategies that minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities and avoiding threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Peer support and learning</li> <li>2. Joint financial, marketing and legal services</li> </ol>

<sup>76</sup> a) Katia Corsi, Ph.D., Full Professor in Business Administration and Accounting, Department of Economics and Business, University of Sassari (Italy), E-mail: [kcorsi@uniss.it](mailto:kcorsi@uniss.it) b) Federico Rotondo, Ph.D., Associate Professor in Business Administration and Accounting, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Sassari (Italy), E-mail: [frotondo@uniss.it](mailto:frotondo@uniss.it)

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Lack of training for editors, lack of online support materials.</li> <li>3. Uncertainty of contracts and staff availability, precarity of the editors' working situation.</li> <li>4. Scalability.</li> <li>5. Non-profit laws limitations.</li> <li>6. Lack of policy makers support.</li> <li>7. Lack of legal support.</li> <li>8. Difficulties for long-term development.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3. Collective advocacy to policy makers and decision makers</li> </ol>
--	---

TABLE 3 – A1.2 ORGANIZATIONAL ASPECTS: COLLABORATIONS, STAFFING, PROCESSES AND WORKFLOWS

<p><b>Internal Strengths</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Born digital: no legacy infrastructure.</li> <li>2. Adaptable Open Source software.</li> <li>3. Flexible editorial workflows, flexibility of services, and tools.</li> <li>4. Low technical threshold.</li> <li>5. Well documented APIs.</li> <li>6. OpenAIRE compatibility.</li> <li>7. Interoperable metadata, interoperability with other systems.</li> <li>8. Technical support available.</li> <li>9. Reliable technical infrastructure.</li> <li>10. Creative Commons licenses.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Strategies that use strengths to maximize opportunities and minimize threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrichment of publications.</li> <li>2. An incubator model that offers tools and expertise in editorial and publishing activities, provides flexibility, and makes it easier to collaborate with different partners.</li> <li>3. Use of Free and Open Source Software</li> <li>4. Joint IT/technical support</li> <li>5. Compatibility and interoperability with other platforms and systems.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Internal Weaknesses</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Metadata not fully open.</li> <li>2. Outdated interfaces.</li> <li>3. Lack of advanced publishing features.</li> <li>4. Lack of archiving and preservation services.</li> <li>5. Infrastructure, upgrading is difficult.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Strategies that minimize weaknesses by taking advantage of opportunities and avoiding threats</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Enrichment of publications.</li> <li>2. Joint IT/technical support</li> </ol>