

## Response to BOAI steering committee concerning multilingualism in Gold OA publishing environment

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On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI), the BOAI2020 steering committee asked for input from colleagues in all academic fields and regions of the world, to support the work on a new set of recommendations. We contribute from the perspective of the Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication ([www.helsinki-initiative.org](http://www.helsinki-initiative.org)) by addressing the proposed question 3:

*Do some strategies (methods, models) to advance OA have harmful longer-term consequences? If some strategies do cause harm, which strategies and which harms? Which strategies to advance OA positively foster (or at least avoid conflicts with) longer-term goals?*

Research is international and it is important that researchers communicate their results to international expert audiences. But research, if communicated exclusively in English, risks not fully meeting all its missions and responsibilities toward society (Sivertsen, 2018). Various languages are needed to support locally relevant research as well as critical discussion and application of results of global research in local contexts (Kulczycki et al., 2020). Open access to publications in different languages is vital for reaching a broad range of users of research both within and beyond academia (Pölönen et al., 2021).

The long-term goal of the Helsinki Initiative is to ensure the continued availability of high quality research published in all languages needed across the world for effective communication of research knowledge within and beyond academia. Accordingly, the Helsinki Initiative aims to foster an academic culture that values multilingual communication and open access to scholarly publications in all languages.

Especially in non-English-speaking countries, national journals and book publishers, typically non-profit organisations such as learned societies or research institutions, play a unique role in scholarly communication by making research results available in national languages to all sectors of society (Late et al., 2020). Commercial publishers, let alone large international publishers, play a very small role because of limited market potential.

Our main concerns are twofold:

1. Funding model based on article processing charges (APC), which has emerged as the dominant funding model of international - and especially commercial - English language

Gold OA publishing, jeopardizes not only diversity, equity and inclusion but also quality of academic work.

2. Non-profit scholar-led publishers of journals and books in the various local and national languages across the world rely mainly on voluntary work of committed researchers and lack sufficient resources they need to maintain high standards of scholarly publishing and for sustainable open access transition. Therefore the Diamond OA model needs a sustainable funding mechanism.

While it was one of the original aims of the BOAI to remove access barriers constituted by subscription fees, it has been increasingly argued that APC constitutes publishing barriers for researchers from less resourceful countries, institutions and fields. It is also important to recognize that APC funding is basically possible only for English language journals, and that for journals publishing in almost all other languages the Diamond OA, which is free for both authors and readers, is the only practicable open access publishing model.

At the time of this analysis the DOAJ register included 16,806 Gold OA journals, of which 4,871 (29%) required APC from authors, and 16,806 (71%) were Diamond OA journals (Table 1). There are, however, marked language-based differences in the use of APC. While 48% of journals publishing only in English charge author payments, only 14% of journals publishing in multiple languages including English, and 12% of journals publishing solely in languages other than English charge APCs.

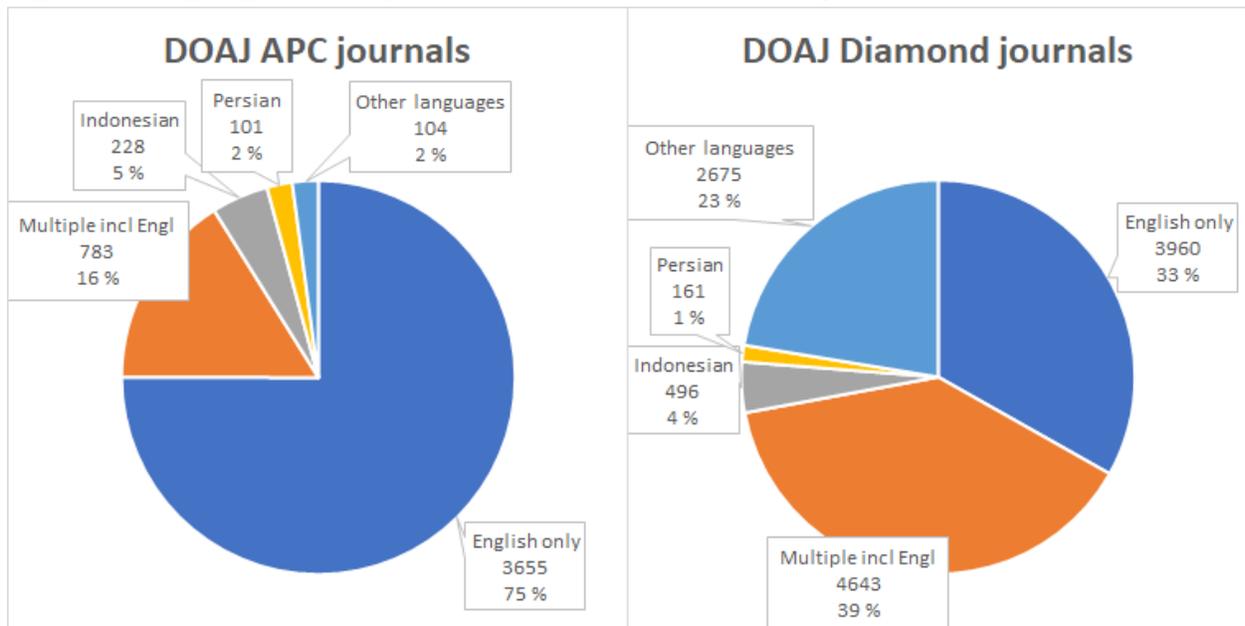
**Table 1: DOAJ journals according to publishing languages and funding model**

APC	English only		Multiple incl Engl		Other languages		All languages	
	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%	Count	%
Yes	3655	48 %	783	14 %	433	12 %	4871	29 %
No	3960	52 %	4643	86 %	3332	88 %	11935	71 %
All DOAJ	7615	100 %	5426	100 %	3765	100 %	16806	100 %

In practice, APC appears to be a viable and sustainable funding option mainly for journals targeted at international authorship and readership: 75% of all APC-based journals publish exclusively in English, and 16% publish in multiple languages including English (Figure 1). In addition, the APC-based Gold OA funding model is well established mainly for Indonesian and Persian language journals, which make up 5% and 2% of the APC journals respectively. Only 2% of the APC-based journals publish exclusively in other languages across the world.

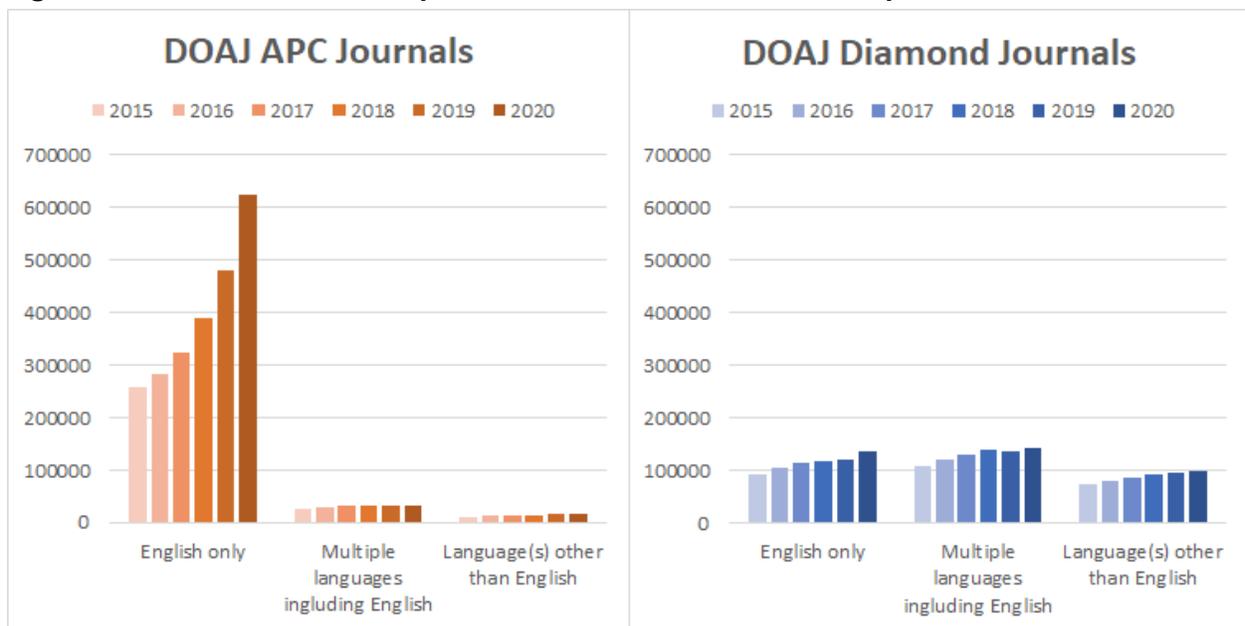
Diamond OA journals support a much more multilingual publishing environment: only 33% are English-only and 39% publish in multiple languages including English. Moreover, a total of 29% of Diamond OA journals publish exclusively in languages other than English (23% do so in languages other than Indonesian or Persian). This strongly suggests that internationally, APC is not a sustainable funding model for OA publishing in most languages, which are vital for the local relevance and outreach of research across the world.

**Figure 1: Language diversity of APC-based and Diamond Open Access Journals**



The APC-based funding model is also fastly increasing the dominance of the English language in the Gold OA publishing environment (Figure 2). The article output of English-only APC journals in DOAJ has increased 144% since 2015 (from 256220 articles in 2015 to 623935 articles in 2020 based on data from Crawford 2021). This is in stark contrast to English-only Diamond OA journals, which show a modest growth of 44%. Both the APC-based and Diamond OA journals publishing in multiple languages including English, as well as journals publishing exclusively in languages other than English, also show a growth only between 25% and 38%.

**Figure 2: Growth of article output in APC-based and Diamond Open Access Journals**



The APC-model has paved the way for a new oligopoly of international commercial Gold OA publishers, and not without serious concerns, as pointed out by Gunnar Sivertsen (2021):

- The transition to OA is consolidating the market control and increasing the profits of the largest journal publishers
- Installing payment on the same side as the pressure to publish makes publishers compete for volume rather than the quality of editorial procedures and contents
- Increasing worries in research communities about the quality of editorial procedures and contents
- New types of conflicts over quality standards between publishers and the editors and editorial boards of their journals.

The open science movement needs to promote stronger standards for APC-based publishing to prioritize quality over quantity.

New open access journals, megajournals and platforms are relevant alternatives for international journals with large pools of potential editors, reviewers, authors and readers. However, it is very difficult to replace established national or local language journals that strongly support and rely on small but committed local research communities. It is possible to facilitate their OA transition with platforms for OA journals, such as Journal.fi, but they also need support to maintain and develop publishing services. Open access movement should send a strong message to national and international stakeholders that non-profit Diamond OA publishing is critical for multilingualism and needs to be prioritized over the APC model (especially commercially-based) in public funding for open access.

Unlike many APC-based journals, Diamond OA journals mostly rely on voluntary work and lack professional editorial and technical support to meet the best technical standards of OA publishing, as exemplified by DOAJ or Plan S criteria (Bosman et al., 2021). English language APC-based journals also have the advantage of indexation in international commercial databases, such as Web of Science and Scopus, that consolidate their prestige in many evaluation and funding procedures (Aksnes & Sivertsen, 2019; Sanz-Casado et al., 2021). We fear that it is to the detriment of the entire open access movement if the Diamond OA journals are neglected and regarded as inferior journals because they are more popular in the peripheral or semi-peripheral countries, or serve only national and local audiences.

The European Union, for example, has designated 24 "official and working" languages. A European survey from 2012 showed that for the vast majority of Europeans their mother tongue is an official language of the country in which they reside (European Commission, 2013). However, 46 % of Europeans were not able to speak any foreign language well enough to hold a conversation, and only 38 % were able to do so in English (the most widely spoken foreign language).

The ultimate goal of BOAI is removing access barriers to scholarly literature to accelerate research, enrich education, and to share the learning. But if we promote open access without

multilingualism, we only go halfway. Broad access to research knowledge, interaction between science and society, and public understanding of science requires multilingual scholarly communication, science communication, and sustainable open access to publications in all languages. We suggest that promoting multilingualism and scholar-led non-profit publishing should be among the leading goals of new BOAI recommendations.

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