

News & Analysis

European Commission moves into publishing

The European Commission (EC) is looking to create its own open-access publishing platform for papers that emerge from its €80bn Horizon 2020 programme. At an open-science conference in Berlin at the end of March, the EC suggested that it wants to launch the platform later this year and has asked its Open Science Policy Platform to look into the move. The EC's platform would be similar to that launched last year by the Wellcome Trust, a UK-based biomedical charity.

Wellcome uses a publishing platform created by the UK-based company F1000Research, which charges authors up to \$1000 per article. Papers submitted to the platform are given a quick “sanity check” by its in-house editors, who then aim to post the articles on the platform within a few days. Peer review occurs post-publication, with authors being allowed to pick who reviews their paper and to decide whose names and reviews appear alongside the article.

Peter Suber, director of the Harvard Library Office for Scholarly Communication, says that the move by the EC is “encouraging”, particu-



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larly because the EC seems fine with researchers publishing their manuscripts on the platform rather than with conventional journals. “This is a signal from funders that they are willing to bypass high-prestige conventional journals and focus instead on the openness of access,” says Suber. “While some conventional publishers have objected, I don’t see any issue with it from the research side.”

Indeed, Wellcome is not the only funder to create its own publishing platform. At the end of March, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced that Gates Open Research will launch later this year. It will make research funded by the

Opening up

The European Commission is looking to create its own publishing platform modelled on a similar initiative from the Wellcome Trust.

foundation “available quickly and in a format supporting research integrity, reproducibility and transparency”, adding that papers published on its site would be open access and have an open-data policy allowing researchers to publish “any research outputs and data”.

Steven Hall, managing director of IOP Publishing, which publishes *Physics World*, says that there are a number of experiments in scientific publishing that feature different business models and different approaches to peer review. “While Wellcome has launched its new platform with F1000, it also supports *eLife* with its rigorous pre-publication peer review. Researchers will choose where to publish based on the quality of the service that a journal provides, including in its peer review, and the impact that it can help their research to achieve,” he says. “That’s one of the reasons that we are seeing such growth in hybrid open access, because it enables researchers to publish under the open-access business model in journals that they have long published in and trust.”

Michael Banks

Philanthropy

Brazil opens its first private research institute

The Brazilian filmmaker João Moreira Salles – whose family owns one of the largest banks in Brazil – has established a new institute in Rio de Janeiro that will support basic research across all sciences. Dubbed the Serrapilheira Institute, the name is inspired by the leaves that accumulate in the forest to act as a fertilizer. In a similar vein, it is hoped that Serrapilheira will help to fertilize Brazilian science.

While the family’s Moreira Salles Institute has been funding cultural projects across the country since 1992, Salles says that it is important to have a private institute exclusively supporting and publicizing science in Brazil. Serrapilheira will aim to fund new and innovative projects, with researchers doing high-quality



Claudio Andrade

Man with a plan
Filmmaker João Moreira Salles has set up Brazil’s first private science institution.

research rather than tackling issues facing the country. “We do not have the muscle to solve all the problems of Brazil,” Salles says.

The institute will be led by French geneticist Hugo Aguilaniu, who was chosen from 138 candidates as Serrapilheira’s founding director. “We seek scientific excellence and we want to support the best researchers, those able to come up with new ideas and ask good questions,” Aguilaniu says. “The focus will always be on young people, who will build the science of tomorrow.”

Meanwhile, Edgar Dutra Zanotto – a materials scientist from the Federal University of São Carlos – has been put in charge of the institute’s scientific council, which consists of 12 Brazilian and foreign scientists

who will be responsible for judging projects. According to Zanotto, support from the institute will be over the “long term” because it recognizes that research takes time. And unlike many researchers funded by government agencies, scientists at Serrapilheira will not be pressured to publish.

The annual budget of the institute will come from the returns – estimated to be around R\$17m per year – from a R\$350m (£90m) endowment from the family. “If this financial support proves useful for science, then our intention is to make new contributions in four or five years,” says Salles. It is estimated that some 20–25% of the institute’s budget will go on scientific outreach to help promote science as a career for students.

A call for research proposals is scheduled for later this year, with scientific outreach initiatives set to be funded from 2018.

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