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Editorial

## Plan S!



### 2020 is going to be a critical year for biomedical publishing in Europe!

On January 1st, 2020, the directives for Plan S, launched in September 2018 (<https://www.coalition-s.org/>) by the European Commission, Science Europe and 13 national research funding bodies including the French National Research Agency) will come into application. As of this date, European researchers will be obliged to publish the results of any studies funded by national or supra-national European bodies exclusively in journals or platforms with Gold open access. All ongoing hospital-based ENT clinical research projects will come under this provision. Authors will have to pay these structures an “article processing charge” (APC), whereas readers will have access to the article free of charge as soon as it has been accepted for publication.

Plan S, in line with French national plan for open science (<http://www.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/cid132529/le-plan-national-pour-la-science-ouverte-les-resultats-de-la-recherche-scientifique-ouverts-a-tous-sans-entrave-sans-delai-sans-paiement.html>), supported by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, seeks to generalize open access and to structure and open up research data, in a long-term European and international effort.

Although no one could possibly object to such a fine idea, ever since it was first mooted Plan S has been the subject of fierce on-line debate between its advocates and detractors, and several posts on Scholarly Kitchen (<https://scholarlykitchen.sspnet.org/2019/01/14/plan-s-what-about-researchers/>) give the research community pause. According to the advocates, the rapid development of the preprint system at the outset of a research project makes the classic peer-review process obsolete and the value added by scientific journals negligible. They are convinced that the way forward in science will be laid by ever more powerful digital tools and servers on which all data (and not just articles) will be freely available, and that this future form of scientific publishing will contribute to the development of open science. They foresee a very near future in which science will not be contained within scientific journals as we know them today. Virtual on-line platforms, open to all, will publish the results of peer-validated

research. Having in mind that the road to hell is paved with good intentions, the detractors (accused by their opponents of seeking to protect the interests of scientific society journal editors), in contrast, find this vision troubling (<https://sites.google.com/view/plansopenletter/home?authuser=0>).

Their first worry is the domination of this new system by the funding authorities, which will oblige authors to conform to the type of open access that they deem best suited to “future science”, to the exclusion of all so-called “hybrid” journals offering a range of modes of access, and that this is an infringement of academic freedom. Their second worry is the increased cost (Gold journals having high APCs), entirely borne by the researcher, with no transparency in the criteria and structures setting the APCs and their progression over time (<https://www6.inra.fr/caps-publierlascience/PLAS-en-ligne/PLAS-22>). And the last but not least of their worries is that Plan S is not going to extend to the rest of the world: the US, China, post-Brexit UK. . .

All of this agitation also hides some more down-to-earth motivations. For some, the hope is that, with this Plan, European universities and the firms that will be joining up with them in the years to come will take responsibility for publishing research conducted in the Old Continent. For others, the fear is that non-university scientific societies and their publishing arms, which have been the backbone of biomedical publication, will cease to be recognized—just as the job of biomedical editor, contributing to the quality of published science, will cease to be.

The fight is on!

It is to be hoped that discussions between the two sides in the argument will guide the development of the situation, and that the “S” of this plan will indeed stand for “Science”, and not “Stupid”, as some skeptical souls fear, with malice toward none - a formula Abraham Lincoln used, in his second inaugural address in March 1865, at the end of the Civil War, to tell his fellow countrymen the vital need for unity.

### Disclosure of interest

The authors declare that they have no competing interest.

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