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The European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers

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Eurodoc Response to the Stakeholder Consultation on the Future of Scholarly Publishing and Scholarly Communication

(1) In practice, how do you imagine the vision of an ideal state of scholarly communication put forward by the expert group and, more specifically, your role as an actor in that future system? You may depart from the suggested vision, if you think necessary/you disagree.

Role/functions of researchers in the scholarly communication system

Researchers are the most important stakeholders in the scholarly communication system and act as scholarly content producers, reviewers, and consumers: (1) they design and do research (2) they produce and analyse data (3) they write and submit articles/books to peer review and typically amend their articles/books after peer review (4) they edit and peer review articles/books by other researchers (5) they may write summary or popular articles/books which are not submitted to peer review (6) they use the final publications in their research. Researchers are mainly involved in the scholarly communication function of (a) certification = establishing the validity of research and to a lesser extent in (b) registration = establishing the attribution of research (c) dissemination = making research accessible and visible (d) preservation = archiving research for long-term usage. We expect researchers to keep doing activities (1-6) and fulfil function (a) but to also be more active with functions (b-d) which we foresee to be increasingly facilitated by digital technology.

Role/functions of publishers in the scholarly communication system

Publishers are in theory supposed to be a service provider in the scholarly communication system that facilitates the submission, editing, peer review, and end publishing of a scholarly article/book. Their role is thus to facilitate activities (3-4) and primarily fulfil function (c) although they may also fulfil functions (a, b, d) to some extent. The role and functions of the publisher may blur somewhat when the publisher is in fact itself a learned society which publishes articles/books in its specific field. The reality, unfortunately, is that the major publishers have stopped acting as service providers and have themselves become the gatekeepers of quality research whereby they have adopted function (a). This has led to the perverse use of journal impact factors, originally employed to assess the popularity of scholarly journals, to assess the quality of research and thus by extension the quality of researchers. We stress hereby that researchers conduct core publisher services at no cost to the publisher such as the editing and peer review of submitted articles/books. All of this has, unsurprisingly in a commercial setting, resulted in astronomical and non-transparent costs to access and publish research in such journals. The future role of publishers should be to return to their role of service provision and focus on function (c) whereby they should be transparent in their costs and prices and whereby researchers or their institutions should be financially rewarded for services that they carry out on behalf of the publishers.

Role/functions of other actors in the scholarly communication system

Other actors in the scholarly communication system are universities and research centres, research funders and policymakers, and groups with a professional/personal interest in research. The role of universities and research centres is and should remain as facilitators

of research and supporters of researchers so that researchers can efficiently and effectively carry out activities (1-6). Universities and research centres currently fulfil functions (a-d) to varying degrees, dependent on the presence and activity of their own publishing platform and institutional repository, and should take a more prominent role in these functions in the future to ensure more control and self-determination of the research cycle. The role of research funders and policymakers is and should remain as enablers of research so that researchers can efficiently and effectively carry out activities (1-6) but also as guardians of the public purse so that public money is justifiably well-spent on research. Funders and policymakers oversee and enable the fulfilment of functions (a-d) and in the future should leave universities and research centres to self-determine how functions (a-d) should be fulfilled under a framework of open principles and cost-effective spending.

Types of scholarly contributions and their relative significance

The scholarly communication system is rigidly focused on the reporting of research when in reality it should also include the initial design, technical support, data management, and peer reviewing that produces the final research publication. Researchers are evaluated and rewarded mostly on the basis of publications and thus these other crucial activities remain secondary and often ignored. The scholarly communication system of the future should encompass activities from the entire research cycle whereby researchers openly and in a timely manner publish all of their research outcomes and are credited and rewarded for all of their (non-)publication research contributions: project applications and methodologies; hardware and software designs; data that is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable (FAIR); review reports and amendments. We understand 'data' hereby to refer to the object of research in whatever form that takes in each of the research disciplines. We see the future term 'publish' not to mean the publishing of the final version of a research report but rather the opening up of research outcomes in a broader context of Open Science.

Venues/paths for dissemination and their relative significance

The rise of digital communication and the capabilities of the internet have not yet fully penetrated the scholarly communication system. Research is still being formally collected and presented in terms of the textual summary of research in the traditional printing concept of the 'journal' or 'book'. The final published summary of activity (3) has become the focal point of scholarly communication when in reality all the outcomes of activities (1-5) should be disseminated. Furthermore, not all 'good' research is allowed to be published: research that is methodologically sound is often not published as it may not be deemed excellent or innovative or even novel. This is especially true for studies showing negative results or replication studies which are crucial to science. We are thus left with an incomplete and biased record of scholarly outcomes. We need to move away from the traditional concept of the 'journal' and instead harness the technical capabilities of the internet to create new publishing platforms that disseminate and link all related scholarly outcomes. We should be digitally publishing our project applications and methodologies, hardware and software designs, FAIRised data, review reports and amendments, and finalised articles/books. All research outcomes should be open for qualitative peer review and, once deemed methodologically sound, be published. These venues should thus not only be publishing finalised research outcomes but allow the drafting of versions which can be openly viewed and peer reviewed whereby we move from 'publishing-an-end-product' to 'publishing-a-version'. We note that we interpret 'open' to mean 'as open as possible, as closed as necessary' and that versions indeed result in an end product. We also strongly advocate for authors (and where necessary institutions) retaining full copyright on their

research outcomes and grant the reuse of these outcomes under open licences such as Creative Commons (CC) Attribution (BY) while allowing exceptions for NoDerivatives (ND).

Business models and financial aspects of scholarly communication

There are many business models involved in the scholarly communication system. There may be costs involved which are directly (such as editing and platform costs) or not directly (such as profit or revenue for funding society activities) related to the research publication. There may be income from directly accessing (such as subscriptions) or from publishing (such as APCs) the research publication. There may also be income that is not directly related to the research publication that could be commercial (such as advertisements on a website) or public (such as government funding). We believe strongly that scholarly research is for the public good and thus that public money should be spent in a cost-effective manner to carry out activities (1-6). We also strongly support the concept of 'full and immediate Open Access' and have recently endorsed Plan S by the consortia of national research funders known as 'cOAlition S'. We are, on the one hand, against the traditional closed model of subscription publishing that locks out many researchers and the public to accessing scholarly research and often involves high costs which are conducted via secret agreements. We are, on the other hand, also against moving definitively from a 'pay-to-access' to a 'pay-to-publish' Open Access model via APCs whereby only those authors or institutions who can pay are published and whereby popular publishers and high impact factor journals charge excessively high APCs. We strongly call for a move to publishing platforms that employ a non-author facing fee business model: neither the reader nor the author or institution should pay to read or publish scholarly research. There are already many examples of such successful business models that can involve public funding and commercial activities. We deem it crucial that the costs and pricing of such venues are transparent when public money is involved in procuring any publishing services.

Evaluation of research

The current evaluation of research and researchers is inextricably connected to the brand and impact factor of the journal where researchers publish. Researchers who publish in popular brand and high impact factor journals are deemed excellent or better than those who do not. This has resulted in our current perverse 'publish or perish' scholarly culture and the gatekeeping of research quality by scholarly publishers. We envision a scholarly communication system that is facilitated by scholarly publishers and disseminates all methodologically sound research outcomes. We strongly believe that the publishing of (versions of) all research outcomes should be rewarded in the evaluation and funding of research as well as the career progression of researchers. We have noticed the increasing competition to publish not only in popular brand and high impact factor journals but also to publish high numbers of articles/books as possible. This has resulted in high stress levels for researchers and undoubtedly leads to a risk of integrity mispractice. We call hereby for slowing down science and a more encompassing vision of scholarly publishing that disseminates and facilitates rewarding all outcomes of scholarly research. The concepts of 'impact' and 'excellence' need to be urgently revised and indicators for evaluating the impact of research outcomes should similarly be encompassing: (1) indicators measuring views and downloads (2) indicators measuring peer citations (3) indicators measuring peer comments (4) indicators measuring degrees of openness (5) indicators measuring social impact. We stress hereby that quantitative assessment via such 'alternative metrics' should not take strict precedence but instead be carefully interpreted and reasonably combined with qualitative assessment in the ultimate evaluation and rewarding of research outcomes.

(2) What would you as an actor concretely need to do – and/or not do, to get us from where we are now to the state of affairs described in the vision put forward by the expert group? Critically, what would other stakeholders have to do – and/or not do?

We note that the Expert Group consisted of a small number of selected members and question the lack of engagement with the general researcher population and researcher associations. Researchers are crucial to the development and acceptance of a change in the scholarly communication and reward system and as such should be more actively involved in such changes. We call on the European Commission to more actively involve researcher associations and researchers in the discussion and development of a better scholarly publishing system. We envision hereby more involvement in new expert groups and in public discussions and consultations at all input stages. Eurodoc is fully committed to Open Science and representing the voice of early-career researchers in ensuring a fair and equitable scholarly communication and reward system. We stress hereby that institutions must start training and supporting early-career researchers in doing Open Science as well as implementing good practices in research and career evaluation involving Open Science. Our representatives and national associations of early-career researchers across Europe welcome feedback and further discussion on Open Science and all points in this response!

Signed by Eva Hnátková [President European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers (Eurodoc)] on 13 May 2019.

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