

A BOOST FOR OPEN ACCESS TO RESEARCH IN NORWAY

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The Research Council of Norway is introducing a new, five-year funding scheme that will cover a significant share of the costs incurred by research institutions for publication in open access journals. With this scheme the Research Council hopes to facilitate a more rapid transition to open access publishing of Norwegian research.

Ensuring open access to scientific publications is an overall research policy objective in an international context. In Norway, open access has been listed as an important objective in the Government's last white paper on research. It is also in keeping with changes in the research community in recent years with regard to technological solutions, publication patterns and reading habits.

The Research Council has had a policy on open access since 2009. This policy was revised earlier this year. While the first policy focused on "green open access", the revised policy also incorporates support for "gold open access". Already from 2009, the Research Council required all scientific articles resulting from research entirely or partially funded by the Research Council to be openly accessible. All articles with such funding must at least be self-archived.

The revised policy emphasises "gold open access" and the Research Council has as a consequence established a new funding scheme to boost publishing in open access journals. The funding scheme will be implemented in the period 2014-19 to cover fees incurred by Norwegian research institutions for publication in open access journals. After 2019, the Research Council expects that costs related to publication fees will be incorporated into the institutions' indirect costs for R&D projects, as subscription fees are handled today.

Picking up the bill

Approved research institutions may now seek funding from the Research Council to cover some of the cost of publication fees incurred. To be eligible for funding, universities and university colleges must have established an internal publication fund. All universities and many university colleges already have such funds in place.

The Research Council will only cover the cost of publication fees in journals registered in the Directory of Open Access Journals and that satisfy current international open access requirements, including licenses for free use. In addition, the Research Council will only approve publication fees for journals registered at levels 1 or 2 in the registry of publication channels from the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions.

The Research Council acknowledges that the institutions are in the midst of a costly transition period in which they must maintain their journal subscriptions as well as pay fees to open access journals. The new funding scheme will make this period more manageable for the institutions, and encourage the institutions to develop effective systems for financing open access publishing through dedicated publication funds.

The Research Council has calculated that the institutions currently pay about NOK 16 million annually (approx. € 2 million) in fees for publishing in open access journals. Roughly half of the published articles are based on research funded by the Research Council. The Research Council is now setting aside up to NOK 9 million (approx. € 1,1 million) per year for the new scheme, which is open to all Norwegian research institutions and not limited to articles from research funded by the Research Council. The scheme's financial framework may be expanded if this is warranted by the volume of publications.

The funding scheme is a step in developing a viable framework for dealing with publication fees in the research system. The first funding announcement will be made in the spring 2015 and is meant to cover costs for open access publishing incurred in 2014.

May withhold funding

All scientific journal articles resulting from projects entirely or partially funded by the Research Council must still be stored in an open electronic repository, either in an institutional or in an open, subject-specific archive. The deposited version of the article must be an accepted version ("post-print"), and the content must be identical to the final published version. The requirement of self-archiving also applies to articles published in open access journals.

The Research Council will permit a delay in open access to self-archived articles from the original publication date by six months for journals in medicine, health sciences, mathematics, natural sciences and technology and by 12 months for journals in the humanities and social sciences. This is in accordance with international guidelines in the field, including in the EU's Horizon 2020 and recommendations from Science Europe.

The Research Council's requirement that project administrators store and make copyrighted material openly accessible in institutional repositories is based on the presumption that such open access does not infringe on the rights of authors and publishers to this material.

If articles resulting from projects funded by the Research Council are not self-archived in accordance with these open access principles, the Research Council may withhold funding until the relevant articles are self-archived.

An important aspect of academic freedom is the right of researchers to choose where to publish their own scientific results. However, the Research Council also stresses that researchers have an academic duty to publish in a manner that gives their peers and the general public easy access to these results. The Research Council therefore encourages researchers who receive funding to publish their work in open access journals.



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