

INTERVIEWS WITH LITHUANIAN POLITICIANS AND FAMOUS RESEARCHERS ABOUT OPEN ACCESS

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Politicians on Open Access

The following politicians were interviewed:

Nerija Putinaitė, Vice-Minister of the Ministry of Education and Science

Professor **Eugenijus Butkus**, Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania, Vilnius University, Faculty of Chemistry

Vaino Brazdeikis, Ministry of Education and Science, Director of Information Technology Centre

There is a lot of talk around the world about open access (OA) to scientific information; various initiatives related to open access are pursued. What do you know about them and what do you think about them?

N. Putinaitė:

From the user's point of view this initiative can be evaluated only positively.

V. Brazdeikis:

I think of those initiatives positively, as they represent progress and bring transparency to research and study processes.

As every initiative, open access to scientific information receives different evaluations. What are the positive and negative aspects of open access to scientific information in your opinion?

N. Putinaitė:

Publishers are interested in pursuing a commercial activity and because of that they want to put up restrictions. There is always a conflict between users who want to get everything free and those, who put efforts into creating the product when after that the product becomes freely accessible. In my opinion, if there is no classified information, the results of scientific research should be freely accessible. The research is paid from EU funds or the budget of Lithuanian Republic, so it should be freely accessed.

Scientists take into account the system for evaluation of science in their country before publishing their research results. Does the science evaluation system in Lithuania encourage scientists to publish their research in an open access publications?

N. Putinaitė:

Open access is only an instrument. While evaluating there is no difference between open and limited access publications. This issue is on a different plane.

V. Brazdeikis:

In my opinion, there is no clear open access promotion (or not promotion) system in Lithuania yet. There are provisions of the European Commission directives, and all research paid from European Union funds in Lithuania must be made open access. Such are the provisions of the Law on Higher Education and Research. But there is no clear and conceptual strategy, and, most probably, it should be the initiative of the scientific community to create such a strategy, as scientists see such a necessity.

The European Research Council, the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) of the European Commission, and other financing institutions require open access the results of scientific research financed by those institutions. I have not heard yet that the institutions financing scientific research in Lithuania would require publishing the results of scientific research in an open access publications. How do you think, wouldn't it be worth to formalize such requirements in Lithuania?

N. Putinaitė:

Such a requirement is applied to the research funded from the budget. The government has confirmed the order regarding scientific research where it is unambiguously stated that the results of the research (even studies) must be made open access. Steps are taken in this direction, but there is no strict formulation that it must be an open access publications. Why is there no such requirement? If scientist publishes his/her publication in a prestigious journal of other country, this journal usually has its rules, and if the researcher wants to make his publication available for open access, he/she has to pay several thousand Euros. Such payments are not included in the project estimates yet. This issue should be discussed in the future.

V. Brazdeikis:

There is a possibility to formalize this requirement. But I think that there is a bigger problem. According to the Berlin Declaration universities have the right to sign it and publish all their work according to the principles of the open access paradigm. Alas, universities somehow don't do that. Do they want the authorities to take the decisions for them? I do not think that the University of Massachusetts or any other would agree to be proclaimed open by the authorities. A university will announce being open because it wants to be progressive. Our universities should be more concrete about their objectives.

E. Butkus:

The question is unambiguous. Specific scientific research is rarely financed in full. Usually only part of it is financed. It is hardly credible that all results of all scientific research would be accessible to all scientists. Some preconditions should be made, e.g. scientific results could be made accessible freely after some period to a certain circle of scientists who could familiarize themselves with the data. It is not rational and purposeful to require that a scientist should publish his/her scientific research results in a certain kind of publication. Scientists should have the freedom to choose in which publication, and in what kind of publication they publish their work.

In your opinion, does the quality of open access journals correspond to the required scientific quality in the journals published by commercial publishers?

N. Putinaitė:

I do not know any strictly open access journals in Lithuania. There should not be any difference. In Lithuania there is a mixed model when publications are made public after a one year embargo period. Most often scientific publications do not have commercial value with a few exceptions (medicine, pharmaceuticals).

The commercial value of other publications is minimal; sooner or later they are made public.

E. Butkus:

There are some really high level open access journals, they are acknowledged in the scientific community, their results are reliable, and this fact is especially important nowadays. In later years, the forgery of scientific data, falsification, and incorrect presentations are of great concern. There are many examples. We in Lithuania also face these phenomena, not to mention plagiarism. Open access journals which apply the same rules of reviewing ensure results of high quality. In such cases the journals gain value and acknowledgement in the scientific community. But once a few scientists performed an experiment: they compiled superficial data from various sources and sent them to an open access journal. The article was accepted...

This shows that in certain cases open access journals do not correspond to the accepted standards. Authors or institutions pay for publication and that is enough for them. Such facts discredit the idea of open access itself. In almost all commercial publications the system of reviews is functioning. I would prefer those journals that apply the usual reviewing order of scientific articles. The main and essential argument for publication of scientific work is that its quality must correspond to certain standards.

V. Brazdeikis:

There exist certain surveys about scientific works published around the world. According to their data, about 70 percent of reference sources are accessible via Google and other information resources. The quality of the journal is not so important, its openness is more important. It is difficult to say whether the quality of a journal is higher or lower. Some journals are created by a certain circle of people and this may be a problem. If there will emerge open access repositories, the journals may take corresponding strategic steps. It is highly negotiable what is more valuable – articles or journals. Citation is another issue where openness has a role.

You are not only the leader of the organization but also a scientist. Did you ever publish your work in open access journals? What problems have you met?

E. Butkus:

When you achieve a certain research result, you seek to publish it in the journal, in which this result will grab the attention of other scientists working in the same field. This is the principle for how I choose journals. The scientist always chooses the journals of the highest scientific ranking. I would say, that now a bad routine has taken place: scientists send articles of different

quality to the journals of the highest ranking. Those journals are overloaded, and because of that other problems arise. From the 100 scientific articles I have published in the international press only a few are in open access journals. The access type did not influence my decision. On the other hand, this year I received an invitation from one journal wanting to publish my article. I contacted the publisher in order to discuss additional conditions. They indicated the terms to me and mentioned that this should cost about 2000 Swiss francs.

I was surprised, as I knew that this was the open access journal I had published one article in earlier. I contacted the editorial board of the journal and they explained that the journal had been free earlier. They usually asked the author to contribute to publishing expenses, but if the author could not do that, the article was accepted anyway. Since this year the publisher policy has changed: you have to commit to pay the fee. I had to refuse to submit the article. Some problems still have to be solved before access can be really open both to the author submitting his scientific work and to the reader who can use it.

Researchers on Open Access

The following researchers were interviewed:

Professor **Limas Kupcinskas**, Lithuanian University of Health Sciences, Member of Lithuanian Academy of Sciences, winner of the national award Best scientist 2011

Professor **Juozas Vidmantis Vaitkus**, Vilnius University, Faculty of Physics

Professor **Vytautas Ostaševicius**, Kaunas University of Technology

Danguolė Rutkauskienė, Director of the E. Learning Technology Centre, Kaunas University of Technology

Professor **Ruta Marcinkevicienė**, Vice-Chairman of the Research Council of Lithuania,, Vytautas Magnus University

There is a lot of talk around the world about open access to scientific information; various initiatives related to open access are carried out. What do you know about them and what do you think about them?

L. Kupcinskas:

We should try to get the journals with high citation rates to become completely free and openly accessible for the medical community. I value open access to scientific articles very positively.

R. Marcinkevicienė:

I think that open access is a good thing and it should constantly expand. When we talk about open access we have organized institutional initiatives in mind. Archives of various resources, repositories with large amounts of scientific data, and research evaluations published by various scientists have been opened so that they can be used by other scientists. As I am a representative of the humanities, it is important to me, that scientific publications, including monograph publishing initiatives become open, when more and more scientists transfer their author rights to

the institutions publishing open access. The humanities scientists do not only need the newest publications, y, we rely on the earlier works. . I hope that gradually there will be more openness, because it is very important that the publications are widely read. For me it is important how research supported by us is read and used, and what influence is exerted by it. Eventually open access should prevail.

J.V. Vaitkus:

I use profile open access journals. This information is really useful and most easily accessible.

V. Ostaševicius:

I assess it positively, because open access allows finding out very quickly what is happening in the scientific world, what research is carried out, what results have been achieved. At the same time it allows you to spread information about your own research and its results.

D. Rutkauskiene:

I assess it very positively. I have worked in the field of distance learning for about eighteen years already, and

the availability and openness of information is a very important issue. Open access resources are very important and it is also very important that information to those resources was submitted not only by young, but by other scientists too.

As every initiative, open access to scientific information receives different evaluations. What are positive and negative aspects of open access to scientific information in your opinion?

L. Kupcinskas:

Even the best publications usually have to deal with practical issues. Journals incur publishing expenses, publishing companies seek after profit. Publication costs must be covered. The largest publishers sell the databases of their journals to universities, and hospitals. This can be understood... A negative aspect is that there exists a possibility that the newest information can become inaccessible to the medical community and this community will not develop. "You do not have money; you cannot access innovations and create yourself".

I doubt if the best journals will ever become open access. Journals policy: after some years they become open. The scientific staffs of the journals strive towards openness of the journals; the so called "embargo" rule becomes not applicable. Sometimes if you ask for the article to be openly accessible, a corresponding fee of (2500-3000 Euros or Dollars) is requested. The problem is unambiguous, it is related to financing, but we should strive for scientific knowledge to become openly, accessible to the medical society.

R. Marcinkeviciénė:

The positive aspect is that it is free. There are separate groups of users: scientists, students, all taxpayers. The humanities publications should be widely read. Another positive aspect is that an author writes differently when he/she knows that his/her work will be read not only by colleagues, but also by all people. Another positive aspect is that science crosses the boundaries of a narrow circle, opens the space for a wider evaluation of scientific works, and reduces the number of falsifications. Some open access publishers allow reading texts before they become articles. There is a possibility to cite not separate citations, but to give links to full-text publication archives. There emerges a possibility to adapt an article to a wide auditorium.

J. V. Vaitkus:

Open access is a quite complicated part of the information business. That is why various businessmen use open access very differently. Some seek open access only for the purpose of distributing information and becoming known. Others use OA to ensure that everybody uses their information, but they pile all tax burdens on the scientists. There are very good journals

that require substantial amounts of money for articles which are published in open access and thus accessible to the scientific community. A number of highly prestigious journals agree to publish open access articles if the authors will pay a certain amount of money. There is a parallel discussion going on debating how taxpayer's money can be used in order to make those journals available to society.

V. Ostaševicius:

It is something like tradition now, that if the journal is easily accessible, you often have to pay for publishing. So, if you have no money, you will not be able to publish, and this is not very acceptable for scientists. A positive aspect is the speed of publishing, but even if you have paid, you have to wait for some time till the publication is out. Another aspect is that if you don't have to pay for the publication it usually is difficult to access. . So in this case, costs, speed, intensity of distribution etc. are important.

Is it beneficial for scientists to publish the results of scientific research in open access publications?

L. Kupcinskas:

In general, scientists benefit from open access. But if a scientist writes a good article he/she will try to publish it in the journals with the highest possible ranking. Access type will not be important. The deciding factor is the prestige of the journal; access type takes second place. On the other hand, every scientist would also like his/her work to be accessible and well cited. Medics have a sufficient tool, i.e. the open abstract databases (PubMed and others).

J. V. Vaitkus:

Actually open access creates better conditions for citing published material, results have better visibility, and at the same time they better represent the scientist or group of scientists to the whole society. On the other hand, OA can have some negative aspects in that information may be disseminated too widely. A negative example can be a very intensive promotion of some achievements of biochemistry or biotechnology. Then a number of so called "quasilaboratories" emerge, producing psychotropic or similar substances endangering our lives

V. Ostaševicius:

Scientists belong to various fields and it is not good when "know how" information is disclosed free to everybody with an interest, including businessmen and commercial companies. The companies begin production and release the product on the market quickly, before the scientists have time to patent their ideas and finish their research. So there are two problems.

D. Rutkauskiene:

Yes, I suppose that every scientist, no matter whether younger or senior, would like his material to be used more widely and his articles, books, monographs, lectures and other publications cited more often. Open access sources provide the possibility for authors to be accessed easier and quicker. This will be useful for them.

Scientists take into account the system for evaluation of science in their country before publishing their research results. Does the science evaluation system in Lithuania encourage scientists to publish their research in an open access publications?

L. Kupcinskas:

Scientific results are evaluated based on two parameters: articles in prestigious journals, and patents. At present the evaluation system in Lithuania neither interferes nor helps. Every system has its shortcomings, but there is nothing better for now.

E. Butkus:

The question should be formulated as follows: are those scientific results interesting for the scientific community, i.e. will the announcement of such results give impulses to other researchers to look for more information about accomplished research? Evaluation is the next stage of a scientific work. I can state firmly, that in Lithuania it is not taken into consideration whether scientific results are published in open access publications or in commercial publications. The first (and the main) question is the quality of scientific research and evaluation is based on it.

R. Marcinkeviciené,:

It is not possible to answer this question directly. Scientists are encouraged to publish their work in good peer-reviewed journals, some of which are open access. The Research Council seeks to implement the plan to create open archives for the results of research financed by taxpayer money.

J.V. Vaitkus:

Yes and no. The present Lithuanian science evaluation system encourages the publishing of articles in high ranking open access journals, although one has to pay for those publications. One can say that it is a little bit easier to publish your article in journals with author fees than in the journals with a very strict expert control and with no publication charges, but without open access. To be precise, they are freely accessible for research centres in another way – via subscribed journal databases. At present "Lietuvos fizikos žurnalas" (Lithuanian Journal of Physics) is kind of open access, I have personal publications there, as the articles of last year are openly accessible there.

Unfortunately, I don't know if it is registered in open access register.

V. Ostaševicius:

In my opinion it encourages, because till now one of the main evaluation criteria has been publications of high level. Only publication in foreign journals with a vast international readership creates the conditions for higher citation rates, and for acceptance by high impact journals.

D. Rutkauskiene:

In my opinion it is not encouraged. A model should be created which will encourage scientists to publish in open access journals. Scientific articles, scientific information is very often used in study processes. I represent distance learning, and one of the distance learning aspects is that the learning material is virtual. When scientists publish their material as open access, we can use it to improve study programs as it is very easy to access. It does not matter whether it is formal informal studies or continuing education material, open access sources can be useful as additional information that improves the quality of studying.

What problems do scientists encounter when they want to publish their research in open access journals?

R. Marcinkeviciené,:

I cannot answer because I have never published my material in open access journals. I have only heard the opinions of my colleagues. One of the problems was that the requirement of publishers required manuscripts to be prepared using special software even if publishing houses already offered the possibility to transfer the publications in different format. There is certain instability, for example in the linking systems; some of the links are not persistent

J.V. Vaitkus:

Actually there are no problems. The author usually checks if the publication in a certain journal will bring the necessary number of points, and if it will be good enough to provide the qualification.

V Ostaševicius:

As I have mentioned, there is first of all a financial problem: you can rarely find additional funds to publish such publications. Another problem is the time period between submitting and publication.

D. Rutkauskiene:

I think that a lot of young scientists do not know how to publish in open access; how can we make this easier. A support system for young scientists is necessary: the mechanism not only to encourage them to get acquainted with the possibility but also to motivate

and to explain in more detail what will happen after publication, and help to submit material for the first time.

In your opinion, does the quality of open access journals correspond to the requirements in journals published by the commercial publishers?

R. Marcinkeviciené:

There are very good open access journals from the content point of view. Sometimes there are incorrectly edited texts or links disappear from the internet. But you have to get used to the fact that texts are dynamic. This can be compensated by additions or corrections. Authors know this, and feel obliged to review their texts from time to time.

J. V. Vaitkus:

Yes and no. Some journals do not satisfy the quality requirements; others satisfy them in full and belong to the journals of the highest ranking. On the other hand, I take part in European discussions about OA. OA is one of the tasks to strengthen the relation between science and society which is being solved by the Science and Society Committee. I take part in European programs representing Lithuania.

V. Ostășevicius:

I cannot see the difference. I think that the quality is very similar; maybe I will compare it in the future. While evaluating various publications I have not noticed many mistakes in language, style, terminology or other things. It is possible that OA publishing is of higher quality than commercial journals.

D. Rutkauskiene:

I am not very experienced in this field. I suppose that evaluation is similar, models are similar as are the procedures of access to more widely known commercial or to open access journals. I think that open access journals are less known and need more time to become more cited.

L. Kupcinskas:

Commercial publishers are like an instrument that helps the editorial boards to publish their journals. Journal prestige depends not on the business model but on the capability of the editorial boards to select articles. I do not see substantial difference in quality in open access journals: all articles are peer-reviewed. . From the point of view of scientific value I do not see any essential difference between open access journals and commercial ones.

Your journals are included in one of the most famous open access catalogues, i.e. The Directory of Open Access Journals. Has the readership and popularity of the journals changed since they became open access journals?

L. Kupcinskas:

We should be happy that such a database as DOAJ exists. It includes journals in all fields, but in biomedical sciences this database is equal to PubMed (open access journals are reflected in the PubMed database). DOAJ is valuable and needed.



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