

EUROHORCs' Recommendations on Open Access (OA)

On 18 April 2008, the General Assembly of EUROHORCs agreed to recommend a minimal standard regarding Open Access to its Member Organisations. At the same time, it acknowledges the fact that some MOs have adopted stricter rules already. It considers the proposed minimal standard as an intermediate step towards a system in which free access to all scientific information is guaranteed without jeopardizing the system of peer review, quality control, and long-term preservation. It encourages its members to continuously examine possibilities to move beyond the proposed minimal standard, to develop, jointly with the publishers, means to move toward full Open Access, and to reduce embargo time to not more than six months and later to zero.

Scientists and research organizations can support this recommendation in different ways:

Recommendations for scientists:

1. High quality publication of scientific results in the appropriate journal – printed or electronic – or in books represents a major responsibility of every scientist.
2. When choosing the appropriate means of disseminating scientific information, authors should always consider the issue of Open Access. If a variety of options are found to be appropriate, higher priority should be given to journals with Open Access rules which are in minimal accordance with the recommendations defined by EURAB in December 2006.

Recommendations for Member Organisations (MOs) of EUROHORCs

3. All MOs of EUROHORCs should sign the Berlin Declaration on Open Access (2003). It is strongly recommended that when ever possible they adopt the EURAB recommendations or at least a weaker version of it by excluding a compulsory limitation of the embargo time to 6 months or less.
4. The overwhelming majority of scientific journal support self-archiving already, but only a very small minority of scientists make use of this possibility. Thus, all scientists, either funded by or doing research for MOs, should be informed about the already existing mechanisms for Open Access and strongly advised to make use of them.

Background to the document

1. Mandate

The 30th EUROHORCs Assembly (Helsinki September 27th 2007) has mandated Dieter Imboden to draft a joint EUROHORCs statement on Open Access (Minutes of GA, Item 7.f.). Simultaneously, Gábor Makara has brought this issue to the attention of the Task Force on the EUROHORCs *Roadmap for Excellence in Science*. This document is a synthesis of the two approaches; it also takes into account the discussion of the Steering Committee at its meeting on January 29, 2008.

2. Actual Practices of Member Organizations regarding Open Access

A survey of existing Open Access regulations, initiated among the EUROHORCs member organizations (MO) in December 2007, yielded about 20 responses, most of them from Research Funding Organizations (RFOs) and a few from Research Performing Organizations (RPOs). The overview demonstrates the great variety of OA policies among the EUROHORCs MOs.

From the MOs which have responded two thirds have signed the Berlin Declaration on OA and introduced a special OA policy. Only two of these organizations have adopted a **mandatory** rule, according to which peer-reviewed articles resulting from MO-funded research have to be deposited in an appropriate research depository. The remaining 10 MOs **recommend** the deposit.

ERC and EURAB have both issued their own OA policy, although they have not signed the Berlin Declaration. ERC has a mandatory rule, EURAB issued a recommendation.

Differences also exist regarding the time limit of deposition (or of free access, respectively) after publication (*embargo period*). The limit varies between 6 months and one year. As clearly demonstrated by the (discipline-specific) UK Research Councils, these differences are also related to the different traditions among the scientific disciplines.

Finally, different rules exist among EUROHORCs MOs regarding OA publication costs. Some MOs explicitly allow charging the costs to the RFO, others exclude it or do not address this issue.

3. The EURAB Report as a possible guideline for EUROHORCS

In December 2006, the European Research Advisory Board (EURAB) has submitted its report on “Scientific Publication: Policy on Open Access”¹. This report summarizes the most important issues of OA. In short, it comprises the following recommendations (citations from EURAB 06.049):

- “Authors should deposit post-prints (or publisher’s version if permitted) [...] on a repository. The repository may be a local institutional or/and a subject repository.”
- “Deposit should be made upon acceptance by the journal.” Open Access should be provided as soon as possible. Journal embargo times should be not longer than 6 to 12 months, where 6 months or less should become the rule.²
- Authors “grant to all users a free, irrevocable, worldwide, right of access to, and license to copy, use, distribute, transmit and display the work publicly...”
- “Suitable repositories should make provision for long-term preservation of, and free public access to, published research findings.”

4. Proposal to GA of EUROHORCS

Given the still great variety of existing OA policies among disciplines and MOs, at its meeting on 29 January 2008 the SC mandated Dieter Imboden to formulate a proposal to the General Assembly defining a **minimal standard** of Open Access rules to be accepted by all MOs of EUROHORCS.

At the same time, the statement of EUROHORCS should acknowledge the fact that some MOs have adopted stricter rules already and that all MOs are encouraged to continuously examine possibilities to move beyond the proposed minimal standard. In fact, according to the actual list of organisations which have signed the Berlin Declaration, a clear majority of EUROHORCS members have **not** yet signed the declaration.

Finally, the EUROHORCS statement should also send a clear message to scientific publishers that its recommendation on OA just represents an intermediate step; time should be used by the scientific community as well as by the publishers to develop better models for an Open Access scheme.

18 April 2008/Dieter Imboden

¹ EURAB 06.049, December 2006

² EURAB requests an embargo time of not more than 6 months, possibly less