

# Transformative Agreements Where are we going?

Susanna Terracini, Università degli Studi di Torino  
European Mathematical Society Executive Council

Workshop on Green Open Access, Transformative Agreements and PlanS  
GSSI July 13<sup>th</sup> 2020

# What are we transforming into?

*The hybrid model of publishing is not compliant with the principles of plan S*

Plan S and the transformative agreements are directing the publishing market towards the model Gold Open Access with APC.

A model where researchers pay to publish and no longer to read.

Are these the exact terms of the matter?

In the old days, and even now however, hard copies of the journals were available to anyone in public or academic libraries. Today we expect to have immediate access to the contents of the articles from the web. It is a huge step forward both for the dissemination of research results and for their use. Open access issues mainly concern the electronic versions of the articles.

# Who pays for APC?

*Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the Funders or universities, not by individual researchers*

The authors, not paying for the publication costs themselves, do not perceive neither their presence nor their magnitude.

In a short time the whole community will get used to paying to publish and fairness and ethical problems will go into the background.

When an hybrid journal is turned into gold OA, if you don't pay or someone doesn't pay for you simply can not publish in.

With Plan S, we are moving in that direction. But do we really want to go there?

Does the fact that authors do not pay individually or directly their article publication charges solve the ethical problem?

The national transformative agreements exclude a number of categories:

- national institutions not subscribing the agreement;
- individuals not structured inside any of the agreeing institutions;
- researchers from countries not subscribing any agreement;
- all national researchers after reaching a certain number of papers, when the agreement covers a limited amount of tokens.

For all of these categories, the transition to Gold OA will be a very bad deal. But not just for them.

Paying for publishing strongly affects the academic freedom.

# The point of view of a scientific journal editor-in-chief

I'm the editor-in-chief of a traditional hybrid scientific journal.

This journal aims to be a place for discussion on some topics of interest to the scientific community. I do my best to animate the debate but ....

To be compliant with plans S, the journal turns into gold open access with article processing charges.

I am forced to publish only those contributions of scientists who pay.

I'm aware that researchers who can not afford to pay for the APCs (individually or through their institutions) will not even submit their papers for publication on my journal.

It is not just a question of blatant injustice, it is both an ethical and a system efficiency problem.

The transition of traditional journals to the gold OA mode with APCs is not desirable also for other reasons.

- The publication fees charged for one article are shamefully disproportionate to the total expenses incurred for online publication. **It is simply not sustainable for all those researchers who do not benefit from large grants.**
- Plan S is a European matter. There is a serious risks of segregating the European publishing market from the rest of the world. It would be a return to the past.

# Three proposals

- Enforce the Green Open Access mode **with no embargo** for the accepted manuscripts for all articles (should be put in the pot of negotiation in all transformative agreements).
- Postpone the ban on hybrid journals of plan S until the editorial market has found an **ethically acceptable path to open access**, respectful of equity, plurality and academic freedom.
- Encourage the development of **alternative models not involving APCs**, such as the subscribe-to-open option and favor the market evolution towards the diamond OA model, which recognizes the role of the academic institutions as patrons rather than customers.