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Open science is “golden opportunity” for publishers

Research commissioner Carlos Moedas reaffirms his commitment to free-to-view access to scientific research funded by the public purse



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Making journal papers freely available is transforming how research is carried out, Research Commissioner Carlos Moedas told the STM Conference in Frankfurt this week.

Europe has now passed a tipping of 50 per cent of articles being open, Moedas noted, saying, “I am committed to completing the transition to open access by 2020. Because open access improves science. And because it engages citizens.”

While open access is one of the Commissioner’s political priorities and a common goal for all EU member states, it also represents an opportunity for scientific publishers, the conference heard.

“Open access contributes to scientific excellence and integrity. It opens up research results to wider analysis. It allows research results to be reused for new discoveries. And it enables the multi-disciplinary research that is needed to solve global 21st century problems,” Moedas said.

In addition, open access connects science with society, allowing the public to engage with research, to go behind the headlines and look at the scientific evidence.

“Fundamentally, I think the public have the right to see the results of the research they have invested in,” said Moedas.

It has taken 25 years to get to the half-way point. But Europe cannot afford to wait as long again to complete the transition to open access.

“That is why, at the beginning of my mandate, I defined the goal of open access to all publicly funded research by 2020,” the Commissioner said.

In May, EU member states unanimously declared their agreement to this ambition, with the agreement being set out in the conclusions of the EU Competitiveness Council, a gathering of research ministers.

At the same time, public funders at the European and national level are united behind this goal.

“We now want to see urgent and substantial progress,” Moedas said. The transition to open access can only be successful if barriers are removed and the right incentives are in place.

There is a need to look at how scientific success is measured and to make use of alternative metrics that do not rely solely on the number scientific publications to a researcher’s name, the Commissioner said, calling on the publishers to play its role in making the transition to full open access a success.

“This is a time of change for the scientific publishing industry,” said Moedas. The transition from pay-to-read to free-to-read requires new business models, but it does not mean the death of

publishing, rather a different kind of publishing.

The range and creativity of new tools and business models already on offer is very encouraging, and real competitive advantage will come from such innovation.

Europe is moving rapidly towards full open access and has the first mover advantage. “This is a golden opportunity for European publishers to be at the forefront of global open access publishing,” Moedas concluded.

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