

“Open Science should provide support, not impose sanctions”

**Open Letter from some participants of the 3rd [Open Science Retreat](https://openscienceretreat.zbw.eu/) < <https://openscienceretreat.zbw.eu/>>
(14/15 June 2022)
organised by ZBW – Leibniz Information Centre for Economics.**

INTRODUCTION

The Open Science paradigm has gained considerable importance over the last ten years. The diverse actors in the science system have made great efforts to further develop the Open Science principles.

Global political crises have recently highlighted the areas in which the Open Science community needs to

reflect its concerns more intensively.

The past has shown that crises – such as the Corona pandemic – can surprisingly turn out as enablers on openness. On the other hand, Russia’s unprovoked and unjustified military aggression against Ukraine ([#ScienceForUkraine < https://scienceforukraine.eu/>](https://scienceforukraine.eu/)) and the suffering and destruction it has caused, painfully remind us of the limiting factor crises can have on the openness of science. But how do such events affect the Open Science movement in general, and how does the Open Science community respond? So far there has been little discourse and corresponding reflection on these and related questions.

This “Open Letter” provides an impulse to initiate this reflection.

It focuses on two core theses:

- The Open Science movement should address the question of whether and, if so, under which framework conditions “closeness” can be appropriate in global, political crises.
- Openness must not be used to place sanctions in global, political crises by closing open offers.

The Open Letter takes a closer look at these aspects.

By signing the Open Letter, you express that the Open Science community should continue to develop self-reflectively with regard to the aspects addressed in the Open Letter. In addition, you support that these

aspects, which have received little attention so far, are included in the discourse of this successful movement in the future. This will contribute to the Open Science movement having a position in global, political crises in the future and not only developing it when the crisis has already occurred.

The more members of the Open Science community support the Open Letter with their signatures, the more the issues will be brought to the attention of the actors in the science system and the broader the discourse can be.

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OPEN LETTER

The relevance of the Open Science paradigm has significantly increased over the last decade.^[1] The worldwide developments of recent years and months have, however, shown that different crises do put different expectations on openness as well as can act either as enablers or as limiters on openness. With this, we are experiencing the “shifting goalposts” of openness, and an ambiguous situation has emerged: while there was a new push worldwide for open practices during the COVID pandemic on the one hand, restrictions were being placed on scientific cooperation with Russia and Belarus, while simultaneously supporting the science system in Ukraine. These two contrasting examples highlight the political and societal expectations of Open Science and thus, the role of (and pressure on) the scientists supporting, promoting and practising Open Science. This paradigm of Open Science is not merely a way of “just doing science right”,^[2] but rather a belief or even a behaviour that must be consistent with the commitment of researchers, while also being promoted and followed through in national, European or international policy.

How do such developments influence the Open Science movement in general? How is Open Science related to and affected by the current crises, be they humanitarian, geopolitical, environmental or all of the above? What are the positions and reactions of Open Science advocates and activists? These questions were addressed in the course of the **Open Science Retreat** < <https://openscienceretreat.zbw.eu/> > on “Impact of Global Crises on the Open Science Movement” in June 2022.

Following the Open Science Retreat, some participants (named below) wrote this open letter. The purpose

of the letter is to emphasise the fundamental value of Open Science principles and openness in the light of different crises but also to highlight challenges regarding national, European or international policies, which might contradict the Open Science principles and make following these even harder.

The bottom line is that “Open Science should provide support, not impose sanctions”.

The following statements are intended to stimulate a hitherto little-held discourse on the role of Open Science in this situation. They should also act as a starting point for the development of strategies and courses of action to provide a way forward in line with the Open Science paradigm.

- The Open Science paradigm is often associated with the expression *“as open as possible, as closed as necessary”*. Although “closed” may be seen to be contrary to the Open Science principles, the Open Science community needs to define the criteria if and when closed has to be an option, particularly in light of the (global) crises.
- When applying sanctions or restrictions it is essential to distinguish between institutional collaborations, individual collaborations, and research knowledge: The continuation of institutional collaboration is justifiably restrictable and can therefore be stopped based on countries. The individual co-operations between researchers should not be impacted upon and should be left to the individual considerations of the researchers as far as possible in the framework of related agreements. However, access to research knowledge should not be restricted, for the following reasons:

- The open principles including Open Access, Open Data, Open Source etc. should equally apply to everyone, and not be turned into instruments of exclusion,
 - it is almost technically impossible to implement comprehensive access restrictions, and
 - such restrictions will even in the best case scenarios not accurately affect the intended group(s) targeted by corresponding sanctions in general.
- Open Science can be a positive enabler in any crisis situation and, in this case, can act as a safeguard by ensuring the scientific knowledge of Ukraine is kept both accessible and secure. One of the current solutions is to primarily store (research) data outside of the Ukraine. While these efforts are laudable, we have to acknowledge that many questions remain unresolved. These include, among others, legal questions regarding ownership of the safeguarded data and responsibility of the long and short term safekeeping of these data.

It should always be kept in mind that Open Science implies a supportive and empowering mission. Open Science must not be perverted into a sanctioning or punishing instrument. On that basis, our appeal for following the Open Science paradigm in the current situation requires the following actions:

- *Workflow Management:* Coordinate and align support activities in order to ensure the effective and

accurate use of resources needed.

- *Content Management*: Provide information and assistance to supporting stakeholders, enabling them to make informed and timely decisions on current questions.
- *Stakeholder Engagement*: Communicate directly with affected researchers/scientists and listen to their needs with a focus on support, as opposed to sanctions.

This document has been written in the personal capacities of the authors. It does in no way indicate any institutional or organisational endorsement of the statements by the home institutes of the authors or any other organisations or institutes.

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Name	Affiliation	Message
Nikolina Ivanova-Bell	American University in Bulgaria	
JC Burgelman	Free University of Brussels	open science is a method to promise ... science. its not an ideology
Josefine Nordling	CSC – IT Center for Science	
Moritz Schubotz	FIZ Karlsruhe – Leibniz-Institut für Informationsinfrastruktur	The Wikimedia movement 2030 goal is to improve the knowledge equity, sanctions are contradictory.
Yannick Legré		
Elvisa Drishti	University of Shkodra “Luigj Gurakuqi”	
Thierry Warin	HEC Montréal	
Dr Mayank Trivedi	The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda	It is the need if the hour...
Tigran Zargaryan	Fundamental Scientific Library,	Science should serve to the needs

Name	Affiliation	Message
	National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia	of Society. Open Science paradigm is logical continuation of Open Access movement, and as a scholar and as a librarian my vote is for "Open Science".
PD Dr. Niels Taubert	AG Bibliometrics, Bielefeld University	
Silvete Osmani		
Björn Brembs	Universität Regensburg	Open Science should be about support, not sanctions!
Katja Mayer	University of Vienna	
Barend Mons	LUMC, Leiden University, GO FAIR	"Open" and "closed" are both ambiguous terms and both (also restriction where needed) are enabled in FAIR
Aidin Niamir	Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung	

Name	Affiliation	Message
Chuan Liu		
Hu Chuan-Peng		Sanctions will split instead of unite people.
Dr. Kishor Chandra Satpathy		
Natasa Dakic	University Library "Svetozar Markovic", Belgrade, Serbia	
Marie Farge	CNRS, ENS Paris and CAPSH (Committee for Accessibility to Publications in Sciences and Humanities)	Collaborating and publishing with colleagues regardless of their personal views (political, religious, social, ...) is an essential dimension of research. We can boycott institutions but not colleagues and friends. It is precisely in times of crisis that exchanges with trusted persons can be crucial.

^[1] See for instance the **Open Science Monitor** < https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/strategy-2020-2024/our-digital-future/open-science/open-science-monitor_en > of the European Commission, the recent publication on **Research assessment and implementation of Open Science** < <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/56958/st10126-en22.pdf> > by the Competitiveness Council of the European Union, the existence of international law on Open Science (**OECD Recommendation on Access to Research Data from Public Funding** < <https://www.oecd.org/science/inno/recommendation-access-to-research-data-from-public-funding.htm> > , 2021), and the **UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science** < <https://en.unesco.org/science-sustainable-future/open-science/recommendation> > .

^[2] Melanie Imming, & Jon Tennant. (2018). Sticker open science: just science done right (ENG). Zenodo. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1285575> < <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.1285575> >

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