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Plan S creates global waves

European funders' ambitious plans to use their financial muscle to drive open-access research have attracted praise around the world, with researchers from North America to Australia eagerly awaiting the next developments in Plan S.

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Under the plan, money from 12 national European funders and the European Union's European Research Council will flow only to those researchers who agree to make their work free to read as soon as it is published. The researchers will have to retain copyright, and eventually eschew journals that mix open access and subscription content in favour of fully open-access journals deemed by the funders to be of high quality.

See 'Research funders unite to break publishers' stranglehold' for full details of Plan S.

Xin Bi, senior university librarian at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, Suzhou, and China's ambassador for the Directory of Open Access Journals, said he is "very supportive" of Plan S. "I think this is definitely a big step in the open-access movement, which will not only benefit Europe but also the world."

Xin said there are several good open-access journals in China, but that many journals need to make improvements to meet DOAJ criteria. These criteria aim to direct researchers to publish in quality journals.

The funders that have signed up to Plan S have suggested they will support initiatives such as DOAJ, so journals that are not DOAJ-compatible could fall foul of the plan. DOAJ founder and managing director [Lars Bjørnshauge](#) said: "While we should remember that these principles [of Plan S] only cover Europe and focus on science and that they may not be applicable on all continents or to the humanities, they will hopefully have a positive impact."

Plan S's approach to the publication of papers in repositories as opposed to journals is also under scrutiny. The Confederation of Open Access Repositories, which represents 140 organisations around the world, [warned in its response to Plan S](#) that the move to open access must be "responsive to the needs and priorities of all regions and countries".

Many people internationally are concerned about affording the fees that some journals charge to publish open-access articles, and Latin American funders have already come out against them, the confederation warned. Plan S would cap such fees but is very likely to make them more widespread.

"It is important to appreciate that the policies and practices adopted in Europe will have an impact on other regions and countries outside of Europe," the confederation said.

The Australasian Open Access Strategy Group, which advocates for open access and data reuse, told Research Europe that it is important for Plan S to not just focus on journal publishing but also include repositories "as a key mechanism for open access". It added that repositories have had high uptake in Australia.

"It is good to see funders taking the initiative to drive further momentum in open access. However, as yet the plan is just an outline and we look forward to seeing many more details of its implementation," said the group. "We also hope that there will be a consultation process on the specific next steps needed, both in Europe and beyond, as there will be implications globally."

In the United States, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's [open-access taskforce](#) called Plan S "a bold initiative" and noted that "European countries have led the world in terms of negotiating with (and standing up to) publishers".

While many open-access advocates have been fulsome in their praise for Plan S, there seems to be a growing desire for it to grow into a global initiative.

"Why isn't the EU working with China and the US, as well as Latin America and Africa, on these issues?" [asked palaeontologist and open-access campaigner Jon Tennant](#) in a blog post shortly after the plan was announced. "There is the opportunity to coordinate on a global level to make scientific research something that is inherently a public good again, but this does not seem to be happening."

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