

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Information Note: 01/2021

Subject: Implementation of Plan S from 1 January 2021

Distribution: All WHO, IARC, ICC Staff Members worldwide

Date: 20 January 2021

Purpose

The purpose of this Information Note is to inform all WHO staff, as well as staff in IARC and ICC, of the changes to the WHO policy on open access ([WHO eManual VIII.6.10](#)), as part of the implementation of Plan S. These changes were discussed by the Publishing Policy Coordination Group at its thirty-fourth meeting in November 2020 and approved by the Director-General in December 2020.

Background

In August 2019, WHO joined [cOAlition S](#), an initiative to make full and immediate open access to research publications a reality. cOAlition S is built around Plan S, which consists of 10 principles to ensure that, from 2021, the results from publicly funded research are published in open-access journals,^[1] on open-access platforms,^[2] or made immediately available through open-access repositories without any embargo period.

Changes to the WHO policy on open access

From 1 January 2021, all WHO-authored and WHO-funded articles that are **submitted for publication** in peer-review journals must be published: (i) in an open-access journal; (ii) on an open-access platform; (iii) in a subscription journal that has committed to transitioning to open access in accordance with the requirements of Plan S; or (iv) in a subscription journal that allows authors to deposit their accepted manuscript immediately in Europe PMC under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Intergovernmental (CC BY 3.0 IGO) or CC BY 4.0 licence.

In the case of options (i)–(iii), the publisher will deposit the version of record of WHO-authored articles in Europe PMC under the CC BY 3.0 IGO licence; in the case of option (iv), the author must deposit the version of the manuscript accepted for publication in Europe PMC or PMC by the official date of publication under the CC BY 3.0 IGO licence. These requirements also apply to WHO-funded work, except that the CC BY 4.0 licence should be used.

^[1] Open-access journals are defined as journals that are freely accessible, i.e. readers do not need to pay a subscription fee, and reusable under the terms of a Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) licence. They may be free to publish in, or charge an article processing charge. Such journals should be indexed by the [Directory of open access journals](#) and have an agreement with the United States National Library of Medicine to deposit the [version of record](#) in PubMed Central (PMC) and to allow that content to be shared with Europe PMC.

^[2] For the purpose of this policy, open-access platforms are publishing platforms for the original publication of research findings under a CC BY licence. Platforms that serve only to aggregate or republish content that has already been published elsewhere are not considered as such.

In implementing this policy, WHO:

- will include the costs of open-access charges, as an estimate, in its applications to donors for project support;
- will recognize the costs of open-access charges, as an estimate, in applications for project support that it receives from outside entities (i.e. where WHO acts as a funding agency).

Availability of research data and related materials

All research articles that are funded in whole, or in part, by WHO must include a data availability statement with links to underlying data or extended data and any relevant materials necessary to understand, assess and replicate the research. In cases where data cannot be made publicly available for ethical and confidentiality reasons, the statement should indicate the restrictions, the process for applying for access to the data and the conditions that will apply.

Data sets should be deposited in an appropriate open data repository, with a persistent identifier, such as a Digital Object Identifier (DOI) and under an open licence. The confidentiality and privacy of the individuals concerned must be ensured.

ORCID

Staff involved in research are encouraged to register for an Open Researcher and Contributor ID ([ORCID](#)) identifier^[3] and to link their published articles to their ORCID identifier.

Applicants for project funding should include their ORCID identifiers as part of the application process and link their published research outputs to their ORCID identifier.

Further information

For further information, please contact WHO Press (openaccess@who.int).

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^[3] [Register and publish with ORCID – Spotlight Series 114.](#)