Final
Recommendation of Regional Consultation on
"Open Access to Scientific Information and Research
– Concept and Policies"
05-07 September 2012

MINSK RECOMMENDATION FOR OPEN ACCESS TO SCIENTIFIC INFORMATION
(Report of the Open Access Experts from the Eastern and Central Europe)

INTRODUCTION:

UNESCO, jointly with the National Library of Belarus, organized a "Regional Consultation on Open Access to Scientific Information and Research" in Minsk, Republic of Belarus from 05 to 07 September 2012. The main objective of the Regional Consultation was to share how free and unrestricted access to research and scholarly communication can increase the impact of research and benefit research institutions, authors, and the society as a whole. The Consultation examined how Open Access can add to the productivity, visibility and accessibility of research and research outcomes. Open Access also contributes to improved teaching, research and development in the region.

UNESCO and Open Access[1]

The 187th session of the Executive Board approved UNESCO's strategy for promotion of Open Access to scientific information and research, which was also adopted by the General Conference at its 36th session. In the framework of the overarching objective of "building inclusive knowledge societies through information and communication" (34 C/4), the strategy focuses on policy development, capacity building, standard setting, partnerships and collaborations, and on playing the role of a clearing-house on Open Access as a forum for international cooperation, exchange of dialogue and reflection. The Open Access activities of UNESCO has been divided into the following three core areas:
- Provision of upstream policy advice and building partnerships
- Strengthening capacities to adopt Open Access
- Serve as a clearing-house and informing the global OA debate

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The term "Open Access", the free online availability of research literature, was first coined in the Budapest Open Access Initiative[2] in February 2002 followed by two similar initiatives that strengthened the base of support for Open Access: the Bethesda Statement3 from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, and the Berlin Declaration4 which originated from the Max Planck Society and other Open Access initiatives in the region.

1   **Additional Information:** UNESCO Open Access: http://tinyurl.com/82px4gy; Global Open Access Portal http://www.unesco.org/ci/goap; WSIS Open Access Community http://tinyurl.com/7gtlkmp; Open Access Brochure; http://tinyurl.com/85q8g49
2   http://www.soros.org/openaccess/read
3   http://www.earlham.edu/~peters/fos/bethesda.htm
4   http://oa.mpg.de/files/2010/04/berlin_declaration.pdf

Joint Statement of the Participants

We, the participants of the Regional Consultation on Open Access to Scientific Information: Concepts and policies met to deliberate and exchange knowledge and experiences on the policy issues related to the Open Access to Scientific Research and Scholarly Communication and collectively observed that:

Open Access to Scientific Information and Research has been recognized as a promising model of scholarly communication and a tool to disseminate and enable science;

1. "Open Access," free and open global online access to peer-reviewed scientific publications and data, can be provided to public via the Internet.
2. There is a need to take advantage of developments in ICTs, and broadly disseminate the scholarship to foster interactivity.
3. Researchers and students from the region can gain increased access to knowledge, publications, and can have greater visibility and readership.
4. Open Access increases potential impact of funded research, which is already a case in many countries in the region.
5. Open Access provides opportunities for implementing additional models for new publication culture and research evaluation.
6. Open Access has a potential to contribute to responsible research and innovation by making the results of research available to public at large and by facilitating societal engagement.
7. Open Access contributes to transparency by providing public access to publicly funded research results.
8. Open Access helps to avoid duplicative research, minimizes time spent searching for information and the research gains value when it is used and reused.
9. Private sector also benefits from wider access to scientific research results and small and medium-sized enterprises improve their capacity to innovate.

By taking into consideration of opportunities as outlined above, we recommend to the decision makers to adopt an inclusive and multi-stakeholder approach to develop Open Access in the region. This should, inter alia, include the following:

1. Open Access should be mandated for all possible outputs of publicly funded research.

2. Efforts are needed to foster Open Access publishing channels and Research Information Systems.

3. The government and research funding organizations should adopt and promote Open Access policies and mandates for the dissemination of scientific publications resulting from publicly funded research.

4. Universities and Research Institutions should also be encouraged to adopt Open Access mandates.

5. Understanding regional dynamics and building on successful initiatives through collaborative work is critical for the Open Access movement in the region.

6. Individual institutions can provide positive example for change and lead the way. Scientific institutions and other stakeholders should reflect upon sustainable new publication models, cooperate nationally, regionally and internationally and play a role in the capacity building in the region.

7. Existing evaluation systems and reward structures are obstacles for the broad implementation of Open Access. This system must be changed in order to create an even-playing field. Promising developments for more comprehensive measures of impact are taking place and these should be improved and implemented.

8. Support interoperability of Open Access infrastructure using open technology standards and ensuring that it meets current best practices for metadata harvesting, accessibility, and digital preservation.

Further recommend:

9. **To request UNESCO** to continue supporting at the country-level, and regional level initiatives to promote and foster Open Access to Scientific Research; act as a collective voice to support Open Access in the intergovernmental fora and continue implementing the Open Access Strategy as adopted by the 36th General Conference in Paris.

10. **To continue dialogue** amongst stakeholders: UNESCO has a special role to play in ensuring that there is full global involvement in the development of policies and mandate. The templates developed within the framework of UNESCO's Open Access Strategy should be promoted.

11. **To enhance the level of financial support** for the projects and initiatives of public organizations, scholarly communities in advocating Open Access to scientific information and research.

12. **To acknowledge the primary role of scholarly communities** in creating Open Access resources.

13. **To consider developing an international instrument** to guide governments in Open Access activities.

14. **To support creation of clearing house mechanism in the region** for good practices in relation to funding research practices that have open access as a supported dissemination model.

15. **To create "soft network"** to ensure communication and continuous consultation among the regional stakeholders.

16. **To continue to develop more strategic partnerships** amongst stakeholders.

17. **To continue influencing policy level** to urge institutions to sign the Berlin Declaration on Open Access Initiative.

Post Script:

18. **Thank the National Library of Belarus, UNESCO National Commission for the Republic of Belarus and Government of Belarus** for the logistics arrangement and for the hospitality.

19. **Express gratitude to** UNESCO for providing support to create this platform and its involvement in discussing current issues and challenges for Open Access in the region.

(Annex: List of participants)

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