Fourth Inaugural Speech

Antoine Petit

DOI: 10.4000/books.oep.16096
Publisher: OpenEdition Press, Académie des sciences, EDP Sciences
Place of publication: Paris ; Marseille
Year of publication: 2022
Published on OpenEdition Books: October 13, 2022
Series: Laboratoire d'idées
Electronic EAN: 979-10-365-4562-7


The text only may be used under licence CC BY 4.0. All other elements (illustrations, imported files) are "All rights reserved", unless otherwise stated.
Fourth Inaugural Speech

Antoine Petit
CEO of the French National Center for Scientific Research – CNRS

This conference is the first in a series of events to be organized by France on scientific research and innovation, coinciding with the EU French presidency. The French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS) is the leading player in research in Europe, and will be mobilised during these six months by organising and contributing to a number of events that will discuss, and challenge, this Europe of scientific research and innovation. This first Open Science Day has already attracted more than 2000 participants across Europe, which demonstrates, if it was necessary to do so, how important open science is. It is a revolution, a very much needed revolution, for research, a revolution in which CNRS is particularly voluntarily involved. Back in November 2018, CNRS published its own roadmap for open science¹, as well as a plan for research data a year later².

The topics that will be developed today are of critical importance, and I would like to thank the staff of CNRS who helped organise this conference. Our speakers for these next two days come from all over the world, because the issue of open science can only be properly understood in an international logic.

Let’s mention some key actions of the CNRS in the service of open science:

100% of publications from CNRS units must be open access. Thanks to the involvement of the scientific communities, this action is gradually being achieved. Just under 50% of these 45,000 yearly publications were open access in 2017. Today, this is the case for almost 80% of them, with a particular progression of 10% in 2021, as a result of a strong policy in favour of the French national open archive HAL³. Since 2019, CNRS researchers have to deposit their publications in this platform. This measure has also had an exemplary effect, judging by the latest figures from the French Open Science Barometer⁴, deployed by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MESRI), which shows a 10-point increase, with a rate of 62% of French publications in open access. This shows that opening science to all is possible.

At the same time, the CNRS supports numerous publishing models, such as the Diamond Open Access model, which will be at the heart of the conference discussions,
with high-quality platforms such as the Centre Mersenne⁵, developed in Grenoble, OpenEdition⁶, essentially in the field of social sciences and humanities, as well as epi-journals⁷, which are backed up by open archives: from manuscripts deposited in HAL and examined by peers, articles are selected for an epi-review. The rise of these publishing models is absolutely essential for open science.

However, we must be careful as these models must have a reasonable cost and be centrally financed by the academic community. This is what will be discussed in the session on scientific publishing, which will demonstrate that there is an alternative to the so-called Gold Open Access model of publication, which involves the payment of publication fees directly by authors to publishers. This model is not sustainable, neither financially nor ethically. Open access publishing is not synonymous with payment of publication fees, and the CNRS intends to go further to counter the drift of these additional fees imposed by publishers.

In order to profoundly and sustainably change the landscape of scientific publishing, an indispensable step is to modify our individual evaluation practices. CNRS is working on this in a long-term effort, which involves convincing the communities to no longer systematically rely on quantitative bibliometric criteria such as journals’ impact factors or authors’ h-index. It is necessary to change our practices collectively, and our institutions, universities, research organisations, funding agencies or means agencies must be proactive. It is only at the cost of this collective effort that we will convince scientists to stop trying to publish as much as possible, and only in high-impact journals. To this end, beyond the DORA⁸, signed in 2018, the CNRS has proposed new, more qualitative criteria, which aim to stop relying on journal rankings and to emphasise the fact that we need scientists with diversified profiles. Those who are champions of innovation, of interaction with society, and of open science also deserve all the attention of CNRS, and an evaluation that considers all the professions of researchers.

For individual evaluation practices to evolve, a consensus is needed, and I welcome the current effervescence around the issues of evaluation, whether at national or European level. A text entitled Paris Call for Action on Scientific Research Assessment⁹ has been prepared by the Open Science Committee and published on the Open Science European Conference (OSEC) website. This follows a text proposed by the European Commission in December 2021¹⁰.

The CNRS wants to be part of the reflection undertaken by the European community. This subject of evaluation is another key topic of the OSEC days, in a dedicated conference with many speakers from very different backgrounds.
As this conference today shows, the challenges of open science go beyond the national and even the European perimeter. But it is particularly up to the European communities to set an example and to exchange more, to collectively assert their interest to decision-makers and to research and innovation stakeholders.

It was in this spirit that the CNRS formed the G6 a few years ago, an informal European club that brings together, in addition to the CNRS, the Italian CNR\textsuperscript{11}, the Spanish CSIC\textsuperscript{12} and the Max-Planck Society\textsuperscript{13}, the Helmholtz Association\textsuperscript{14} and the Leibniz Association\textsuperscript{15} in Germany. This network brings together some 135,000 multi-disciplinary research staff and aims to represent the interests of research communities to European decision-makers in Brussels. Open science and research evaluation is an important issue for the G6, which recently issued a declaration in favour of open science to reiterate its common position and to emphasise six priorities that will help accelerate the movement towards open science, and hence research excellence:

1. Open access to scientific publications as the default mode of academic publication;
2. Research data to be “as open as possible, as closed as necessary”, in line with the FAIR principles;
3. Extension of open science principles to research software;
4. New evaluation procedures and criteria, compatible with the principles of open science;
5. The development of new skills with appropriate training;
6. Appropriate and available infrastructures and services within Europe and internationally.

Some of these priorities will be addressed in the sessions in the course of today and tomorrow. I wish you a great conference.

References