



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Council Conclusions on scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation

*2832nd COMPETITIVENESS (Internal market, Industry and Research) Council meeting
Brussels, 22 and 23 November 2007*

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

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RECALLING:

- the 24 August 2006 Commission Recommendation on "the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation" (OJ 2006/L 236/28) and the related Council Conclusions of 13 November 2006 (OJ 2006/C 297/01);
- the 14 February 2007 Commission Communication on "scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation" COM(2007)56;
- the 4 April 2007 Commission Green paper on "the European Research Area: New Perspectives" COM(2007)161;
- The OECD's Principles and Guidelines for Access to Research Data from Public Funding, agreed by all OECD Countries in 2007.

CONSIDERING that:

- access to and dissemination of scientific information – publications and data – are crucial for the development of the European Research Area, and can help accelerate innovation;

P R E S S

- the Internet has created unprecedented possibilities to disseminate, share and build on the outcome of research efforts;
- Information and Communication Technologies revolutionise the way scientists communicate, perform research and produce knowledge;
- in an era of high speed connectivity and high performance computing, data emerges as key for modern science;
- the systems by which scientific information is published are pivotal for its dissemination and quality control, in particular through peer review, and thus have a major impact on research funding policies and on the excellence of European research;
- universities, libraries, research performing and research funding organisations, scientific publishers and other stakeholders have in recent years made considerable investments in information technologies for online accessibility;
- effective and long-lasting digital preservation of scientific information is fundamental for the current and future development of European research;

1) WELCOMES

- the Communication COM(2007)56 on "scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation" as a basis for further work at the European level on the accessibility and preservation of scientific information.

2) RECOGNISES

- the major contribution of universities, international research organisations, research bodies, libraries and other public organisations, as well as of scientific publishers, to the scientific dissemination process;
- that new, Internet-based dissemination models have triggered a major debate involving all concerned stakeholders on access to and dissemination of scientific information and in particular on access to peer-reviewed scientific articles;
- that over the past years scientific libraries' capacity to provide researchers with access to a wide range of publications has been affected by rising overall prices of scientific journals (including electronic distribution of publications);
- the strategic importance for Europe's scientific development of current initiatives to develop sustainable models for open access to scientific information.

3) UNDERLINES

- the need to ensure rapid and wide access to publicly funded research results;
- that Member States have a strong interest in an efficient scientific information system that maximises the socio-economic impact of public investments in research and technological development;
- the importance of scientific output resulting from publicly funded research being available on the Internet at no cost to the reader under economically viable circumstances, including delayed open access;
- the cross-border nature of many research endeavours, of their funding sources, and of their dissemination channels;
- the importance of better access to unprocessed data and repository resources for data and material that allows fresh analysis and utilisation beyond what the originator of the data had envisaged;
- that new forms of electronic communication have the potential to enable open access to data and scientific publications, and provide a unique opportunity for the open development of specific data mining, analysis and integration tools, possibly enhanced by common format standards;
- that policies and practices in the Member States on access to and preservation of scientific publications and research data are developing at different speeds;
- the importance of effective collaboration between different actors, including funding agencies, researchers, research institutions and scientific publishers, in relation to access, dissemination and preservation of scientific publications and research data;

4) TAKES NOTE

- of recent reports calling on the Commission to improve access to results stemming from the research it funds, including reports of the European Research Advisory Board and the European Research Council's Scientific Council supporting open access to Community funded research results;
- of the intention of the Commission to support further research on the scientific publication system, and to carry out a study on the economic aspects of digital preservation.

5) INVITES THE MEMBER STATES

As first steps and in line with the annex, to

- reinforce national strategies and structures for access to and preservation and dissemination of scientific information, tackling organisational, legal, technical and financial issues;
- enhance the co-ordination between Member States, large research institutions and funding bodies on access, preservation and dissemination policies and practices;
- maximise access for researchers and students to scientific publications, in particular by improving public procurement practices in relation to scientific information; this could include exchanging information on these practices and increasing the transparency of the contractual terms of "big deals", and exploring the possibilities for funding bodies, research institutions and scientific publishers from different Member States to work together in order to achieve economies of scale and efficient use of public funds by demand aggregation;
- ensure the long term preservation of scientific information - including publications and data - and pay due attention to scientific information in national information preservation strategies;

6) INVITES THE COMMISSION TO

As first steps and in line with the annex, to

- monitor good practices in relation to open access to European scientific production, including those arising from large scale experiments by scientific communities and large research institutions, and encourage the development of new models that could improve access to European scientific research results;
- monitor the current situation of public virtual scientific libraries in the EU and other ongoing developments across Europe relating to access of students and researchers to scientific information and to its digital preservation, as well as the relevant legal framework conditions that may have an impact on access to this information;
- experiment with open access to scientific data and publications resulting from projects funded by the EU Research Framework Programmes in order to assess the appropriateness of adopting specific contractual requirements;
- encourage research into digital preservation, as well as experiments on and wide deployment of scientific data infrastructures with cross-border, cross-institution and cross-discipline added-value for open access to and preservation of scientific information;
- support and contribute to improving policy co-ordination and to fostering a constructive debate and exchange of information between stakeholders.

A. Invitation to the Member States to:

1. Reinforce national strategies and structures for access to and dissemination of scientific information by:	
defining clear policies for dissemination of and access to scientific information, including the associated financial planning;	2008
promoting, through these policies, access through the internet to the results of publicly financed research, at no cost to the reader, taking into consideration economically sustainable ways of doing this, including delayed open access	2008 onwards
<p>assessing in a systematic way conditions affecting access to scientific information, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the way in which researchers exercise their copyrights on scientific articles; - the level of investments in the dissemination of scientific information as compared to total investments in research; - the use of financial mechanisms to improve access, such as refunding VAT for digital journal subscriptions to libraries; 	2008
ensuring that repositories of scientific information are sustainable and interoperable;	2010
bringing together main stakeholders in the debate on scientific information (scientists, funding bodies, libraries, scientific publishers)	2008

2. Enhance the co-ordination between Member States on access and dissemination policies and practices by:	
exploring the possibility for national funding bodies to define common basic principles on open access;	2008
improving transparency of the contractual terms of 'big deals' financed with public money and assessing the possibilities to achieve economies of scale by demand aggregation;	2008
working towards the interoperability of national repositories of scientific information in order to facilitate accessibility and searchability of scientific information beyond national borders;	2009
contributing to an effective overview of progress at European level, informing the Commission of results and experiences with alternative models for the dissemination of scientific information.	2008

3. Ensure the long term preservation of scientific information - including publications and data - and pay due attention to scientific information in national preservation strategies by:	
defining a structured approach to the long term preservation of scientific information and incorporating this approach in national plans for digital preservation established in line with the Commission Recommendation of 24 August 2006 and Council Conclusions of 13 November 2006 on online accessibility to cultural material and digital preservation;	Mid-2008
taking into account the specific characteristics of scientific information when setting up the legislative framework (including legal deposit) or practical set-up for digital preservation.	2009

B. Invitation to the Commission to implement the measures announced in the Communication on "scientific information in the digital age: access, dissemination and preservation", and in particular to:

1. Experiment with open access to scientific publications resulting from projects funded by the EU Research Framework Programmes by:	
defining and implementing concrete experiments with open access to scientific publications resulting from Community funded research, including with delayed open access.	2008 onwards
2. Support experiments and infrastructures with a cross-border added-value for access to and preservation of scientific information by:	
co-funding of research infrastructures, in particular by linking digital repositories at European level and co-funding research on digital preservation within FP7; supporting experiments with open access with a clear cross-border added value.	2007 onwards
3. Contribute to improved policy co-ordination between Member States and to a constructive debate between stakeholders by:	
bringing together, at the European level, concerned stakeholders in the debate on scientific information	2007 onwards
monitoring good practices in relation to open access to European scientific production.	2008 onwards