



## Open Access: challenge or concern?

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Today, the transition from the current system of scientific publication based on subscription – the readers pay – to the full open access (OA) – the authors (sponsors) pay – is highly debated and a cause for concern.

At the end of 2013 the European Physical Society (EPS) has published a statement in collaboration with the European Association for Chemical and Molecular Sciences (EuCheMS) entitled “[Managing the transition to Open Access Publication](#)”, that resulted from a wide consultation with numerous learned societies in many scientific disciplines in addition to the EPS Member Societies. This statement, besides underlining the need to make publicly funded research results freely available, also claims the importance of maintaining peer-reviewed high-quality journals, and secure and persistent archiving.

Closely behind there followed another more detailed report by the European Astronomical Society (EAS) with the title “[Exploring the road to Open Access Publishing](#)”. The report has been prepared by a working group appointed by EAS, made of thirteen scientists from various European countries. Although it mainly concentrates on OA publishing in the domain of astronomy, its main conclusions may be well extended to other disciplines.

The document analyses all different aspects of OA publishing and explores its benefits and limitations, pointing out the recurrent concerns on the financial uncertainty inherent in the transition from the traditional to a full OA system. The community is also warned about the disturbing proliferation of new OA initiatives and the so-called “predatory publishers” that “unprofessionally exploit the author-pay scheme (gold OA) for their own profit”.

The conclusions of the EAS document stress the importance of disseminating correct information and updated of the Open Access practices.

Finally six recommendations are proposed in the EAS document. The first two are general statements relative to the importance of keeping the present standard of the peer-reviewing system, and to the need of maintaining a persistent version of record for all publications, which are perfectly in line with the conclusions of the EPS-EuCheMS document cited above. The third recommendation states that there should be no restrictions on scientists to publish in the journal of their choice. The final three recommendations are more specific to astronomy publishing under the “Gold” and “Green” OA schemes and to the resolutions that should urgently be taken by the funding bodies concerned.