DIAMAS

Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication

Research funders committing to Diamond OA

A DIAMAS case study report

This report provides a set of insights into why and how research funders are trying to support Diamond Open Access publishing. It provides case studies examining different funders and their motivations and funding mechanisms, and what this means for their work.

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Executive Summary

Based on a series of dialogues with representatives from research funders, this report provides a set of insights into why and how funders are trying to support Open Access (OA), specifically Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) publishing. It offers a set of case studies examining different funders and their motivations and mechanisms and what this means for how they work.

The topic of how research funders can support OA through routes beyond the payment of Article Processing Charges (APCs) has grown in interest recently, particularly how funders can support Diamond OA publishing and publishers. However, the emergence and pervasiveness of the topic do not mean it is a simple subject or funder support is easy to provide, or that it should be taken for granted.

Funders have long supported OA but are developing more nuanced approaches as the movement continues to grow. They are also evaluating the impact that their support has had on the research ecosystem. Diamond OA has emerged as a potential mechanism to achieve better economic and cultural outcomes in line with funders' broader goals, primarily through equity, researcher control and more transparent finances.

In our discussions, we have identified at least fifteen different routes that funders have used, and more are being considered for the future. These range widely, including:

- Diamond OA grant programmes
- Seed funding grant programmes for early-stage initiatives
- OA transition grant programmes aimed at journal publishers in specific regions
- Membership fees paid to participate in OA or Open Science (OS) initiatives
- National repository provision
- National Open Journal platform provision
- Block grants to research institutions with percentages reserved for OA and Open Infrastructure

However, funders do not have unlimited degrees of freedom available. Their options are more constrained than many other stakeholders may realise. Funders must work within restrictions such as limited funding, national boundaries, and established funding mechanisms like Transformative Agreements and block grants. Despite these obstacles, creative ways can be found through partnerships, collaboration and by emphasising a portfolio approach.

This topic should interest stakeholders across the research infrastructure. We hope it will provide particular food for thought for all research funders as they continue to evolve their strategies and routes for supporting OA in all its forms.

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Introduction

DIAMAS (Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication) is a European Commission-funded project aimed at enhancing Diamond Open Access (OA) publishing. DIAMAS seeks to map the landscape of institutional publishing in Europe, develop common standards and guidelines, and provide recommendations to support and sustain Diamond OA initiatives.

Research funders play a crucial role in shaping the policies and financial frameworks that underpin Open Access (OA) publishing. This report seeks to raise awareness of the capabilities and challenges funders face as they seek to support OA, particularly Diamond OA. It aims to highlight the different contexts in which alternative approaches and funders' roles have evolved. It seeks to highlight how funders have been inventive and innovative, and explores mid- to long-term opportunities.

Why? A goal-orientated approach

Funders have long-standing commitments to OA, expressed through a combination of direct and indirect funding mechanisms, general and specific policies and funding conditions. Support for Diamond OA initiatives and entities have been part of these commitments for many years.

However, notwithstanding the ongoing success of the OA movement, a number of second-order goals have emerged. These goals concern the stock and flow of OA - how it is made up and evolving. It is not so much that these goals did not exist at the outset of the OA movement; it is simply that funders are now being more explicit and more nuanced in where they place emphasis.

Funders differ in where they place emphasis. For some, particularly those who entered into dialogue for this report, ambitions and priorities are coalescing around support for Diamond OA. Diamond OA is seen as a viable route (or one viable route) through which funders might achieve their goals. This applies to different funders of different types working at varying speeds in diverse environments.

Although there is some overlap, we can talk broadly about two categories of these second-order goals: economic and cultural.

Economic

Economic goals have emerged as funders react to the high cost of the transition to OA, because of the dominance of models like Transformative Agreements and APCs paid to favour large, commercial publishers.

There is an ongoing dialogue about the role of the funders in supporting Diamond OA in response to this. It is hoped that by helping Diamond OA approaches to gain greater traction, funders can provide increased access to scholar-led content whilst enabling greater cost-control and transparency and that funder support can create opportunities for innovation in business models that the commercial market has failed to provide or sustain.

There is an ongoing dialogue about whether supporting Diamond OA publishing is about offering an alternative to for-profit publishers or more nuanced ambition to move away from *excessive* for-profit publishing or an overly-consolidated publishing market.

Another concern at play for several publishers is trying to mitigate the financial impact on Learned Societies of the transition to OA. Such societies are vulnerable to the shift away from a commercial pay-to-read model to a commercial pay-to-publish model, but they are seen as valuable partners for the range of work they do supporting the research community. Funders hope their support for Diamond models will allow such partners to find ways to better align with and adapt to OA.

Cultural

These concerns are primarily rooted in equity and a desire to ensure that the distribution of progress and benefits from OA is more evenly felt. Funders see progress at different speeds in different subject disciplines, and among academics without access to APC funds (here, the overlap with economic goals is clear), and have identified that Diamond OA publishing models may offer a solution. The promotion of bibliodiversity and multilingualism are also relevant, although these are not explicit priorities for all funders.

Preserving or restoring the control of researchers and the academic community over the publishing process is another factor in this category. Diamond OA is frequently embedded in academic communities ('scholar-owned and scholar-led') and is perceived to bring editorial and publishing decisions closer to researchers. Greater control of the dissemination of knowledge is well aligned with Publish, Review, Curate (PRC); it would be no surprise to see interest and support for Diamond OA grow in line with PRC.

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How? Constrained creativity

Mechanisms in use

Research funding organisations direct funds to OA, specifically Diamond OA, through a wide range of different routes beyond the payment of APCs. The research for this report identified the following routes that are currently or have recently been utilised by funders:

1. Block grants made to research institutions, sometimes with a percentage allocated to support OA publishing or provision of Open Infrastructure
2. Research grants made to researchers, possibly with a percentage allocated to support OA publishing
3. Transformative Agreements
4. Advocacy and engagement encouraging the development of proposals from researchers and research institutions
5. General OS grant programmes
6. Diamond OA grant programmes
7. Open Infrastructure grant programmes
8. Seed funding grant programmes for early-stage initiatives
9. OA transition grant programmes aimed at journal publishers in specific regions
10. Plan S compliance grant programmes aimed at journal publishers
11. Network grant programmes to stimulate collaboration and partnerships
12. Membership fees paid to participate in OA or OS initiatives
13. National repositories provision
14. National Open Journal platform provision
15. Service agreements with providers of OA infrastructure or OA publishers to provide targeted or bespoke services

Constraints on funders

Yet despite this range of mechanisms, it is not a trivial task to transform funder interest in supporting Diamond OA into funding for publishers and service providers in research institutions (IPSPs) who operate that model. The viability of Diamond OA is likely to depend on reallocating monies away from existing expenditure on publishing and disinvestment from some publishers, but also the deployment of additional funds to seed and grow new publishing routes.

Access to funds does not necessarily translate into discretion as to how to utilise them. Funders must contend with a range of constraints on their actions, which are only sometimes apparent when observers ask why (say) no one has yet created a European

equivalent of SciELO. Every funder has to contend with their own version of path dependence, as momentum from the past dictates the direction of the present and closes down what may seem to the outsider viable hypothetical funding paths.

Funders distributing public monies often find it impossible to offer grants to researchers or projects outside their national borders. Funds are often allocated solely to benefit researchers of a specific nationality, making it difficult for them to offer support to any activity based outside their borders or working internationally.

Allocated funds may also be hypothecated for specific purposes. They may be locked into particular grant programmes or ringfenced to be passed directly to research institutions. Even when this is not the case, it can be very difficult to reroute money from one scheme to another; this becomes progressively more difficult as programmes become more established, familiar and popular. Multiple funders mentioned this in relation to Transformative Agreements. For better or worse, TAs have become a part of the landscape and are popular with groups of researchers because they remove friction from the publishing process. Removing or reallocating funds for other purposes is not simple to achieve.

Annual block grants to institutions have become an increasingly common mechanism through which some public research funders disseminate funds to research institutions. They offer a particular kind of challenge, as opposed to direct grants. Often, the only flexibility a block grant affords is through a percentage overhead allocation to which conditions can be attached, or by attaching a funding condition to the overall grant requiring the use of specific publishing routes. In the latter case, this will be, by necessity, only one of many such conditions.

Funders dispersing public monies is that they all have less money now than 10 to 15 years ago and less money, which they can distribute at their complete discretion. This is due to increased demand for funds, rising costs, political reprioritisation and requirements to achieve greater efficiency. The latter leads to greater pressure to make fewer, larger funding awards since efficiency favours scale. This makes it harder for funders to find ways to support novel, creative or early-stage approaches.

Outside the public sphere, private funders often have more latitude in how they allocate money, but they must still navigate the requirements conferred by their legal status or conditions attached to endowments and major donations.

Relatedly, funders have found themselves constrained by unreformed research assessment processes; they encounter opposition to the reallocation of money because it is perceived to enable researchers to publish in the most prestigious journals, thus furthering careers. More than one funder referred to a catch-22 situation

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- the desire to provide greater support to Diamond OA is constrained by current research assessment practices; reform of research assessment processes is dependent on the emergence of more viable and more attractive Diamond OA publishing routes.

Funders operate under constraints. There are more pressures on their funds than ever. It is challenging for them to find mechanisms to support Diamond OA initiatives. Yet these are not new pressures, and funders have found creative, innovative ways to remove impediments to funding and to offer support through the mechanisms that they have available to them.

There are also discussions at different levels about removing impediments to funding and how to sustain investment. These are based on partnership and collaboration between funders and other stakeholders. There are also initiatives where funders can find new ways to offer support through open forums for dialogue, flexible definitions of Diamond OA, and by addressing and investigating multiple publishing routes.

What? Collaboration & floating many boats

Partnerships

One of the most important factors in future development of support for Diamond OA publishing, will be collaborative initiatives that facilitate investment across international borders. The Global Diamond Open Access Alliance, and the partnerships that will emerge under its auspices, is the obvious mechanism that funders cite. Well-established pre-existing regional and subregional partnerships lie at the heart of some of the most promising discussions and developments.

The emergence of initiatives that work across borders by being embedded in organisations that can viably host them has also been critical to the progress of dialogue. These might be within research institutions or collaborations of research institutions; funders cite SCOAP3 (which operates under the CERN umbrella), SciELO and REDALYC as key examples.

Membership fees offer a simple route to viability for any provider that can adapt their business model to it. Memberships that cross international boundaries and foster international collaboration allo funders to provide support in a way that is less constrained than grant-making programmes or annual revenue funding. Science Europe, cOAlition S and the European Universities Association are examples of this

type of model which is well-established for different types of partnership and collaboration.

None of these models are invulnerable to the free-rider problem. There is still a need to find new mechanisms that can transcend or build upon nationally defined criteria for funding or to pool funds divested from other approaches, as some countries attempt at the national level. Yet the nature of the dialogue and the collaboration offers greater transparency and protection than relying on grant funding mechanisms that operate solely within national borders.

Portfolio approach

For research funders, support for OA has always been achieved through a combination of policy development, funding mechanisms and grant conditions, engagement and advocacy. This remains the case as research funders pursue support of Diamond OA.

It remains to be seen how Diamond OA can scale, how Diamond OA can be made sustainable, and how Diamond OA can be made sustainable at scale. Funders see a need to support a range of potential options and to support large and small transitions. Returning to a point made when discussing economic motivations in supporting Diamond OA, funders see a need for more innovation than commercial publishing routes have offered. They are seeking novel ways to foster innovation and diversity.

Open Research Europe (ORE) was mentioned by several funders for its potential to offer a solution at scale across national boundaries. Funders were keen to be involved in ORE discussions, were likely to support it as it moves into its next phase, and acknowledged the recognition it has at the ministry level. However, they were also keen to emphasise the ongoing need to diversify options rather than putting all of their eggs into the basket labelled 'ORE'. Support for ORE is not an either/or choice to be weighed against other Diamond OA routes, but rather one route among many which is emerging for funders to support. ORE has potential for scale and impact, but one is unlikely to develop into a final, single status quo for OA publishing.

Conclusion

The landscape of research funders financially supporting OA, particularly Diamond OA, is currently complex and constrained by various challenges although even within the small selection of funders we spoke to, we identified fifteen ways that they can or do fund Diamond OA. Funders continue to play a pivotal role by applying and exploring diverse funding mechanisms in innovative ways. As they move to support broader forms of OA motivated by goals of equity, transparency, and sustainability, and as the OA movement evolves, the mechanisms that funders employ are also evolving.

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However, funders do not have unlimited degrees of freedom available. Their options are more constrained than many other stakeholders may realise. Funders must work within restrictions such as limited funding, national boundaries, and established funding mechanisms like Transformative Agreements and block grants. Despite these obstacles, creative ways can be found through partnerships, collaboration and by emphasising a portfolio approach.

In times of such change, being creative and innovative and above all, seeking more collaboration with other research funders will be key to navigating limitations to create new pathways to a more sustainable future for Diamond OA.

Case studies

Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI)

Working with feet in two camps

HHMI is a US-based non-profit medical research organisation and one of the world's largest private supporters of biomedical research. Its legal status as a Medical Research Organization (MRO) means that it is required to spend funds generated from its endowment on the conduct of its own research. As a result, most HHMI-supported scientists are not grantees but HHMI employees receive operational support and a budget for conducting research.

HHMI has discretion about the research it chooses to fund. Still, the legal structure of a Medical Research Organization limits HHMI's ability to support publishing models and infrastructure, including Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) models, through grants. While HHMI does provide limited grant funding to external publishing organisations, paying for publishing services that improve research outputs is the financial mechanism most consistent with its status as an MRO.

The future of scientific publishing

HHMI set out a strategic initiative in 2017, building on a paper written by its President and Chief of Strategic Initiatives which set out '*A proposal for the future of scientific publishing in the life sciences*'.

The focus of HHMI emerging from that strategy is the reform of the research assessment system to ensure the next generation of scientists can develop and progress in a healthier way than the research sector currently permits. HHMI is

committed to Open Access (OA) alongside a fundamental change in research assessment. Institutions and researchers should focus on sharing their research independently of journals, for example, through preprints and data repositories. Journal editors would still play an important role in amplifying and curating research outputs, but they should not interfere with researchers sharing results themselves. In this way, assessment is uncoupled from the vehicle used for sharing research and journal-based metrics like publication venue or number of publications, accelerating sharing and facilitating a broader set of curation mechanisms.

HHMI sees OA models built on Article Processing Charges (APCs) as a step in the process but only as a way of loosening system restraints. They are inherently inequitable. HHMI does not pay centrally for APCs but allows researchers to use HHMI research budgets to pay APCs for OA journals and journals that are transitioning to full OA. HHMI supports publishers that offer preprints and open review and permits green OA routes.

HHMI would advocate change in such a way as to bring its researchers along. Researchers were split about 50:50 as to whether they supported an immediate OA policy, but this was sufficient for HHMI to actively pursue the change. Researcher attitudes are slowly changing as they weigh the costs and benefits of pursuing publishing in certain 'prestige' venues.

What role does Diamond OA play?

HHMI sees a role for Diamond OA in its vision, intimately tied to support for preprints, moving decisions on publishing to authors, not editors, and developing new infrastructure to evolve existing journals. A programme to build and create tools and services to support HHMI researchers is in development, working alongside partners, and this will be a potential and key route for supporting Diamond OA publishers and infrastructure providers.

HHMI seeks to be a distinctive voice in initiatives like cOAlition S and the Open Research Funders Group. They hope their voice can contribute to broader solutions in collaboration with other funders and stakeholders by remaining actively involved.

Fonds zur Förderung der wissenschaftlichen Forschung (Austrian Science Fund; FWF)

The importance of being early

The FWF is seen as an early adopter in all aspects of the Open movement in research.

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It was one of the first funding agencies in the world to adopt an Open Access (OA) policy in 2004. This policy became an OA mandate relating to peer-reviewed publications in 2008 and was expanded to cover books in 2009, likely a global first.

The FWF developed a programme in 2013 dedicated to supporting journals to transition to OA models, including some Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) titles. This was also the year FWF first supported SCOAP3. The first direct support for Diamond OA initiatives came in 2015 with support for the Open Library of the Humanities. A new funding programme helped launch or transition journals to Plan S-compliance in 2021.

The adoption of an Austrian Open Science policy in 2022 represents another significant moment of development in Austria. It aligned with the EU recommendation for national Open Science (OS) strategies, the increased awareness brought by cOAlition S, and the influence of the Open Science Network Austria, which brought together all relevant voices including research institutions and researchers.

Organically-grown approach

As the most significant funder in a mid-sized EU nation, acting early has been strategically important for the FWF, although the development of Open Access in Austria has been helped by international developments and collaboration. However, their approach has also always been predicated on the belief that if research funders require researchers to publish OA, they should provide funds for it. As such, the FWF also always needs to find ways to support open access financially. OA and then OS have been fundamental to the FWF's approach for over 20 years and will remain so, but the mechanisms they deploy have evolved to react to changes in the system.

The FWF has allocated a consistent percentage of its annual research budget to supporting OA for at least a decade. This has been done by utilising different funding streams:

- funding targeted at Austrian journals and media owners
- funds for investment in science and scholarship
- OA block grants allocated to institutions, which reduce barriers and administration for researchers (as they no longer have to seek reimbursement for Article Processing Charges

In turn, these mechanisms have been used to support Diamond OA and fund diverse platforms, support different disciplines and promote innovation.

The past can be a reliable guide to the future

The FWF will remain very active and flexible in supporting OA and Diamond OA and will continue to work with other organisations across the research landscapeSimply put, the more organisations that take part in the support of alternative publication models, the lower the share of cost each much bear, and so FWF seeks to work with other funders but also, institutions , and othermore parties more generally.

There are 61 Austrian journals listed in DOAJ, of which 52 are Diamond. Some Austrian institutions support international Diamond OA initiatives like Open Library of the Humanities. However, the full value of this support is not well understood. An initiative of the Austrian Academic Library Consortium is currently investigating who finances Diamond OA journals and open infrastructures in Austria in order to have a better overview on the one hand and to work together on funding in the future on the other.

There is also value in international collaborations where funders work together to support initiatives through membership models and alternative mechanisms. The current programme that supports journal compliance with Plan S will end in 2024. The FWF will continue to consider mechanisms for supporting Open Access and will participate in discussions about international collaborative initiatives, including Open Research Europe, Toward Responsible Publishing and the Global Diamond Open Access Initiative. As in the past, the likelihood is that these initiatives will require further reviews of how the FWF provides support and the financial streams they have in place.

RCN and Nordic Diamond Open Access

A Norwegian dawn

The first suggestion of a capacity hub for Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) for Nordic publishers came as a recommendation in the *Norwegian strategy for scholarly publishing after 2024 (Strategi for vitenskapelig publisering etter 2024)*, which was published in 2024. Norway had reached the impressive threshold of 80% of research articles being published Open Access (OA) in 2023, although this fell short of the 100% target set for 2024 in the previous strategy. The government established a working group to formulate a strategy for Norwegian scientific publishing post-2024 to further this initiative. The Research Council of Norway (RCN) functioned as the secretariat for formulating the strategy.

The Research Council covers the costs for Open Access publication as part of the indirect costs (overhead) to the institution where the researcher is employed.

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Previously, there had been an Article Processing Charge (APC) fund, but this ended in 2022 and was instead rolled into the overhead grant provided to institutions. Institutions spend significantly more on Open Access than the money allocated in this way.

RCN is not responsible for negotiating and managing publish and read agreements with publishers on behalf of Norwegian research libraries. In Norway, this is done by the Norwegian Agency for Shared Services in Education Research (SIKT). Whereas in the past, RCN had discretionary funds available to support networks or small grant calls for early-stage initiatives, reductions in funding have led to a reduction in funds available for strategic projects and a consolidation into larger grant awards.

Among many recommendations, the report identified that a capacity hub for Diamond OA publishing could be created from connections already developed through other initiatives, notably DIAMAS and cOAlition S, but no funding grants have been allocated from the RCN for this initiative so far.

A Nordic approach emerges

RCN has entered into dialogue with Universitet i Tromsø (UiT) who were keen to develop the possibility of a Diamond OA hub. UiT suggested working on the idea with University of Stockholm (SU) in Sweden and Tieteellisten seurain valtuuskunta (e Federation of Finnish Learned Societies; TSV), as well as potential partners in Denmark and Iceland.

The logic behind a Nordic hub rather than a solely Norwegian one has several different levels.

There are already substantial crossovers and established partnerships across the Nordic publishing landscape. Editorial board members, library directors, researchers and authors all work together actively across borders, and there is such commonality between languages to allow for collaboration and an emphasis on multilingual journals.

The work of Mikael Laakso on the Nordic publishing landscape suggests that there is still untapped potential for collaboration on infrastructure within this landscape, to be developed through shared services, possibly including a capacity hub. Building and maintaining attractive publication infrastructures is important if publishing in these titles is to grow.

While the priorities of a Nordic capacity hub might differ from those of individual national capacity centres. The Nordic countries are small, and the money in individual

national publishing landscapes is unlikely to be sufficient individually. Scale remains one of the major challenges inherent in Diamond OA publishing for all the identified benefits, and that means a Nordic, not a Norwegian approach, at least for now.

The proposal also fits the expected structure for capacity hubs, which is emerging from the DIAMAS Project, is predicated on institutional and disciplinary capacity centres as well as regional ones.

Libraries will take the next steps

Development of the concept took place at a workshop in August 2024 and was followed up by a second coinciding with the Munin Conference on Scholarly Publishing in November 2024.

SU will contribute a project leader for the initial development phase. This will be funded from within the existing SU library's budget. While generous, there is a clear logic to this approach. SU already operates a scholarly publishing centre which supports libraries across SU on topics such as licensing and also offers this service to 2 universities in Norway, including UiT. SU is actively pursuing a range of approaches to OA and is keen to enable more publishing routes.

It is also logical that the development is taken forward through libraries. Their budgets are more readily deployed on projects such as this, and they already actively invest in open infrastructure and support Diamond OA publishers. The immediate areas where a hub can make a difference fall in areas where librarians have expertise: metadata, archiving, marketing and training materials, and pricing.

Researchers and faculty need to be part of the conversation; it is important to engage them in the project's aims and ambitions. After more work has been done, the focus will return to funders.

Although this is primarily an initiative from a bottom-up collaboration between institutions that directly support researchers, RCN remains involved. They and funders from other Nordic countries have signalled interest in understanding the potential of such an initiative and are engaged as observers, although no funding allocation has yet been made. The approach also opens up the possibility of applying to 'Nordforsk', the cross-national funder, which requires the involvement of representatives or organisations from at least three Nordic countries before it will consider applications.

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(Agence nationale de la recherche (French national research agency; ANR)

Diamond Open Access for Open Science, sustainability and bibliodiversity

The ANR is expressly and strongly committed to Open Science (OS). This is built around specific objectives set out in its OS policy that echo the French *National Plan for Open Science*:

- Developing a concerted approach on national, European and international levels
- Contributing to the sharing and opening of research data, source code and software
- Promoting full and immediate Open Access (OA) to scientific publications.

Support for OA is embedded as part of OS, and Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) is embedded within OA in the *National Plan for Open Science*, which states the need to:

> *"Support open access publishing models that do not require the payment of articles processing charges ("diamond" model)."*

The ANR's support for Diamond Open Access is part of a strategy to ensure bibliodiversity, that is, a wide range of publishing venues and models. In addition, in the French context, a study has underlined that the amount spent by the French research institutions supporting APCs has tripled in the 10 years to 2024 and is possibly forecast to reach €50m by 2050. The sustainability of Open Access publishing is also part of this strategy. The ANR also places an emphasis on the value of multilingualism in science, specifically support for French language publishing.

Finding routes forward

Despite the strength of its commitment, ANR funding is awarded via project-based research grants and there is no simple mechanism for directing funds to Diamond OA publishers or infrastructure providers. The ANR has been able to provide substantial direct support and indirect support to a number of Diamond Open Access initiatives:

- *The Action Plan for Diamond Open Access* - In March 2022, under the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union, in partnership with cOAlition S, OPERAS and Science Europe, the ANR launched the Action Plan for Diamond

Open Access. It proposes to align and develop common resources for the entire Diamond OA ecosystem, including journals and platforms while respecting the cultural, multilingual, and disciplinary diversity that constitutes the strength of the sector. It stresses four key quality elements: Efficiency, quality standards, capacity building, and sustainability.

- *French Open Science Fund (2023)* - ANR has allocated €850k to the French National Fund for Open Science to support a wide range of projects, including many involving Diamond Open Access.
- *The DIAMAS Capacity Hub (2024)* - ANR announced financial support to the Global Federation through the launch of the European Capacity Hub with funding of €250k in 2024
- *Global Summit on Diamond Open Access* - A large French delegation was present in Toluca for the Global Summit on Diamond Open Access, which culminated in the announcement of collaboration to establish a Global Federation for Diamond Open Access, with the support of the French Ministry of Higher Education and Research.

These initiatives are in addition to the HAL-ANR portal, which brings together and promotes all the scientific publications arising from projects funded by the ANR. The ANR Open Science Monitor measures the effect of the ANR's open science policy. ANR stands as an example of how funding agencies can collaborate to set new mechanisms to support Diamond OA at national, regional and global levels.

French Ministry of Higher Education and Research

A National fund for Open Science

The French Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche, MESR) is not itself a direct funder of research but it provides annual funding to France's large research institutions and through agencies like the French National Research Agency (Agence nationale de la recherche; ANR).

Despite this, the MESR has sought to provide direct investment into Open Science (OS) through the National Fund for Open Science (FNSO). This grant-making programme has existed since 2018 and has invited applications three times in that period. The national OS budget is around 5 to 6M€ a year, and 2 to 3M€ are dedicated each year to the FNSO. In addition to the MESR's funds, the ANR provided an additional €850k for the FNSO in 2023 and around €50k from the Ministry of Culture between 2021 and 2023.

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Through FNSO, the MESR supports a broad range of initiatives, investing in entities providing infrastructure, software, data repositories, data curation and training, and platforms. One of the major initiatives funded by FNSO is Recherche Data Gouv, an ecosystem for sharing and opening research data.

From its inception, FNSO has emphasised Open Access (OA), focusing on establishing a broad base of models and an equitable, high-quality, affordable and transparent publishing model in France. In practice, this has resulted in the support of Diamond Open Access (Diamond OA) initiatives rather than Article Processing Charges (APCs).

Grants to support stability and sustainability

The MESR also published research showing the total cost of APCs reached €30m in 2021 and could reach €50m-€68m in 2030 without changes. This has helped change the terms of discussion from individual APC costs of €2k to one about the national burden of figures in the tens of millions of Euros. It has underlined the priorities for FNSO to support a range of publishing models.

While annual grants are not ideally suited to provide the longer-term support on which the transition of the publishing system and ongoing stability may require, the MESR has been supportive of initiatives such as Subscribe to Open or freemium models that offer alternative models and routes to stability and also supports publishing platforms that offer services to publishers for free.

The MESR has also used the FNSO to partner with the Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS) and has offered three-year support to a range of entities selected by SCOSS that align with its priorities.

Legally, FNSO sits outside of the MESR, and while this may seem to be a simple technical point, it was a deliberate choice since it permits multi-year investments.

Influence and funding into the future

Above and beyond these funding awards, the MESR is proactive in seeking to influence the organisations it works with, increasing visibility for OS and developing partnerships. It does this through the work of a dedicated National Open Science Coordinator, who works with stakeholders across France and peers in other countries through the Council for National Open Science Coordination (CONOSC).

Since 2018, the MESR's efforts have yielded substantial progress in institutional OS adoption. A recent survey of research organisations conducted in 2024 showed a notable increase in universities with formal OS policies, rising from 2.9% in 2018 to 51%

in 2024. Further, 63% have dedicated internal publishing structures such as University Presses. Over 80% promote the Green OA model, and 76% promote Diamond OA. Such high levels of participation indicate that the MESR's support has been instrumental in mainstreaming OA across France's higher education institutions, above and beyond the funding awarded through FNSO.

Yet, co-ordinated joint funding processes with other countries remains logistically challenging. Despite entities like CONOSC and SCOSS, the free rider problem remains OS infrastructure remains overdependent on a few funders. The MESR's ongoing support for prominent infrastructure providers like arXiv and Open Research Europe (ORE) is important and intends to be a strong signal to other potential funders.

The MESR is currently considering how and when to launch further calls for applications to FNSO; the MESR is also considering adaptations that would allow it to support longer-term activity and help organisations plan for more stable transitions. Changes will be considered by the Open Science Committee, which is made up of the leaders of the most prominent research organisations in France such as:

- National Research Agency (Agence Nationale de la Recherche; ANR)
- National Center for Scientific Research (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique; CNRS)
- National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment (Institut National de Recherche pour l'Agriculture, l'Alimentation et l'Environnement; INRAE)
- National Institute for Research in Digital Science and Technology (Institut National de Recherche en Informatique et en Automatique; INRIA)
- Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (Commissariat à l'Énergie Atomique et aux Énergies Alternatives; CEA)
- High Council for Evaluation of Research and Higher Education (Haut Conseil de l'Évaluation de la Recherche et de l'Enseignement Supérieur; HCERES)
- University Consortium for Digital Publishing (Consortium Universitaire de Publications Numériques; Couperin)

In any scenario, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation will proactively support Open Science and seek to lead support for equitable Open Access initiatives in France and abroad.

Appendix A - Methodology

A total of 7 interviews and a focus group were conducted with representatives from a variety of research funders. Interviewees were selected to ensure good coverage

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across a variety of dimensions - type of organisation, location, size, historic support of OA and Diamond OA.

Interviews were semi-structured around a short number of key themes. Follow up questions varied depending on context, responses given and existing knowledge about the policies of the interviewees' organisations. Detailed case studies were drawn from interviews and follow up correspondence with interviewees, with the final text subject to review and confirmation.

Appendix B - List of participants / acknowledgements

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