Federating diamond OA in Europe and beyond: the European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH)

This case study presents the context, governance and operations of the European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH) launched in January 2025. The EDCH will coordinate diamond open access (OA) capacity centres in Europe and consolidate and align the diamond OA organizations that provide services and tools to diamond OA outputs in Europe. In this way, it will provide the backbone for a scholarly communication infrastructure that is owned and operated by the academic community without charges for authors and readers.

Keywords

diamond open access; scholarly publishing; diamond OA journals; European Diamond Capacity Hub; OPERAS; UNESCO

PIERRE MOUNIER

Co-coordinator
OPERAS
Capacity Hub Co-coordinator
European Diamond
Co-Director
DOAB
France

JOHAN ROORYCK

Executive Director
cOAlition S
Co-coordinator
European Diamond
Capacity Hub
Co-Editor-in-Chief
Glossa, a journal of general linguistics
The Netherlands

Context

Definition and purpose

Diamond open access (OA) is an equitable model of scholarly communication where authors and readers are not charged publishing fees for publishing or reading. Diamond OA is community-driven, academic-led and -owned: all content-related elements (journal and platform titles, papers, reviews, preprints, books, decisions, data, correspondence, reviewer databases) are controlled and owned by scholarly communities and cannot be sold or traded as commodities. Open licences for content are the default. Diamond OA outputs serve a wide variety of generally small-scale, multilingual and multicultural scholarly communities.

The European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH) will serve the infrastructure and service needs of diamond OA capacity centres, including diamond OA publishers and service providers in Europe, who in turn will provide services to specific diamond OA outputs (e.g. journals, platforms, preprints, books). The EDCH will provide a community platform, quality alignment processes and tools, skills and training modules, technical tools and unified publishing guidelines as well as a general coordination service. These services are spelled out in more detail in the 'Operation: six task forces' section below. The EDCH will also provide services to help diamond OA publishers transition existing subscription journals to diamond OA. In this way, the EDCH will streamline, strengthen and unify diamond OA publishing activities in Europe.

'The European Diamond Capacity Hub (EDCH) will serve the infrastructure and service needs of diamond OA capacity centres'

Background and international embedding

The idea to build the EDCH finds its origin in the recommendations of the Open Access Diamond Journals Study (OADJS),[1] followed by the Diamond OA Action Plan.[2] In the Action Plan it is observed that 'Diamond open access currently represents an archipelago of relatively isolated journals and platforms. They would benefit from sharing common resources.' As one of the actions to remedy that situation, the Diamond Action Plan proposed to 'Create a dedicated non-profit Capacity Centre for Diamond Publishing (CCDP) within 30 months that provides technical, financial, and training services and resources at different levels to eligible journals and editors. Governance of the CCDP will be transparent and representative of its stakeholder communities, with proper consideration for the decentralised and diverse nature of the Diamond ecosystem.'

That 'Capacity Centre for Diamond Publishing (CCDP)' is now being set up as the EDCH. The hub is itself anchored in a broader, global framework for diamond OA that unfolds across four levels corresponding to the concentric circles in Figure 1.[3]

◆ **Community**
Diamond journals, books, outputs

◆ **National, local, & disciplinary**
Diamond Capacity Centers

◆ **Regional**
Diamond Capacity Hubs

◆ **Global**
Diamond Alliance

Figure 1: A global architecture for Diamond OA

The outermost circle represents diamond OA communities (journals, book series, publish-review-curate platforms, preprint servers, etc.) whose titles are owned by a scholarly community that publishes scholarly content without charges to authors and readers.

The next layer consists of institutional, disciplinary and national capacity centres that provide services to these scholarly communities, enabling them to function through administrative, legal or infrastructural support. Examples of such national capacity centres that may serve as best practices include OpenEdition in France, TSV in Finland, FECYT in Spain, PUB IN in Portugal, Hrčak in Croatia, Érudit in Canada and Relawan Jurnal in

Indonesia. The DIAMAS project has found that support for diamond OA at the national level is valuable, because it is able to instrumentalize national legislation, institutional networks and academic traditions in the service of diamond OA. Examples of disciplinary and institutional capacity centres include the Open Library of Humanities in the UK, the centre Mersenne in France, or PsychOpen GOLD Leibniz in Germany, among many others.

The third concentric circle represents regional diamond capacity hubs, which ensure synergies between national capacity centres within their global region. This is again based on best practices in Latin America (Redalyc-Amelica, SciELO) and Africa (African Journals Online (AJOL)). Such regional hubs are best attuned with regional legislation and academic practices that need to be taken into account in the streamlining of diamond OA. The EDCH is positioned at this level: a Capacity Hub for diamond OA services in Europe.

> 'support for diamond OA at the national level is valuable, because it is able to instrumentalize national legislation, institutional networks and academic traditions'

Finally, the centre of the concentric circles represents the Global Alliance for Diamond OA. This level brings together regional diamond capacity hubs (DCHs) and technical organizations with a worldwide reach to facilitate and coordinate diamond OA publishing worldwide, in line with the 2021 UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science.[4] For this reason, UNESCO has graciously accepted to host and facilitate the Global Alliance for Diamond OA and announced a global consultation about it on 10 July 2024.

The European Diamond Capacity Hub: governance and operation

Figure 2: EDCH logo

Governance model

The EDCH, (see its new logo which represents a stylized, multifaceted diamond with each facet of the diamond carrying a different colour corresponding to different services, Figure 2) will be hosted by OPERAS,[5] the research infrastructure supporting open scholarly communication in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) in the European Research Area (ERA). OPERAS will host the EDCH under the fiscal sponsorship regime. It has three governance bodies: a Steering Committee, an Executive Committee and an Assembly. The Assembly consists of community members: these include representatives from diamond capacity centres and diamond publishers and service providers who are listed in the diamond OA registry, and who will be consulted on all major EDCH initiatives. The Assembly will elect a Chair and two co-chairs to sit on the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee otherwise consists of Supporting Members: representatives from public or non-profit organizations (e.g. charities, foundations, associations, research performing organizations (RPOs) and research funding organizations (RFOs) located in the ERA whose legal mission is to fund and/or perform research and scholarship, and who financially support the EDCH. Finally, the Executive Committee represents Operational Members: these

are national and international organizations engaged in aspects of diamond OA publishing, that are willing to take responsibility for long-term services to EDCH and/or by leading essential EDCH Task Forces.

Operation: six task forces

The EDCH will initially deploy six task forces to achieve its goals. These are described below:

Community management

This task force will ensure communication and engagement with the community of diamond capacity centres and diamond publishers and service providers in the ERA, ensure outreach to national communities and languages and coordinate the translation of tools into various languages of the region.

'The EDCH will initially deploy six task forces to achieve its goals'

Skills and competences

Diamond OA journal services need their staff (editors, editorial support staff, administrative personnel) to be trained in various aspects of publishing. This task force will coordinate training, develop training materials to be hosted by national capacity centres and ensure mutual learning to upscale skills and competences across the diamond OA community in the ERA. The French national diamond OA infrastructure OpenEdition[6] has agreed to lead and coordinate this task force.

Quality alignment

The DIAMAS (Developing Institutional Open Access Publishing Models to Advance Scholarly Communication)[7] project has developed an ambitious quality standard for diamond OA called the Diamond OA Standard (DOAS), which will help align the quality of diamond OA outputs and services.[8] Diamond OA capacity centres and publishers can check to what extent their services are in line with DOAS via a self-assessment tool.[9] The Spanish science and technology organization FECYT[10] has agreed to lead this task force, which will support the ongoing quality alignment effort of diamond OA outputs and services.

Tools and technology

Diamond OA outputs and capacity centres need publishing tools and platforms to provide high-quality online publication and ensure their technical interoperability. This task force will initially integrate the various outputs from the DIAMAS and CRAFT-OA (Creating a Robust Accessible Federated Technology for Open Access)[11] projects (e.g. Common Access Point, the Diamond Discovery Hub, open journal systems (OJS)[12] Core enhancements, the OJS diamond package, the OpenAIRE[13] Diamond Publisher Dashboard and the Diamond Publishing Technical Living Handbook), make them available on a central portal and keep them up to date.

Diamondization

Bosman et al. showed that the distribution of diamond OA journals is uneven across scholarly disciplines: 60.6% of diamond OA journals are in HSS, 17.1% in medicine, 22.2% in science.[14] The diamondization task force will carry out a pilot project to help diamond capacity centres and publishers facilitate the 'diamondization' of scholarly journals in disciplines currently lacking diamond options. The modus operandi for this task force is still to be designed but it could start managing a 'diamondization fund' to support journals planning to transition to diamond OA.

Funding and fundraising

This task force will expand the Funders-Sponsors-Donors (FSD) network of EDCH, using a fair and equitable model of contributions for all stakeholders that takes into account the number of scholars served and the gross domestic product based on purchasing power parity – GDP (PPP) of the country they operate in.

Diamond OA benefits all, so it stands to reason that it should be supported by all stakeholders. The French National Research Agency (ANR) has already generously provided €250,000 for the initial two years of operation of the EDCH. These funds will be used to hire a technical director and meet other expenses (communication, travel, overheads). The Direction des Données Ouvertes de la Recherche (DDOR) of France's CNRS has contributed funding that will be used to hire a community manager for the EDCH, leading the task force on community management.

RFOs can follow the example of ANR and provide funding for the EDCH. We are working on a model for funding that is proportional to an organization's investment in research and country GDP. RPOs, university libraries and (national) capacity centres can use the Global Sustainability Coalition for Open Science Services (SCOSS)[15] as an intermediary that helps identify what needs funding or provides in-kind contributions in the form of seconded personnel, tools and services. Ministries will be able to contribute through the future European Research Infrastructure Consortium (ERIC) status of OPERAS, and EOSC.[16] The European Commission can make project funding available that is targeted towards diamond OA.

'the EDCH will interact with capacity centres, diamond OA publishers and service providers, rather than with individual diamond OA outputs and editors'

How it works: user scenarios

To see how these task forces operate and deliver their services in a complementary way, we would like to provide a few user scenarios. First of all, it is important to realize that the EDCH will interact with capacity centres, diamond OA publishers and service providers, rather than with individual diamond OA outputs and editors. A typical capacity centre will become a Community Member of the EDCH via registration in the registry. That registry contains different types of organizations; some of them are capacity centres but also learned societies that publish a single diamond journal. As a requirement for membership, these organizations will have to work with publications that meet six operational criteria for diamond OA.[17] The organization then carries out a self-assessment of their operations with the DOAS quality self-assessment tool developed in DIAMAS and maintained by the quality alignment task force in EDCH, see Figure 3.

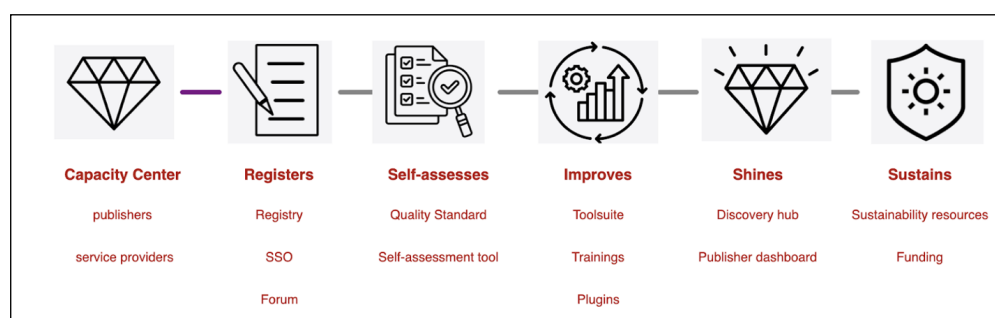| Capacity Center	Registers	Self-assesses	Improves	Shines	Sustains
publishers	Registry	Quality Standard	Toolsuite	Discovery hub	Sustainability resources
service providers	SSO	Self-assessment tool	Trainings	Publisher dashboard	Funding
	Forum		Plugins		

Figure 3: User scenarios

The organization may then notice that aspects of their operations can be improved or would benefit from collaboration. They then reach out to the EDCH skills and competences and tools and technology task forces to improve their skills and competences via the toolsuite, training, and technical operations, upgrade or change their submission system, or work together with other capacity centres to share operational tasks. The organization and its journal(s) become more visible and shine via the Discovery Hub and the Publisher Dashboard that are managed by the community management task force. Such well-aligned organizations may then be contacted by journals that wish to adopt the diamond model to serve disciplines that currently lack diamond outputs. They can apply to an open call from the diamondization task force to receive funds for a three-year migration of these journals to a diamond platform. The sustained interaction of all task forces will enable a flexible, diverse and well-aligned network of diamond publishers and service providers in Europe.

Timeline

The envisaged timeline for the establishment of the EDCH is represented in Figure 4.
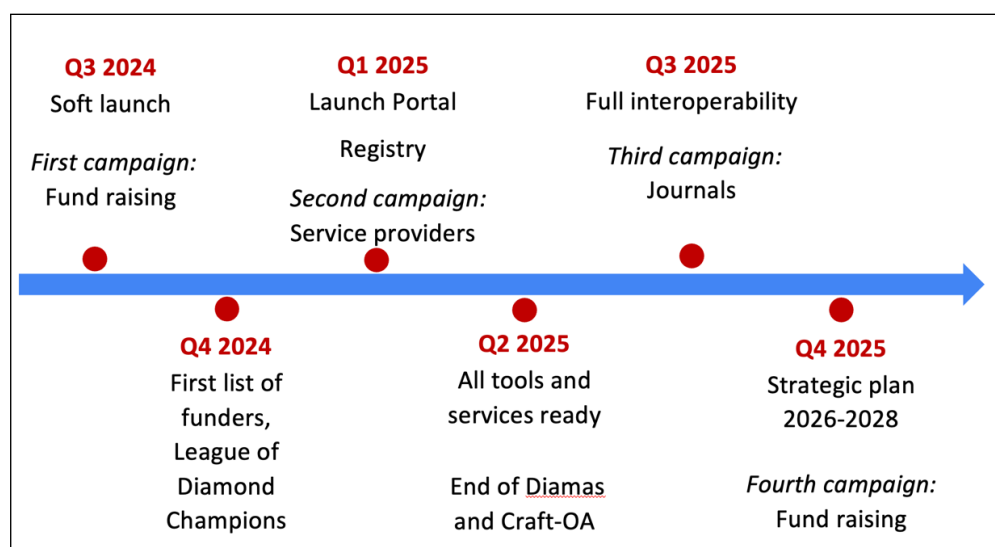

Figure 4: EDCH timeline

The soft launch of the EDCH and its first fundraising campaign took place in Q3 of 2024, resulting in Q4 in a first list of contributing RFOs and a network of Diamond Champions. Q2 of 2025 will see the launch of the EDCH portal and the opening of the Registry, followed by a second funding campaign targeting service providers. In Q2 of 2025, the DIAMAS and CRAFT-OA projects come to an end, and all the outputs, tools and services of these projects will be ready for use in the EDCH portal. Q3 of 2025 is dedicated to achieving full interoperability between these tools and services, and a third campaign targeting Diamond OA outputs will be launched. By Q4 of 2025, a three-year (2026–2028) strategic plan for EDCH will be announced, and a fourth funding campaign will be launched.

Conclusion

The Diamond Capacity Hub will ensure synergies align and support diamond OA capacity centres in Europe, including diamond OA publishers and service providers. It will facilitate the diamond OA capacity centres that service diamond OA outputs in terms of technical services, training, quality, best practices and sustainability. Capacity centres will be enabled to provide journal, book, and preprint communities with the necessary publishing infrastructure allowing them to publish their diamond OA outputs. We call all readers to action to engage in diamond OA journals and publishing activities in their own communities.

Facilitating and aligning diamond OA will achieve a number of desirable goals in OA publishing. First, it ensures equity by not charging fees to authors or readers. It also allows researchers to take back control of scholarly content. Diamond OA also allows RFOs and RPOs to control publication costs, creating a sustainable alternative to gold OA fees that are spiralling out of control. Finally, diamond OA ensures diversity and multilingualism since it publishes outputs in a variety of languages and epistemic traditions.[18]

'We call all readers to action to engage in diamond OA journals and publishing activities in their own communities'

Abbreviations and Acronyms
A list of the abbreviations and acronyms used in this and other *Insight*s articles can be accessed here – click on the URL below and then select the 'full list of industry A&As' link: http://www.uksg.org/publications#aa.

Competing interests
The authors are co-coordinators of the EDCH.

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Corresponding author:
Pierre Mounier
OPERAS Co-coordinator
European Diamond Capacity Hub Co-coordinator
DOAB Co-Director
France
E-mail: pierre.mounier@openedition.org
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0691-6063

Co-author:
Johan Rooryck
ORCID ID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7214-7405