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Open access, open access publishing and open research data in the Greek Universities

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Abstract:

Objective: Examines the developments made by the Greek institutions in open access, in open access publishing and in open research data.

Methods: Describes and provides a brief overview of the initiatives and actions that took place in Greek universities and organizations since the Berlin Declaration on Open Access in October 2003. We focus on the activities and projects that were and are carried out by Greek academic libraries and by the national consortium of the Hellenic Academic Libraries-Link (HEAL-Link).

Findings: During these years the Greek academic libraries were and remain the pioneers of the open access movement while there is no national open access mandate and policy. It seems that initially the emphasis was given to green road through the implementation of institutional repositories but they soon became stagnant. In most of the institutions the mandate refers only to master and doctoral theses while there is a recommendation for researchers' publications. The gold road was barely supported by the Greek institutions and researchers.

Conclusions: Greek academic libraries and HEAL-Link need to work with researchers to ensure that the full benefits of open access are realised.

Keywords: Greek Universities, HEAL-Link, Open access.

1. Introduction

Since the Berlin Declaration on Open Access in October 2003, many initiatives, projects and actions have taken place worldwide regarding the implementation of open access. All the parties of scholarly communication and publishing were involved in the open access movement and they acted in accordance with their principles, priorities, goals and needs. Consequently, the concept of open access has evolved and transformed during the last fifteen years. Various pathways have been opened up making space for new ideas. Roadmaps and policies have been announced and put in practice and several models have been developed. The last few years the community engaged in the open access movement speaks about Open Science and Open Data introducing new parameters, mechanisms and models. The notion is that open access as an idea and as a reality is in a transformative stage.

In Greece the research is mainly conducted by Higher Education Institutions, namely the Universities, and by various research centers and organizations. All the above institutions have kept track of the developments at the European and international level and have attempted to align with them, where and when feasible.

In this paper we will attempt to map and present the current situation of open access in Greece, but we will limit our overview to the environment of higher education. More specifically the paper consists of two parts, the one presenting the attempts and the actions of Greek universities and the second one presenting the role and the actions of HEAL-Link, the consortium of Greek academic libraries. At this point we have to clarify that when we refer to Greek universities or Greek Higher Education Institutions, we mean the Greek academic libraries, which were the first to support the idea of open access and took actions so as to forward and disseminate it.

2. Greek research environment

The main research output comes from the Greek Higher Education Institutions and the research centers. Currently the term Greek Higher Education Institutions equals to both universities (of theoretical and applied/technological education) and polytechnic schools, all of them public. The research community of these institutions comprises of the faculty members, who have educational and research tasks in parallel, the PhD candidates and postgraduate students, the postdoctoral researchers and the scientific staff members.

Apart from the academic institutions, there are many research centers and institutes, which are supervised by the General Secretariat of Research and Technology (GSRT). Both the Greek Higher Education Institutions and the research centers are under the supervision of the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs. There are, also, a few research centers, which are supervised by other ministries. Additionally, research is also carried out by other organizations such as hospitals, private companies etc. though at a lower rate¹.

¹ <https://www.openaire.eu/item/greece>

At national level, the Law 4310/2014 refers to open access for publicly funded research but there is no national open access mandate and policy². No formal mandate or set of policies have been adopted by national bodies and the Greek government. Within this context it's not surprising that 80% of the publications by Greek corresponding authors were behind a paywall, as found for 2016³.

3. Greek academic libraries

The libraries of the above mentioned Greek Higher Education Institutions form the Greek academic libraries. During the previous years the Greek academic libraries were the pioneers of the open access movement in an attempt to engage all the involved parties, like the researchers, the administration of the institutions and the publishers. The first significant output was the resolution of the 71st Hellenic Universities Rectors' Synod in 2012. The Synod adopted the Open Access Principle in bibliography and signed the Berlin Declaration⁴. The Synod, also, made a recommendation to the institutions so as the papers and/or publications to be deposited in open access institutional repositories and encouraged the members of the academic community to publish in open access journals.

Long before the resolution of 2012, most of the academic libraries had developed institutional repositories following the developments in other countries. As a result of the libraries' prompt, the Senate of many Universities signed the Berlin Declaration individually. Along with the implementation of the repositories, the libraries also developed policies for the function and the content of the repositories. Almost all the Greek institutional repositories follow the same policy today. There is a mandate for the deposit of master's and doctoral theses while the deposit of professors' and researchers' publications is recommended. Only two Institutions, the International Hellenic University and the University of Macedonia, have adopted a mandate for the deposit of all types of the university's research output. In two other institutions, the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and the Harokopio University the deposit of the publications of the faculty members and the researchers is voluntary but the data is also used by the Quality Assurance Units of the Universities for the evaluation of the teaching staff. The deposit of research data in repositories is extremely limited as only the Harokopio University has such content.

A positive development took place in March 2019. The last Hellenic Universities Rectors' Synod requested all the universities to implement policies and practices, which will support both the green and gold open access road and to adopt a mandate for professors and

² National policy of Greece on the OpenAIRE webpage, <https://www.openaire.eu/item/greece>

³ Presentation by HEAL-Link's Office during the 24th Panhellenic Academic Libraries Conference in Larissa, 1-2 November 2018, <http://palc24.cs.teilar.gr/conference/el/programma.jsp>. The title of the presentation is "*HEAL-Link 2019-2021*".

⁴ The full text of the resolution on the following webpage, <http://www.synodos-aei.gr/announcements.html>

researchers to self-archive their scientific publications⁵. Of course, the Synod's resolution doesn't suggest the commitment of all the universities. The universities are independent bodies and the Senate of each one is assigned to approve and sign the respective policy.

Apart from the institutional repositories the academic libraries initiated a number of projects focusing on the digitization of old Greek journals, although very few were scientific journals. Most of these digitized collections are hosted in OJS platforms and their content is open access. The last few years a few libraries moved on to the development of systems and platforms for the publishing of Greek gold open access journals. These journals don't charge the authors any article publication charges (APCs). A typical example of this kind of journal is *Academia*, a peer-reviewed open access journal⁶, which is indexed by DOAJ and Scopus. The journal is hosted in Pasithee, a platform for the publishing of open access scientific journals⁷.

It seems that initially the emphasis was given to the green open access road through the implementation of institutional repositories, but they soon became stagnant. The obligatory deposit is limited to master's and doctoral theses while the deposit of researchers' publications remains optional - after a period of about ten years since the implementation of the repositories. On the other hand, the gold open access road (either APC-based or non APC-based) is barely supported by the Greek institutions and researchers. Very few universities provide a partial cover of article processing charges (APCs).

4. Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL-Link)

The Hellenic Academic Libraries Link (HEAL-Link) is the only existing national consortium in Greece consisting of 49 members including Universities and research members but also the Academy of Athens, the Library of the Greek Parliament and the National Library of Greece⁸. The actions of the consortia include the full text access to electronic journals, books and databases, an interlibrary loan service, staff training and others⁹.

HEAL-Link holds a prominent position in the country as it supports open access through various activities. The official position of HEAL-Link is that it advocates for and supports both the green and gold open access road. Within this context, during the last negotiations for the renewals of 2019-2021 agreements with all the scientific publishers, HEAL-Link asked for open access provisions and terms. As a result of the negotiations there were two Read & Publish agreements and four agreements with a discount on APCs. Apart from the agreements, HEAL-Link has a membership in important initiatives such as SCOAP3 and Open Library of Humanities (OLH).

⁵ The full text of the mandate, http://www.synodos-aei.gr/documents/apofaseis_90is_synodou.pdf

⁶ For more information you may visit the webpage of the journal, <http://academia.lis.upatras.gr/>

⁷ More information on the web page of Pasithee, <http://xantho.lis.upatras.gr/pasithee/>

⁸ <https://www.heal-link.gr/en/members/>

⁹ <https://www.heal-link.gr/>

An important project was developed under HEAL-Link to provide electronic textbooks in higher education. Kallipos is an open access repository that holds all the textbooks which were produced under the project “Hellenic Academic e-books”¹⁰. HEAL-Link is also interested in infrastructure for open research data. A repository for research data is under development as a unified infrastructure for the HEAL-Link members.

HEAL-Link participates in open access initiatives like OA2020 and OpenAIRE. As a consortium, HEAL-Link is a member of Southern European Libraries Link (SELL)¹¹. During the meeting of SELL in May 2018, a statement on open access was announced, with which the members stated their full support to open access and their commitment to speed up the transition¹².

A declaration on open access was announced by HEAL-Link, which was supported by the Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs through the Minister Kosta Gavroglou¹³. In brief, HEAL-Link declares its interest in establishing an international initiative for the open access transformation of scholarly journals focusing on the transformation from subscription to open access publishing in accordance with community specific publication preferences. Also, HEAL-Link supports new and improved forms of open access publishing, urges institutions to establish open access policies and professors and researchers to submit their post-print scientific papers to academic institutional repositories immediately upon publication.

Lastly, HEAL-Link decided to initiate cooperation with the Hellenic Foundation for Research and Innovation (H.F.R.I) though the memorandum isn’t yet signed. It’s regarded as an important step forward since the HFRI is a national key player in research funding.

5. Conclusions

As we have already mentioned there isn’t an open access mandate and policy in Greece but the academic libraries and HEAL-Link work intensively towards this direction in the academic environment. An open access policy was composed by HEAL-Link in cooperation with the research centre ATHENA but it’s still under revision. The text will work as a template for every institution that wishes to comply with the last Rectors Synod’s decision for the implementation of policies and practices, which supports both the green and gold open access road, and the mandate for professors and researchers to self-archive any type of research output. In parallel the General Secretariat of Research and Technology (GSRT) is composing an open access policy which will apply only to the research centers.

¹⁰ More information on the web page of Kalippos, <https://www.kallipos.gr/en/>

¹¹ More information on the webpage of SELL, <https://www.heal-link.gr/SELL/>

¹² The full text of the statement, https://www.heal-link.gr/SELL/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/SELL_Thessaloniki_statement_may_2018.pdf

¹³ The full text of the declaration on the following webpage, <https://www.heal-link.gr/en/declaration-on-open-access-in-greece/>

It seems that the Greek research community is more familiar with the green open access road than the gold one if we take into account all the preprint archives that exist worldwide and the demand for doctoral theses to be deposited both individually in the corresponding institutional repository and in the National Archive of PhD Theses¹⁴.

The Greek academic libraries ought to be more proactive and work along with the researchers in order to foster and establish open access as the appropriate way of publishing and/or disseminating the research output of an academic institution.

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¹⁴ <https://www.didaktorika.gr/eadd/?locale=en>