

## The Consortium for a Transparent Transition to Open Access (TTOA): A cost-transparent combination of old and new

*The TTOA Consortium is an initiative of the Fair Open Access Alliance ([www.faiopenaccess.org](http://www.faiopenaccess.org)) and includes 'native' open access publishers, traditional subscription-based publishers, and open access publishers that do not charge authors: PLOS, MDPI, De Gruyter, Open Edition, Copernicus Publications, Ubiquity Press, Brill, and OLH. In addition to these publishers, the following organizations are collaborating partners: CWTS (Leiden University), QOAM, MPDL.*

The European Commission has recently opened a call for tender to build an “Open Research Europe Publication Platform” in order to achieve its laudable open access ambitions for 2020. The specifications of the call detail many ideal features for a 21<sup>st</sup>-century publishing platform: the platform must be open source; the costs for publishing each article must be transparent; authors should be exempt of any charges; all content published on the platform must be immediately and freely accessible to all readers; and the platform should be able to integrate the publication of research results sponsored by other funders.

One feature, however, is significantly less desirable in our opinion: the call suggests that the new platform is intended as a new mega-journal, serving all disciplines uniformly. Similar types of mega-journal formats recently launched and tested by private research funders have suffered from limited uptake by researchers. This is understandable: researchers are reluctant to publish in new journals that have yet to develop quality standards and a reputation. Scholars have more confidence in the fine-tuned quality control provided by existing journals. More importantly, this tender does not encourage established publications and publishers to change their workflows to achieve the transparency and openness sought in the scientific enterprise.

For this reason, the TTOA Consortium has refrained from submitting a proposal to build and run a platform as currently described in the call for tender.

The TTOA Consortium has instead developed a different approach to manage the transition to open access, while embracing all the final features specified in the ORE Call for Tender. Our proposal calls on the expertise and the recognition of existing journals to screen the quality of the articles that are published on the platform. Provisionally called the “Open Publication Platform (OPP)”, this structure consists of two pillars:

- The first pillar is a submission portal that serves as a preprint publication channel and funnels articles to the journals preferred by the authors. During submission, authors indicate the journals in which they hope to see their article published. Peer-review reports are portable and are carried along with the paper from one journal to the next, with authors revising their paper as a function of the reviews.
- The second pillar consists of a modern platform hosting the journals' peer-reviewed and published articles. These articles are co-branded with both the journal name and the OPP logo.

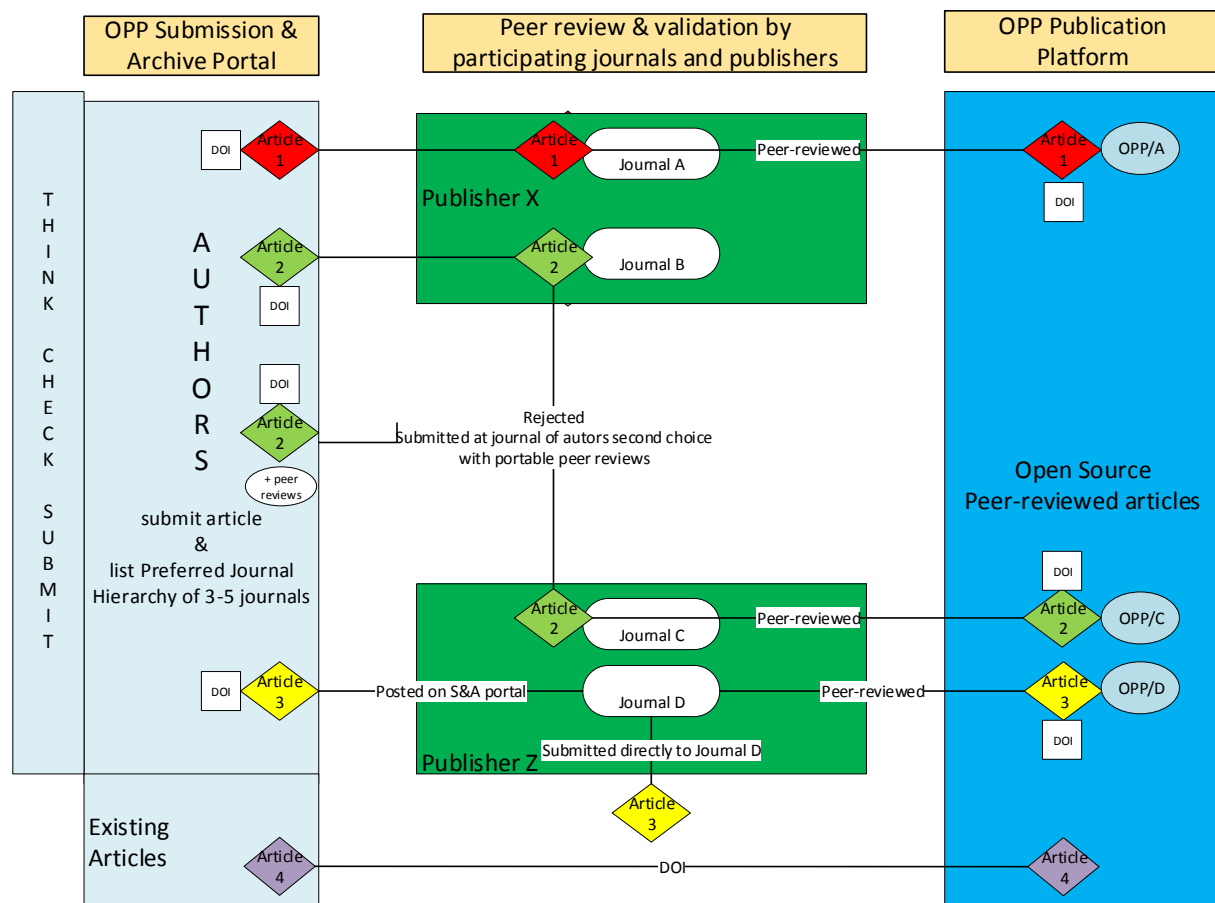
The submission portal, archive, and publication platform would be financed by research funding organisations, while the peer-review and quality control are carried out by the journals of participating publishers. This infrastructure should be built from open-source software, operate under open standards, and be owned or hosted by non-profit organizations.

A fully transparent publication fee (PF) is key in our approach: participating publishers have agreed to provide a breakdown of the per-article costs of publishing. Open peer-review and open data will also be our goal, and the CWTS will be our partner for the implementation of ‘responsible metrics’. In addition, all publishers in the TTOA Consortium have agreed that the publication fee will not exceed €1400 per

article on average, a sustainable figure that preserves the future of scholarly publishing and recognizes the true cost of publishing. The OPP could easily integrate national platforms as well as those of other funding organisations. All publishers and funders who agree to the conditions set out by the TTOA Consortium are welcome to join.

This proposal would create a platform for sponsored research that combines the expertise of existing journals and current publishers with the openness of a publicly funded archive, submission system, and platform. The unique co-branding of articles proposed by the consortium offers a new route to full open access, with no costs for the authors. Combining the strongest features of the old and new publishing worlds, this proposal represents transition without disruption, and an exemplary combination of public and private investment. We trust that our initiative will support the plans of the Open Access Envoy of the European Commission to accelerate the transition to full and Open Access in line with the political target date of 2020.

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