

Plan S:

What You Need to Know



Last fall, the international consortium of research funders known as **cOAlition S** cast much of the scholarly publishing community into disarray with the announcement of its ambitious and divisive open access initiative, Plan S.

More recently, cOAlition S released revisions to the plan's principles and implementation guidance based on feedback received from the wider community.¹ In addition to providing greater clarity regarding the terms of the initiative, the revisions extended the plan's implementation date by one year—to **January 1, 2021**—in order to provide more preparation time for researchers and publishers.

Regardless of your station in the scholarly publishing ecosystem—and whether or not you support Plan S—it's important to have a general understanding of the initiative, which has the potential to dramatically alter the scholarly publishing industry on a global scale.

“With effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo.”



What Is Plan S?

Plan S is an open access initiative that aims to accelerate the transition to a system of scholarly publishing defined by **full and immediate open access to scientific publications**.

The plan was initiated by Robert-Jan Smits, the former open access envoy of the European Commission. It was further developed by Marc Schiltz, president of Science Europe, along with the heads of the participating research-funding organizations. Plan S also drew input from the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC).

The launch of Plan S was announced on September 4, 2018. Revisions to the plan's principles and implementation guidance were released on May 31, 2019.

Funders and Supporters

The group of national research-funding organizations that have committed to implement Plan S is known as cOAlition S. This international consortium currently consists of 16 national research-funding organizations and three charitable foundations. The group invites research funders from around the world, both public and private, to join the coalition. A number of other organizations have issued statements of support for Plan S. Full lists of the initiative's funders and supporters may be found on the cOAlition S website.²

The research funders that comprise cOAlition S have agreed to implement the 10 principles of Plan S in a coordinated manner.

Principles of Plan S

Plan S consists of one key principle and 10 additional principles (reproduced below).³

Key Principle: With effect from 2021, all scholarly publications on the results from research funded by public or private grants provided by national, regional and international research councils and funding bodies, must be published in Open Access Journals, on Open Access Platforms, or made immediately available through Open Access Repositories without embargo.

10 Principles

1. Authors or their institutions retain copyright to their publications. All publications must be published under an open license, preferably the Creative Commons Attribution license (CC BY), in order to fulfill the requirements defined by the Berlin Declaration.
2. The Funders will develop robust criteria and requirements for the services that high-quality Open Access journals, Open Access platforms, and Open Access repositories must provide.
3. In cases where high-quality Open Access journals or platforms do not yet exist, the Funders will, in a coordinated way, provide incentives to establish and support them when appropriate; support will also be provided for Open Access infrastructures where necessary.
4. Where applicable, Open Access publication fees are covered by the Funders or research institutions, not by individual researchers; it is acknowledged that all researchers should be able to publish their work Open Access.

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5. The Funders support the diversity of business models for Open Access journals and platforms. When Open Access publication fees are applied, they must be commensurate with the publication services delivered and the structure of such fees must be transparent to inform the market and funders potential standardisation and capping of payments of fees.
6. The Funders encourage governments, universities, research organisations, libraries, academies, and learned societies to align their strategies, policies, and practices, notably to ensure transparency.
7. The above principles shall apply to all types of scholarly publications, but it is understood that the timeline to achieve Open Access for monographs and book chapters will be longer and requires a separate and due process.
8. The Funders do not support the 'hybrid' model of publishing. However, as a transitional pathway towards full Open Access within a clearly defined timeframe, and only as part of transformative arrangements, Funders may contribute to financially supporting such arrangements.
9. The Funders will monitor compliance and sanction non-compliant beneficiaries/grantees.
10. The Funders commit that when assessing research outputs during funding decisions they will value the intrinsic merit of the work and not consider the publication channel, its impact factor (or other journal metrics), or the publisher.

How Will Plan S Affect Authors?

Once Plan S goes into effect, authors whose funders are members of cOAlition S will be required to publish in Plan S-compliant journals or on Plan S-compliant platforms.

cOAlition S has delineated the specific requirements for Plan S compliance for individual publications, journals, platforms, repositories, and transformative agreements. Detailed accounts of these requirements may be found in the principles and implementation guidance of Plan S.

All scholarly articles resulting from research funded by members of cOAlition S will need to be openly available immediately upon publication without any embargo period. These articles will also need to be permanently accessible under an open license that allows reuse for any purpose, subject to proper attribution of authorship. For scholarly articles, cOAlition S will require the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) 4.0 license⁴ by default, unless an exception has been agreed by the funder.

Under specific conditions, during a transition period, cOAlition S will allow authors to publish open access in subscription journals, provided that the journals are covered by transformative agreements for transitioning to open access. Transformative agreements will only be supported until 2024.

¹www.coalition-s.org/rationale-for-the-revisions

²www.coalition-s.org/funders

³www.coalition-s.org/principles-and-implementation

⁴https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0

“Free the Science, and our demonstrated commitment to open access and open science, puts us in an excellent position to not only comply with Plan S, but also to grow our publications' reach because of it.”

Moreover, authors funded by cOAlition S members will need to publish in Plan S-compliant venues in order to ensure the compliance of their scholarly articles.

Where Does ECS Stand on Plan S?

Like the founders of cOAlition S, ECS believes that open access is of paramount importance to the scientific enterprise. It was this staunch belief that led the Society to launch the *Free the Science* initiative in 2015.

Free the Science is ECS's initiative to move toward a future that embraces open science to further advance research in the Society's fields. It is a long-term vision for transformative change in the traditional models of communicating scholarly research based on the tenet that research should be free to read and free to publish.

The initiative is supported by ECS's Author Choice Open Access program, as well as ECS Plus, the Society's transformative agreement-based subscription option, both of which have seen substantial growth since their inception. (Last year, over 42% of ECS's journal articles were published open access; through ECS Plus, authors at more than 1,000 subscribing institutions currently have the opportunity to publish open access at no cost.)

In this sense, ECS has already been working toward the same goal that cOAlition S seeks to accomplish through Plan S.

In his Pennington Corner article in the spring 2019 issue of *Interface*, ECS Executive Director and CEO Christopher Jannuzzi highlighted the connection between *Free the Science* and Plan S.

“Fortunately for ECS,” Jannuzzi said, “*Free the Science*, and our demonstrated commitment to open access and open science, puts us in an excellent position to not only comply with Plan S, but also to grow our publications' reach because of it.”

Looking Ahead

At present, ECS aims to ensure its journals' compliance with Plan S by the revised implementation date of January 1, 2021.

As the implementation date approaches, ECS's foremost allegiance will remain, as ever, with the community of researchers it stewards. The needs of the ECS community will ultimately inform any actions taken in response to Plan S.

More information on ECS and Plan S will be included in subsequent issues of *Interface*.

Ways for Authors to Comply with Plan S

	Open Access publishing venues (journals or platforms)	Subscription venues (repository route)	Transition of subscription venues (transformative arrangements)
ROUTE	Authors publish in an Open Access journal or on an Open Access platform.	Authors publish in a subscription journal and make either the final published version (Version of Record (VoR)) or the Author's Accepted Manuscript (AAM) openly available in a repository.	Authors publish Open Access in a subscription journal under a transformative arrangement.
FUNDING	cOAlition S funders will financially support publication fees.	cOAlition S funders will not financially support 'hybrid' Open Access publication fees in subscription venues.	cOAlition S funders can contribute financially to Open Access publishing under transformative arrangements.