The UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science

International law as policy basis

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@ 66th Helmholtz OS Seminar 17 January 2023
Helmholtz Open Science Policy

The present Helmholtz Open Science Policy is organized into three sections. In the section “A. Strategic Positioning,” the Helmholtz Association formulates a commitment to open science in accordance with the principle “as open as possible and as closed as necessary.” In the section “B. Monitoring,” Helmholtz makes a commitment to open science on the basis of the three current focus areas (open access, open research data, and open research software) through specific and verifiable objectives. In the section “C. Implementation and Common Requirements,” in line with the funding policy of the European Commission, open science practices are formulated for implementation purposes.

A. Strategic Positioning

In line with the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science¹ and the enshrining of open science in national, European, and international science policy, Helmholtz commits itself to open science.
Essentials on the UNESCO Recommendation

- Recommendation = proper type of international law
- UNESCO proper organization
  - Relevant mandate; previous action has well legitimized UNESCO
- Proper timing
  - including insights from Covid-19 pandemic
- Proper process
  - very participatory, in particular with wide inclusion of scientific practitioners
  - Strong legitimacy of a strong, state-of-the-art text on science as a global public good
  - Has already had far-reaching policy impacts
What is a “Recommendation”?

- “Medium level” of commitment / binding character, in comparison with other forms of international law
  - “Declaration” = low formal legal commitment (may become customary law); mainly serves to establish common language / consensus
  - “Convention” = full legal commitment; to be ratified and translated into binding national law
- Recommendation establishes legal reporting requirements for Member States
- More importantly, a Recommendation establishes legal consensus on concepts + their technical operationalization
  - Every single word of the text has been negotiated among 193 governments
Global Consensus has strong value for itself
UNESCO mandate

- United Nations’ specialized agency, mandated for education, science, culture, media policies, press freedom/freedom of expression, ethics, ....
- Particularly strong portfolio in environmental / earth sciences
- But also strong science policy action across disciplines
Previous relevant action of UNESCO

- Budapest World Conference on Science 1999
- Long history of engagement with *Open Access* to scientific publications (in line with Berlin Declaration)
- Since 2013: All UNESCO publications themselves are Open Access, as decided by its Member States and under IGO CC license
- 2017 UNESCO Recommendation on Science
- Open Educational Resources (OER): learning materials in any medium in the public domain (or under an open license) that permits no-cost access, use, adaptation and redistribution – UNESCO “invention”
- 2019 UNESCO Recommendation on OER

Strong field of action as well by German Commission for UNESCO.
Timing

- Covid-19 pandemic demonstrated the full potential of OS
- “Preprint culture” has expanded beyond expectations
- **Result**: Rapid development of vaccines and medical treatments based on various technologies (first test kit by Drosten team already in January 2020)
- **In addition**: strong engagement of society; in many countries increased public understanding of science
- UNESCO was able to create high political momentum for OS, starting with ministers’ conference in March 2020
Slide 9, 17 January 2023
Dr Lutz Möller, German Commission for UNESCO

History of elaboration

1. Establishment of the Open Science Partnership
2. Establishment of the Open Science Advisory Committee
3. Electronic consultation on the elements of the Recommendation
4. Thematic and regional consultation with stakeholders on the contents of the Recommendation
5. Further consultations and inputs on the final draft
6. Meeting of the special committee consisting of technical and legal experts appointed by Member States (category II meeting)

Inclusive: March 2020
Consultative: September 2020 - January 2021
Responsible: April 2021
Transparent: November 2021

First outline of the Recommendation
First draft of the Recommendation, sent to the Member States of UNESCO for their comments
Communication of the DG's revised draft of the Recommendation to Member States
Submission of the draft Recommendation to the 41st General Conference with a view to its adoption

Adoption of the Recommendation by Member States November 2021
Very constructive engagement of expert observers
“The aim of this Recommendation is to provide an international framework for open science policy and practice that recognizes disciplinary and regional differences in open science perspectives,

takes into account academic freedom, gender-transformative approaches and the specific challenges of scientists and other open science actors in different countries and in particular in developing countries,

and contributes to reducing the digital, technological and knowledge divides existing between and within countries.” (Article 1)
— “promoting a common understanding of open science, associated benefits and challenges, as well as diverse paths to open science;
— developing an enabling policy environment for open science;
— investing in open science infrastructures and services;
— investing in human resources, training, education, digital literacy and capacity building for open science;
— fostering a culture of open science and aligning incentives for open science;
— promoting innovative approaches for open science at different stages of the scientific process;
— promoting international and multi-stakeholder cooperation in the context of open science and with view to reducing digital, technological and knowledge gaps”. (Article 3)
THE TEXT: Open Science as umbrella concept
“Inclusive construct that combines various movements and practices aiming

- to make multilingual **scientific knowledge openly available, accessible and reusable** for everyone,
- to increase **scientific collaborations** and sharing of information for the benefits of science and society, and
- to **open** the processes of scientific knowledge creation, evaluation and communication **to societal actors beyond the traditional scientific community**.

It comprises **all scientific disciplines** and aspects of scholarly practices, including basic and applied sciences, natural and social sciences and the humanities, and

it builds on the following key pillars: **open scientific knowledge, open science infrastructures, science communication, open engagement of societal actors and open dialogue with other knowledge systems.”** (Art. 5)
THE TEXT: Values and Principles

VALUES
- Quality and integrity
- Collective benefit
- Equity and fairness
- Diversity and inclusiveness

PRINCIPLES
- Transparency, scrutiny, critique and reproducibility
- Equality of opportunities
- Responsibility, respect and accountability
- Collaboration, participation and inclusion
- Flexibility
- Sustainability
Article 18: “Member States, according to their specific conditions, governing structures and constitutional provisions, should develop or encourage policy environments, including those at the institutional, national, regional and international levels that support operationalization of open science and effective implementation of open science practices, including policies to incentivize open science practices among researchers.

Through a transparent participatory, multi-stakeholder process that includes dialogue with the scientific community, especially early-career researchers, and other open science actors, Member States are encouraged to consider the following:

a. Developing effective institutional and national open science policies and legal frameworks that are consistent with existing international and regional law and are in line with the definition, values and principles as well as actions outlined in this Recommendation.

b. Aligning open science policies, strategies and actions from individual institutions to local and international levels, while respecting the diversity of open science approaches.
c. Mainstreaming *gender equality* aspects into open sciences policies, strategies and practices.

d. Encouraging research-performing institutions, particularly those in receipt of public funds, to *implement* policies and strategies for open science.

e. Encouraging research-performing institutions, universities, scientific unions and associations, and learned societies to *adopt statements of principle* in line with this Recommendation to encourage open science practice in coordination with national science academies, associations of early-career researchers such as young academies and the International Science Council (ISC).

f. Enhancing the *inclusion of citizen and participatory science* as integral parts of open science policies and practices at the national, institutional and funder levels.

g. Designing models that allow *co-production of knowledge* with multiple actors and establishing guidelines to ensure the recognition of nonscientific collaborations.
h. Encouraging responsible *research and researcher evaluation and assessment* practices, which incentivize quality science, recognizing the diversity of research outputs, activities and missions.

i. Fostering equitable *public-private partnerships* for open science and engaging the private sector in open science, provided that there is appropriate certification and regulation to *prevent vendor lock-in, predatory behaviour and unfair and/or inequitable extraction of profit* from publicly funded scientific activities. Given the public interest in open science and the role of public funding, Member States should ensure that the *market for services, relating to science and open science, functions in the global and public interest and without market dominance on the part of any commercial entity*.

j. Designing, implementing and monitoring funding and investment policies and strategies for science based on the core values and principles of open science. The costs associated with operationalization of open science relate to the support of open science research, publishing, data and coding practices, the development and adoption of open science infrastructures and services, capacity building of all actors and innovative, highly collaborative and participatory approaches to the scientific enterprise.
Thank you for your attention.

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