Joint Statement on Open Science
Open Science as a pillar for strengthening the European Research Area
Opportunities and remaining barriers

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On behalf of thousands of European universities, research-performing organisations, libraries, scholarly infrastructures, and academies of sciences and humanities:
ALLEA, EIFL, IFLA, LIBER, OPERAS, SPARC Europe.

Introduction

In light of the consultation on the European Research Area (ERA) Act, we have reflected on the current state of Open Science (OS). While significant policy progress has been made—through the UNESCO Recommendation on Open Science (2021), European Council Conclusions in 2022 and 2023, national OS policies, and more—substantial challenges remain. Financial, linguistic, and geographic inequalities continue to limit equitable participation in and access to Open Science.

This joint statement outlines what key remaining barriers require a coordinated approach. The ERA Act represents an important opportunity to accelerate progress through targeted legislative measures, but legislation alone will not be sufficient. Achieving Open Science will require the mobilisation of a diverse ecosystem of actors and complementary tools, including policy alignment, incentives, infrastructure, and community-led initiatives.

Open Science is fundamental to the 'fifth freedom'—the free circulation of knowledge. The research and education system is being strengthened by Member States' support and incentive structures that advance the uptake of Open Science and Open Education (OE) practices, including opening methods, protocols, software, and outputs such as articles, books, preprints, and research data. In line with the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, Reusable) principles, this enhances reproducibility, transparency, and trustworthiness, strengthens evidence-based policymaking and democracy, and supports competitiveness.

Responsible Open Science is grounded in community governance, transparency, equity, inclusiveness, and sustainability, as reflected in the UNESCO Recommendation, and guided by the principle “as open as possible, as closed as necessary.” Better alignment of OS policies enables a more connected research environment, facilitating cross-border and cross-sector collaboration.

Open Science as a strategic priority

EU governments, through Council Conclusions in 2022 and 2023, alongside research-performing organisations (RPOs) and national policymakers across Europe, including funders, have endorsed Open Science as the optimal mechanism to share, access, and reuse research outputs efficiently, transparently, and at scale. Initiatives such as the ERA Policy Agenda, the European Open Science Cloud (EOSC), and investments in infrastructure and capacity-building support the European research system.

However, progress remains uneven across countries, institutions, and disciplines due to economic, structural, and policy differences. Greater efforts are needed to ensure immediate Open Access to publicly funded research outputs—including publications, data, and software—and their reuse.

OS is core to a modern, effective, and secure research and innovation system and we urgently need to reduce the economic, organisational and legal barriers to it. The ERA Act offers a timely opportunity to make progress towards this goal.

Open Science as a pillar for strengthening Europe’s research area

1. Equitable and sustainable access to Open Access and other research outputs

There is a need for broader and more consistent Open Access (OA) to a wide range of publicly funded research outputs, including publications, research data, software, and more, under open licences, to ensure full participation, reuse, and impact across the research system.

However, today’s OA publishing landscape is economically unsustainable and inequitable. APC/BPC-based models, large-scale agreements and new OA charges create disproportionate financial and administrative burdens, limiting participation and slowing innovation.

To serve research and society better, we need:

- To advance equitable, not-for-profit and publicly governed publishing models, including Diamond OA and publish-review-curate models to become new standard models and trusted open repositories that enable dissemination without financial or technical barriers.

2. Rights, legal clarity, and harmonisation

Legal complexity continues to hinder OS and cause uncertainty amongst researchers. They, and their institutions, must have the ability to openly share and deposit research outputs without restriction, delay, or additional cost and without contractual barriers such as embargoes or copyright transfer.

More harmonised legal frameworks would ensure:

- The right to openly disseminate publicly funded research without embargo, openly licensed, with no extra charging: via a Secondary Publication Right.
- The retention of rights to share and reuse research by researchers or their institutions.
- Simplification through the adoption of harmonised approaches to publication and research dissemination.
- Consistent application of research exceptions, including for text and data mining.
- Protection against contractual or technical override.

Clarity and harmonisation are essential for effective cross-border collaboration.

3. Research data, FAIR, and capacity

Gaps persist in the accessibility and reuse of research data, with inconsistent FAIR implementation and insufficient metadata and repositories.

Research information should be made open and reusable with appropriate safeguards, ensuring transparency, resilience, and independence.

There is a need to:

- Strengthen FAIR data practices, building on a better understanding of current gaps.
- Improve the discoverability and interoperability of research data by developing key national infrastructures and preserving key data, also to help further develop a European Open Science Cloud (EOSC).
- Build institutional capacity, including data stewardship and legal expertise.

A coordinated approach is required to enable effective data reuse across Europe.

4. Open Science for innovation, security, and AI

Open Science accelerates innovation by enabling knowledge transfer, exchange, collaboration with industry and other non-academic partners, and SMEs, and supports a better quality AI offering.

There is a need for:

- Manageable and risk-appropriate safeguards to maintain openness in alignment with research security.
- Striving for OS principles to include privately funded research, where appropriate, supporting transparency, integrity, and knowledge circulation.
- Clear conditions for responsible reuse, including in AI.
- Consistent investment in Open Science, both structural and grant-funded.

'*As open as possible, as closed as necessary*' approaches make it possible to address legitimate concerns around security and risk while facilitating responsible research innovation.

5. Inclusiveness, multilingualism, and societal engagement

A strong ERA must reflect Europe's diversity for cohesion, trust, societal impact, and resilience.

We must:

- Support multilingual research dissemination, and formally recognise it, reducing the dominance of one language as a structural barrier to knowledge exchange.
- Ensure equitable participation across regions and disciplines.
- Encourage and support citizen science and participatory approaches.

Building an inclusive, multilingual, and participatory ERA ensures fair access, broad engagement, and resilient knowledge exchange.

6. Open, federated, and sovereign infrastructures

Dependence on proprietary systems creates risks related to cost, control, and long-term access.

There is a need to:

- strengthen federated open infrastructures for publications, data, research information, and software, through access to structural funding and
- reinforce European digital sovereignty, particularly over research data and metadata.

OS requires interoperable, community-governed quality infrastructures aligned with European values.

7. Incentives and research assessment

Current assessment systems prioritise certain publication outputs and venues and commercial quantitative metrics, reinforcing inequalities: causing systemic barriers to knowledge.

There is a need for reinforcing and supporting existing frameworks, such as CoARA that:

- Recognise diverse outputs and open practices, and reform career paths that fully support OS.
- Align with international assessment reform efforts.
- Balance the responsible use of quantitative indicators with qualitative evaluation.

Aligning incentives is critical to embedding Open Science in practice.

To support the researcher of the digital age, and in the context of a broader package of measures, the ERA Act can help bring about the following enabling conditions necessary for systemic change to occur:

- **Ensure immediate Open Access to publicly funded research outputs, including publications, data, software, methods, and protocols.**
- **Provide harmonised legal frameworks for access and reuse to support innovation, for digital services and processes such as AI, text and data mining, and specifically a Secondary Publishing Right.**
- **Guarantee protection from restrictive contractual practices for all types of research outputs.**
- **Support strong institutional capacity for Open Science implementation.**
- **Facilitate coordinated strong national OS policies, strategies and monitoring structures, and continue to fund OS both structurally and through grants.**

Conclusion

Open Science is a foundational component of a high-performing, secure, and future-proof European research system. It underpins excellence, integrity, innovation, and trust, while strengthening Europe's capacity to respond to societal and geopolitical challenges.

A coherent approach that removes barriers, aligns incentives, and strengthens infrastructures is essential to ensure that Europe remains globally competitive. Conditions need to be improved for systemic change to occur for a research ecosystem that is responsibly open, innovative, resilient, inclusive, and strategically autonomous, grounded in European values.

Signatories

ALLEA, the European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities

EIFL, Electronic Information for Libraries

IFLA, International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions

LIBER, Ligue des Bibliothèques Européennes de Recherche – Association of European Research Libraries

OPERAS, Open Scholarly Communication in the European Research Area for Social Sciences and Humanities

SPARC Europe