ERC Scientific Council Statement on Open Access
December 2006

1.   The ERC Scientific Council stresses the fundamental importance of peer-reviewed journals in ensuring the certification and dissemination of high-quality scientific research and in guiding appropriate allocation of research funds. Policies towards access to scientific research must guarantee the ability of the system to continue to deliver high-quality certification services.

2.   While the certification quality of the scientific publication system is not in doubt, the high prices of some journals – which do not seem to be chiefly driven by cost considerations – raise significant worries concerning the ability of the system to deliver wide access and therefore efficient dissemination of research results, with the resulting risk of stifling further scientific progress.

3.   These considerations lead the ERC Scientific Council, like other research funding bodies, to stress the attractiveness of policies mandating the public availability of research results – in open access repositories – reasonably soon (ideally, 6 months, and in any case no later than 12 months) after publication.

4.   Of course, general open-access policies are not trivial to implement because: (i) the speed of 'obsolescence' of knowledge varies across disciplines; and (ii) so does the availability of open access repositories. Moreover, coordination between research funders (at EU level, across parts of the Framework Programme for example, but also at the level of Member States and their regions) is highly desirable.

5.   This being said, it is the firm intention of the ERC Scientific Council to issue specific guidelines for the mandatory deposit in open access repositories of research results – that is, publications, data and primary materials – obtained thanks to ERC grants, as soon as pertinent repositories become operational.

6.   The ERC Scientific Council moreover hopes that research funders across Europe will join forces in establishing common open-access rules and in building European open access repositories that will help make these rules operational. To facilitate this process for EU-funded research, it recommends that the European Commission sets up a task force including representatives from the various FP7 programmes (Cooperation, Ideas, People, …) to develop an operational FP7 policy on open access by the end of 2007 (which takes in particular into account disciplinary differences and technological constraints).

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