

Publishing scheme ‘to serve all of Europe’

Bloc’s open-access platform will be for more than just recipients of EU funding

Ben Upton

A free-to-use open-access publishing platform commissioned for use by recipients of EU R&D funding will be designed so it can serve the needs of all European researchers, according to the company that will build it.

F1000 Research was named as the winner of a protracted procurement process to build the Open Research Europe platform on 20 March. The company’s managing director Rebecca Lawrence said ORE would “work for all researchers across Europe, going beyond recipients of [EU] funding”.

The tender won by F1000 emphasised the need to cater to EU-supported researchers, but also called for the platform to plan for long-term sustainability.

The company has brought onboard three grassroots organisations as advisers: the early-career researcher advocacy networks Eurodoc and Global Young Academy, and the Association of European Research Libraries (Liber).

All three will be represented on an ORE governing board including members from the platform’s owner, the European Commission. ORE will also be shaped by a scientific advisory board that Lawrence said will include researchers from many disciplines, geographies and career stages.

Eurodoc president Eva Hnatkova said her organisation would explain the platform to researchers through training sessions and webinars, and gather feedback through focus groups. She said Eurodoc was approached by F1000 Research last summer, when the Commission published an updated request for tenders after a first attempt ended with no organisation matching its brief.

Astrid Verheusen, executive director of Liber, said the three organisations would “play vital roles” in creating sustainability and communication strategies.

F1000 Research has built similar platforms for other large research funders—including the Wellcome Trust and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation—and



Lawrence said it would apply lessons from that work to ORE.

Koen Vermeir, co-chair of the Global Young Academy, said researchers around the world were struggling with traditional, closed publishing models. “We need to work towards a global solution, but for us this platform is a great step,” he said.

He said there would be challenges ahead, including how publication on the platform will be recognised in institutions’ researcher assessments, but that the Commission’s name would lend “prestige”.

ORE will accept submissions from autumn 2020, with its official launch planned for early 2021. ☺

Leader’s move ‘will bring research and agriculture closer’

Praise for European Commission R&D official Wolfgang Burtscher as he shifts roles

Pola Lem

The European Commission’s promotion of Wolfgang Burtscher, a deputy leader of its research and innovation department, to head of the agriculture department will bring the two units closer together, according to former R&D chief Robert-Jan Smits.

Smits, Burtscher’s former boss, said the promotion announced on 25 March would take cooperation

between his old team and the agriculture department to the “next level”.

He paid tribute to Burtscher’s “dedication, loyalty and in-depth knowledge” of EU workings, but warned he would “not get an easy life” in his new role because the agriculture department is “getting lots of heat” to modernise the EU’s Common Agricultural Policy.

Burtscher started in the agriculture department when

he joined the Commission in 2000, and served as a deputy director-general in its research and innovation department from 2009. He has had responsibility for “a wide range of research and innovation policy issues including in the fields of agriculture, food and health”, according to the Commission.

University representatives welcomed Burtscher’s promotion, but said he would be missed.

“I’m truly sorry that the research and innovation community will lose Wolfgang Burtscher as deputy director-general of DG RTD, but I’m genuinely delighted that someone so knowledgeable about research will become director-general of [the agriculture department]”, said Jan Palmowski, secretary general of The Guild of European Research-Intensive Universities. ☺