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Action line Open Access Fund – Specifications

1. Background

The [Open Science Program I \(2021-2024\)](#) of swissuniversities includes an action line National Open Access (OA) Fund. The Delegation Open Science (DeIOS) has tasked the Swiss Library Network for Education and Research (SLiNER) to specify the conditions for the call for proposals. This document, initially conceived and revised by AKOA, responds to this demand and delineates these specifications.

2. Context and aim

The vision of the [National OA strategy](#) states that "By 2024, all scholarly publication activity in Switzerland should be OA, all scholarly publications funded by public money must be freely accessible on the internet. The OA landscape will consist of a mix of OA models". As a consequence of the Negotiation with publishers action line (action line 2 of the strategy and 4 of the [implementation plan](#)), advancements towards this ambitious goal have been made, mainly by promoting mainly Hybrid OA with conventional publishers. These deals transform already available library funds into Read & Publish deals. Such deals, considered as a transition towards fully OA agreements, allow for a streamlined publication process that is advantageous for both researchers and HEIs.

However, these deals exclude fully Open Access publishers. Furthermore, some Swiss HEIs have not individually entered into such deals and may not even have the financial means to do so since no library funds have been allocated to such agreements. Therefore, for purely Gold publishers, researchers and HEIs must process individual APC invoices, often in a decentralized manner, which entails a higher administrative burden. This may have the unintended consequence of pushing researchers to publish through R&P agreements for the sake of lighter administrative burdens, thus reinforcing the already overbearing influence of such publishers in scholarly publishing. Furthermore, if Open Access bibliodiversity is to be encouraged, Gold OA funds should be available at HEIs to allow for smaller publishers and alternative forms of publication to profit from the available resources. Some Swiss HEIs do not currently have such institutional funds. The aim of the National OA Fundaction line is therefore two-fold:

- To contribute to the setting up of consortial agreements with purely Gold OA publishers that would function similarly to the Consortium of Swiss Academic

Libraries (CSAL) Big Deals. This would potentially decrease costs by obtaining bulk discounts and will certainly streamline administrative processes linked to these Gold OA costs for both HEIs and researchers. The number of deals and the publishers that will be included will depend on the number of applicants and the available funds.

- To promote the creation of an Institutional Gold OA Fund standard across Switzerland and encourage institutions without institutional funds to create them following these specifications. These institutional funds are especially meant to cover Gold OA fees that would not be included in the aforementioned pure Gold OA deals, thus promoting bibliodiversity and developing OA in all disciplines, particularly the social sciences and humanities (SSH). Diamond Open Access and APC discount membership fees cannot be funded via the national OA fund action line. In the case of Diamond Open Access, which should be strongly supported, alternative action lines exist in the implementation plan and HEIs are encouraged to apply for funds through those action lines.

3. Specifications

3.1 Overarching principles

The action line, that will run from 2022 until 2024 (3 years), will thus be structured in a two-prong system described in the context and aim:

Track A: Consortial negotiations with Gold OA publishers

Track B: Institutional Gold OA Funds

HEIs are free to apply to either or both tracks, provided they are eligible to do so.

As specified in the national OA strategy “OA should not lead to higher publication costs (cost neutrality) in the medium and long-term for Switzerland as a whole, although there will be additional costs in the transition phase”. Therefore, a cap of SFr 2500.- (exc. VAT) per APC will be applied to both tracks (SFr 8000.- for books in Track B).

A maximum cap of SFr 2500.- (exc. VAT) would include 90% of all journals found in OpenAPC, and specifically over 80% of the Swiss APC expenditure in 2019. This cap would therefore allow to send a clear and unified signal to publishers from Switzerland and to control costs while maximising the number of journals that could potentially be included. Such cap would also provide guidance during negotiations for Gold OA deals with the ultimate objective to include the whole journal catalogue of a given publisher.

In the case of books, the average for Open Access book publishing charges (2014-2020) according to OpenAPC is EUR 6200.-. This cap is meant to give a significant contribution to non-SNSF eligible books while increasing the number of books that can be supported with limited funds.

Furthermore, works for which publication costs can be covered by third-party funding (e.g. SNSF, EC, etc.) shall not be considered in either track.

3.2. Application eligibility and specifications

3.2.1. Track A: Consortial Gold OA deals

Application eligibility

Track A will be coordinated by the CSAL and participating HEIs will cover 50% of the deal amount for the chosen publishers. The coordination costs incurred by the CSAL can be included in the proposal.

APC cap

In the case in which deals are based on quantified individual APCs, the consortial agreements will be negotiated so that each individual APC costs a maximum of SFr 2500.- (exc. VAT). Other forms of deals that allow to comply with budgeting targets can also be pursued (number of articles, credits, etc.).

Discount

The consortial agreement will be negotiated so that each individual APC is discounted with respect to the standard price list for each journal.

List of publishers

Based on the results of a consultation where HEIs prioritised OA publishers, the first round of negotiations will tentatively be launched with the following publishers:

1. MDPI
2. Frontiers
3. PLOS
4. Springer/BMC
5. Copernicus

Institutions can decide which agreement they want to participate in.

Provided that funds are still available after the first round, further negotiations may be initiated with other publishers for the years 2023-2024.

The National OA Fund does not preclude negotiations with publishers with whom no agreements were signed within the framework of the action line from being undertaken by the CSAL separately.

3.2.2. Track B: Institutional Gold OA Funds

Application eligibility

All HEIs that do not currently have an OA fund are eligible to apply for this track. HEIs with an OA fund can apply for this track as long as their existing fund is already compliant with the specifications below, or they modify the requirements to meet them. Track B cannot be used to create a second Institutional OA Fund. Institutional Gold OA funds can be used to cover article, book chapter and/or book publishing.

Fund amount

HEIs must justify the amounts requested with actual or estimated Gold OA needs based on reliable data. Furthermore, the requested amount must exclude:

- Third-party funded costs (i.e. SNSF, EC, etc.).
- APCs included in Gold OA deals from Track A or Big Deals.
- Other costs not compliant with the specifications below.

Specifications for Article Processing Charges (APCs)

- Publications by corresponding authors affiliated to the HEI.
- Gold OA journals listed in the Directory of Open Access Journals DOAJ membership (or – in case of a newly founded journal – fulfilling DOAJ criteria).
- Cap of SFr 2'500.- (excl. VAT) per APC.
- Publications in Gold OA titles with higher APCs and Hybrid OA fees in any form are excluded.
- Any other additional publishing charges, such as but not limited to, front page charges and color charges are excluded.
- Handling of the invoicing process for individual APCs can be arranged as the HEI sees fit (direct payment to publishers or reimbursement to authors). It is recommended that the fund enables direct payment to publishers to decrease the administrative burden for researchers and HEIs.

Specifications for Book Processing Charges (BPCs and BCPCs)

- Books (BPC) or book chapters (BCPC) by corresponding authors and editors affiliated to the HEI.
- Each HEI determines whether the payment of BCPCs for chapters in otherwise closed books is accepted.
- The publisher should preferably be listed in the Directory of Open Access Books or function along similar principles.
- Cap of SFr 8'000.- (excl. VAT) per BPC.
- BPCs beyond the cap may be partially funded by the OA fund.
- Handling of the invoicing process for BPCs or BCPCs can be arranged as the HEI sees fit (direct payment to publishers or reimbursement to authors).

Specification Creative Commons Licence

- For books and book chapters, swissuniversities recommends using the CC-BY licence, but CC-BY-NC-ND licenses are acceptable.
- For articles, swissuniversities aligns with the international standard of CC-BY as a requirement. A CC-BY-ND license can be accepted provided a justified request is addressed to the fund administrator.

3.3. Possible case scenarios

The table below shows the possible case scenarios for applying HEIs.

HEI with these can apply for	Interest in GOAD	No interest in GOAD
No IGOAF	Track A and Track B*	Track B
Compliant/adapted IGOAF	Track A and Track B**	Track B
Non-compliant IGOAF	Track A	-

IGOAF: Institutional Gold OA Fund, GOAD: Gold OA Deals

* This is the case of a HEI interested in Gold OA deals that does not yet have an institutional Gold OA fund to cover the rest of its Gold OA needs. This HEI may apply to both tracks.

** This is the case of a HEI interested in Gold OA deal that has a compliant (or is willing to adapt the requirements of their) existing institutional Gold OA fund. This HEI may apply to both tracks, but Track B cannot be used to create a second institutional fund.

4. Funding and budgeting

Contribution split

Two models of distributing the HEI and federal contributions are possible:

Even contribution

HEIs and swissuniversities each contribute 50% yearly throughout the duration of the project.

Increasing contribution

swissuniversities' contribution starts at 75% of the total in year 1 and decreases to 25% over the course of the project as described in the table below. HEI contributions will increase inversely over the whole period.

	2022		2023		2024			
	CHF	%	CHF	%	CHF	%	CHF	%
swu	1325000	74,6	1000000	50	450000	25,4	2775000	50,00
HEi	450000	25,4	1000000	50	1325000	74,6	2775000	50,00
Total	1775000		2000000		1775000		5550000	

Long term sustainability of the funds

Applying HEIs must specify in their application how they will ensure the long-term sustainability of the funds. Swissuniversities will only provide startup funding.

Unspent funds

swissuniversity recognises the exploratory nature of this action line and that most budgets will initially be based on estimates. Therefore:

- if funds received for Track A remain unspent at the end of the year (either because a Gold OA Deal could not be agreed or because the real cost of the deal was lower than expected for the HEI), they can be taken forward to the next year. Any unspent federal contribution at the end of the project period will be reimbursed to swissuniversities.
- if funds received for Track B remain unspent at the end of the year they can be taken forward to the next year. Any unspent federal contribution at the end of the project period will be reimbursed to swissuniversities.

5. Application procedure

Expressions of interest

Application to this action line will be done through a simplified procedure. Interested institutions will send a duly signed [expression of interest](#) to swissuniversities by 31 May 2021.

Evaluation by SLiNER/AKOA and intermediate decision by DeIOS

SLiNER/AKOA will evaluate the expressions of interest and prepare a few scenarios based on the amounts requested, strategic priorities and a fair distribution between the Tracks. DeIOS will choose the scenario for fund allocation based on the proposals from SLiNER/AKOA on 24 September 2021.

Negotiation with publishers

The CSAL carries out the negotiations with the publishers and presents the conditions to the HEIs by 31 October 2021.

In the event where a Gold OA deal is not concluded or the HEI opts out:

- Institutions applying to Track B only: no impact.
- HEIs applying to track A only: the corresponding amount is deduced from the requested amount.
- HEIs applying to both tracks: the corresponding amount is transferred to the Track B component.

Definitive decision

Following the conclusion of the negotiations, each interested HEI will sign an offer issued by the CSAL to commit to the negotiated agreements and the CSAL will inform the DelOS by 15 December 2021.

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Start of projects

Projects starts on 1 January 2022. Funds are paid from February 2022.

6. Monitoring

All relevant data (APCs and BPCs, as well as BCPC if this becomes available on OpenAPC) must be reported to OpenAPC in accordance with the monitoring recommendation by swissuniversities ([de](#), [fr](#)).

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