



**OPINION n°2012-25**

**« THE OPEN ACCESS OF SCIENTIFIC PUBLICATIONS »**

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## I. SUMMARY

The COMETS (CNRS ethical committee) has deliberated on the issue of open access to scientific publications.

Scientific publications associate publishers and researchers' communities. They have become the place of high tension and their various models face a problematic coexistence. Free access to scientific publications today is a strong recommendation of European or French funding agencies for research on public contracts. The COMETS is guided by two ethical principles: firstly sharing the basic scientific knowledge with the largest number, on the other hand the necessary evaluation of the results by the peer review system. Aware of the great diversity of practices, it makes the following general recommendations:

1 – The main objective of this recommendation is first to convince the CNRS to engage in an in-depth reflection on the importance of the issues about open access to scientific publications. It is urgent to coordinate this reflection with all actors: researchers, research institutes, universities, publishers and librarians, in order to offer researchers the best conditions - intellectual and economic- for the dissemination of their scientific work.

2 - The HAL open archive system, run by the CNRS, should be improved to better respond to the demands of researchers. An open archive, in the same way as scientific journals, needs an editorial board that sets its science policy and follows the deposits. The deposit on the HAL open archive should be strongly encouraged by the CNRS for all scientific publications in various scientific areas which are currently unevenly used. Note that optimizing HAL would be such as to strengthen the partnerships between the CNRS and other institutions, as was the case for example with INRIA.

3 - It is essential that the CNRS should reconsider its support policy to reviews while preserving the diversity of publishers. The modest-sized publishers, belonging mostly to learned societies or universities, must be supported in the present context of the evolution towards "open access gold" which could weaken them when facing powerful publishers.

4 - The direction of the CNRS should inform and advise researchers on the regime of intellectual property and copyright which concern them and encourage them not to waive their rights when submitting their articles, as it is often the case. Models of standard contract between publishers and institutions have existed also for years (SPARC, SCIENCE COMMONS, etc.) and are available to researchers in their negotiation with publishers particularly in the USA; the CNRS could follow this example. These recommendations, or even made compulsory, could help to dissuade researchers to publish in journals that require abusively the complete abandonment of the copyright with a view to producing excessive profits.

5 - Regarding some publishers' unjustified fees for publication, the CNRS should join the initiatives taken by academic institutions to introduce a balance of power to obtain reasonable prices of subscriptions to scientific journals, along with the present actions in progress abroad.