



## **Press Release National Conference 13/02/07: “How to increase your Impact with Open Access”**

On Tuesday 13 February 2007, the Belgian academic world spoke out unanimously about the future of scientific communication during a national conference at the Royal Academy of Arts and Sciences in Brussels in the context of DRIVER, a European e-science project for the advancement of open access to scientific research.

Open Access makes research results freely available online, everywhere in the world. Researchers publishing OA deposit a copy of their publications in the online, open archive (or repository) of their institution, or publish their articles directly in a freely accessible, electronic journal. The Open Access principle builds on the idea that publicly funded research results must be freely accessible to society. This is not only advantageous to the greater public, it also benefits the individual researcher: more visibility and citations increases the impact of an article, and the immediate availability of results leads to an acceleration of scientific innovation.

At a European level, more than 200 rectors and ministers signed the Open Access resolution, the ‘Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in Sciences and Humanities’<sup>1</sup> (2003). For Belgium, the two national funding bodies (the FWO-Fonds voor Wetenschappelijk Onderzoek and the FNRS - Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique) signed this document in 2003, and it was ratified on the 13th of February, on the occasion of the national conference on Open Access to Belgian research, “How to Increase Your Impact with Open Access”, with the signatures of fourteen Belgian university rectors, the two regional Ministers of Science (Minister Fientje Moerman en Minister Marie-Dominique Simonet) and the President of the Council of Schools for HE, Professor B. Hoogewijs. The University of Ghent was the 200<sup>th</sup> signatory.

In addition to the signing ceremony of the Berlin Declaration, researchers from the sciences and humanities talked about the advantages of Open Access for their field of expertise, and the rector of Liège, Bernard Rentier, gave an inspiring speech on his views of the future of Open Access publishing in Belgium. In short, the Belgian scientific world rallied around the same principle, which benefits the international reputation of Belgian research. It is a clear signal to the researchers that their administrations and authorities support them in the transition to the new paradigm and shows Belgium as a unified country, ready to take on a strong position in the global knowledge economy.

This national conference took place just days before the important EC conference ‘Scientific Publishing in the European Research Area’, where over 500 researchers, information professionals and publishers met to streamline the future policy on European scientific publishing. To open this conference in Brussels, a petition was handed over to the EC, having gathered over 20 000 signatories in less than a month, calling for the EC to put the recommendations of the report '[Study on the Economic and Technical Evolution of the Scientific Publication Markets of](#)

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<sup>1</sup> <http://oa.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>

[Europe](#)' into practice, giving evidence of the research community's strong desire to be heard in these matters. The petition was well received by Janez Potočnik, EU Commissioner for Science and Research, and during the conference, Open Access advocates demonstrated that through a coordinated alliance of different partners a long-term OA solution is possible.

### **Names of the Belgian Berlin Declaration signatories on February 13th:**

Ministers:

- Flemish Minister of Science and Innovation, Ms. Fientje Moerman,
- Minister of the Walloon Region for New Technologies, Foreign Affairs and Scientific Research, Ms. Marie-Dominique Simonet

University rectors:

Prof. Conti, Calogero FPMs  
Prof. Coulie, Bernard UCL  
Prof. Delporte, Christian FUCAM  
Prof. De Schepper, Luc UHasselt  
Prof. Lambert, Jean-Paul FUSL  
Prof. Rentier, Bernard Ulg  
Prof. Scheuer, Michel FUNDP  
Prof. Thewis, André FUSAGx  
Prof. Van Camp, Benjamin VUB  
Prof. Van Cauwenberge, Paul UGent  
Prof. Van Hoecke, Marc KUB  
Prof. Van Loon, Francis UAntwerpen  
Prof. Vervenne, Marc KULeuven  
Prof. Vincke, Philippe ULB

President of the Flemish Council of Institutions for Higher Education: Prof. B. Hoogewijs