Will the adoption of ‘Gold’ open access in the UK and the adoption of ‘Gold’ or ‘Green’ models in the EU’s Horizon 2020 programme influence a global shift towards open access?

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Will the adoption of ‘Gold’ open access in the UK and the adoption of ‘Gold’ or ‘Green’ models in the EU’s Horizon 2020 programme influence a global shift towards open access?

• **Answer:** NO influence on global shift to OA from UK prioritised APC-funded gold policy, YES influence on global shift to OA will come from EU combined gold and green models
• **Reason:** the EU policy is in line with policies in other countries, whereas the UK policy places a priority upon APC-funded gold OA which is not found in policies in other countries
How did the Finch Group and the UK Government get it so wrong?

- The answer appears to be that green OA is perceived (without any evidence) to put high-quality journals and academic societies at risk.
- So even in a time of austerity the UK Government was willing to provide additional funds to publishers and academic societies, allowing them to keep their existing profits from subscriptions, during the transition to OA.
- As a taxpayer I ask, how can the UK Government justify a policy which is not cost-effective for the UK, a policy which depended upon a high take-up of gold OA across the world for which there was no evidence?
- The big international publishers can use their 30%-40% profit from subscriptions and licences to see them through the transition to OA.
- Academic societies have the option of deciding whether using their journal surpluses for “charitable scholarly and public engagement activities” is more important than using the surpluses to make their publications (derived from publicly-funded research) more accessible.
Why is finding the best route for a global shift towards open access so important?

- Both the Finch Group and the UK Government were correct in recognising the economic importance of open access to research outputs.
- The Finch Report is clear that a transition to gold OA alone is only cost-effective if the transition is world-wide: “where the UK is significantly ahead of the rest of the world in adopting publication in open access or hybrid journals, and with APCs on average at a higher rate, the additional cost to the HE sector could be over £70m a year” para.8.39.
- This conclusion is supported by Houghton and Swan, who also conclude that when the transition to gold OA is NOT world-wide, green OA is more cost-effective (Houghton, J and Swan, A. “Planting the green seeds for a golden harvest” *DLib Magazine, vol 19 no1/2* (2013)
- So if the UK Government wishes to move as quickly as possible to an OA environment in collaboration with the rest of the world, researchers should be required to deposit their work in an open access repository, with APCs only being paid to journals for which no subscription or licence payment is being made by taxpayer-funded libraries.