

2025 negotiations for 2026 agreements

Scoping letter for the negotiation of Read and Publish agreements

With this scoping letter, the Department of Documentary Negotiations (DND) of the Couperin consortium provides the elements that should guide negotiations during 2025 (for 2026). The negotiations covered by this document relate to Read and Publish agreements.

All the clauses set out in the scoping letter for Read agreements apply (statistics, ILL, accessibility, access to subscribed years, TDM, etc.). The clauses below complete that scoping letter by defining the consortium's additional expectations as regards the specific features of Read and Publish agreements along with agreements on fully open access journals.

Price requirements

The heavy budgetary constraints of the French state and its establishments mean scientific documentation is particularly exposed to possible cuts. The Flash budget survey carried out by the consortium at the beginning of 2025 found that 37% of establishments are reporting budget cuts with cuts of over 10% for a quarter of them while only 40% have managed to maintain their resources. In this context of severe budget cuts, only 74% of responding institutions could consider taking out a Read & Publish agreement and just under half (47%) would limit themselves to a Read subscription. This fragile financial situation has been compounded by the continuing rise in the cost of open access publishing which is taking up resources that are already inadequate. In this context, the ability of publishers to offer economically sustainable services is no longer an option but an actual requirement. Failing this, establishments will be forced to reduce their commitments or even partially or totally withdraw their subscriptions, to the detriment of access to scientific information.

French scientific publications¹ are increasingly open, and Couperin continues to respond to its members' expectations by using several levers for transformation at its level. In 2025, 10 overall Read and Publish agreements are active, covering both hybrid and full OA journals. The first agreement for natively open access journals was also negotiated in 2024. Couperin is also involved in initiatives to support open science². Faced with these transformations, negotiations for traditional subscriptions to published content - which a large proportion of our members remain attached to - are still in the majority.

The consortium will therefore make its best efforts to **negotiate traditional subscriptions jointly at the same time as overall read and publish agreements**. The Couperin consortium is committed to encouraging bibliodiversity and has notably been mandated to study the opportunities provided by negotiating with native Open Access stakeholders. The DND will examine each intention to negotiate on a case-by-case basis according to the publisher's model. In all cases, all agreements must **reflect the establishments' financial realities by cutting costs and guaranteeing long-term financial viability**. Proposals that enable **open science to develop that comply with Plan S may be examined at constant cost**.

The agreements negotiated must allow for open access publication of the Version of Record and facilitate immediate deposits of Author Accepted Manuscripts under a CC BY licence in open repositories. These agreements must offer **fair, affordable and sustainable rates** that guarantee open access publication and long-term access to research. The fees billed must reflect real costs and be transparent. Publishers must demonstrate that such fees are linked to publication services and the transition to open access. **The pricing model and the way prices are calculated must be transparent and easy to understand**. Publishers are encouraged to develop models that are not based on the volume of published articles. Proposals are welcome that include a commitment to moving from article-based pricing to models enabling everyone to publish in open access without paying fees. For this, publishers are invited to test their model using the

¹ In 2023, 65% of French publications in 2022 with a DOI CrossRef were in open access.
<https://barometredelascienceouverte.esr.gouv.fr/>

² In 2024, Couperin offered its members an agreement to facilitate support for Open Science infrastructures.
<https://www.couperin.org/so/doaj-sparc-europe-scoss/>

'How Equitable Is It?' tool³ developed by the 'Beyond Article-based Charges' working group led by cOAlition S, Jisc and PLOS and which Couperin has taken part in. **Publishers should not take into account the amount of APCs paid in hybrid journals when setting their rates.**

Publishers must not charge authors or their establishments any other publication fees, including page charges, colour illustration fees or submission fees, whether these are in the framework of the agreement or not. Similarly, no additional fees should be charged to authors who wish or have to deposit their accepted author manuscripts in non-embargoed open repositories, or to authors who would like to use a CC-BY licence.

The transition to full open access

Publishers must demonstrate their commitment to making the transition to fully open access models:

- overall Read and Publish agreements are temporary and valid for the duration of the contract. They are not binding on future contracts and are not an end in themselves;
- the agreements will aim for 100% open access for French publications which means the progressive release of French articles should not be the favoured option. The publisher's whole portfolio of journals - both hybrid and full OA - must be covered by the agreement;
- journals that are included in an agreement must remain so at no additional cost for the entire duration of the agreement, including the case of hybrid journals that switch to full open access during the duration of the agreement;
- there must be no limits on open access publication and article cap models must be avoided;
- publishers are encouraged not to launch new hybrid journals and to convert their hybrid journals into full Open Access (FOA) journals;
- publishers should share their roadmap for their transition to full open access with the consortium. This roadmap must include clearly defined deadlines and objectives.

Respect for authors' choices and rights

Authors' choices and rights must be fully respected. The Couperin consortium endorses the Final Statements⁴ from the 16th and 17th Berlin Open Access Conferences⁵ and adopts the following principles for its Read and Publish agreements:

- For each article submitted to a journal covered by the agreement, publishing authors must have the right to choose whether or not to open the article immediately and retain copyright;
- The agreements must stipulate that authors only grant limited or 'non-exclusive' licences to the publishers, and only grant them rights that are strictly necessary for publication;
- It is obligatory for the publisher to communicate any 'licence to publish' contract with an author to the consortium during the negotiations;
- The associated licences must be Creative Commons ;
- Publishers will apply the CC-BY licence by default and this will be the only choice offered to authors. More restrictive licences (CC BY-NC, CC BY-ND, CC BY-NC-ND) must be expressly requested by authors;
- In compliance with the spirit and objectives of open access, more restrictive CC licences (as set out above) must function as originally intended, fit with authors' disciplinary requirements, and should not involve an exclusive transfer of rights by the author;
- Consequently, the assignment of rights granted by the author to the publisher must in no way limit the author's rights;
- Publishers must not use any language or terms or adopt any practices that infringe authors' rights or hamper open access publication or immediate deposits of accepted author's manuscripts in open repositories;
- Contracts for the transfer of rights between authors and publishers must clearly indicate to authors how the publisher and third parties will use their work.

³ <https://www.coalition-s.org/equitable-open-access-publishing/>

⁴ <https://openaccess.mpg.de/b16-final-statement>

⁵ <https://oa2020.org/b17-conference/final-statement/>

Workflow simplicity and efficiency

The characteristics of the monitoring tool for open access publications (submissions of applications by researchers, administrative validation, billing, access to reports, etc.) must be discussed and adapted to suit the French context (multiple affiliations, referring applications to the affiliation establishment if the wrong establishment is erroneously entered, and for agreements with discounted publication costs, the submission of invoices on the public sector [Chorus Pro](#) platform) and enable establishments to validate the eligibility of authors if they wish to do so. Publishers will make efforts to streamline processes and workflows so as to reduce the administrative workload for the author's affiliation establishment and the consortium. For the duration of the agreement, the publisher agrees to make a dedicated professional team available to the consortium that is trained in the agreement's specific features, is French-speaking if possible and capable of responding to requests from the consortium, member establishments and authors. The publisher is responsible for identifying authors and eligible articles from a given establishment or individual in the framework of the submission and publication process. The agreement's member establishments must have visibility as regards articles published under the agreement.

Persistent identifiers favour the sharing and re-use of scientific outputs so these can be accessed over the long term while also simplifying citations. Couperin supports the promotion of the use of unique identifiers and encourages publishers to implement these in their metadata and push these metadata into the CrossRef DOI metadata. The use of ORCID, a neutral and independent author identifier is the subject of an international consensus while IdRef is also recommended for French publishers.

As regards organisational identifiers, Couperin recommends using disambiguated, open and interoperable IDs that enable researchers' affiliations and research results to be unambiguously identified. Among such identifiers, the use of the Research Organisation Registry (ROR) complies with these criteria.

Consequently, publishers are asked to use ORCID and ROR identifiers, and indeed any other recognised persistent open identifier in their submission, production, peer review and publication workflows.

Data requested from academic journal publishers

Publishers must provide information each year to assess their publication activity and the share of French productions involved, based on several parameters. These data must be dated back three years to guarantee their robustness and avoid annual variations. Similarly, data on the use of content by subscribers must be provided.

The data requested are:

Provider's overall worldwide publication activity:

- The total number of articles published by the provider in the subscribed contents,
- The total number of articles published in subscription-only access,
- The total number of articles published in open access in hybrid journals,
- The total number of articles published in fully open journals.
- A breakdown by type of CC-BY licence of articles published in open access
- Data relating to a publisher's roadmap for the transition to full open access – the number and proportion of hybrid journals that have switched to full open access, the number and proportion of hybrid journals and full open access journals as compared to the total number of new journals created, the proportion of open access articles compared to the total number of published articles, the evolution over five years of the proportion of articles published in full open access journals, compliance with transition deadlines and objectives.

Publications related to French Higher Education and Research:

- Publication activity: list of articles where at least one of the authors is affiliated to a French institution with the option of filtering for articles whose corresponding author is affiliated to a particular establishment.

Data to be provided for a publication year: DOI, year of publication, title of the article/chapter, authors, ORCID, affiliation, title of the journal, ISSN, nature of the journal/book (subscription only, hybrid, pure Open Access), indication of the mode of publication of the article (OA, non-OA), the associated license (copyright, Creative Common with indication of the license used).

- Creative Commons publication licences chosen by the authors and proportion of articles published under CC BY licences.

- APC expenditure: list of articles whose corresponding author is affiliated to a French institution and amount of publication fees paid. The data collected will be used in part for the annual publication of French APC expenditure on the Open APC website and will aliment the French system for rapid and transparent monitoring of expenditure relating to publication (APCs and ancillary costs)
- Data to be provided: DOI, ORCID, amount paid excluding and including VAT, discount rate, author, affiliation, invoiced institution.

Public access to documents linked to the negotiations

Couperin implements the relevant European and French rules on the freedom of information, particularly those concerning subscribing public institutions, and the provisions of the French Code of Relationships between the Public Sector and the Administration. Hence, confidentiality clauses will be excluded both from the contracts and from the agreements. Couperin will post the content of the Read and Publish agreements online on the *ESAC Transformative Agreement Registry*⁶.

This position is consistent with the [French government's commitments under the Open Government Partnership](#), and in particular commitment 18 on 'Building an open science ecosystem'.

The Couperin Consortium is mandated by member institutions to collect information from providers on the amounts invoiced to each institution, in accordance with the members' charter.

By agreeing to a consortial negotiation, the provider agrees to provide the consortium with a list of Couperin member institutions and the amounts invoiced.

The amounts paid by the member organisations are published annually on <https://data.enseignementsup-recherche.gouv.fr/pages/home/>.

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⁶ <https://esac-initiative.org/about/transformative-agreements/agreement-registry/>