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Representatives of major European research institutes meeting in Berlin on Wednesday (October 22) issued a declaration in support of open-access publishing of scientific and scholarly research.

The [declaration](#), dubbed the Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, says, "The Internet now offers the chance to constitute a global and interactive representation of human knowledge, including cultural heritage and the guarantee of worldwide access."

"Our organizations are interested in the further promotion of the new open access paradigm to gain the most benefit for science and society. Therefore, we intend to make progress by encouraging our researchers/grant recipients to publish their work according to the principles of the open access paradigm," it says.

[Robert Schlögl](#), of the [Fritz Haber Institute](#) of the Max Planck Society, told us that signatories included all major research institutes in Germany and France, as well as others throughout Europe, including Norway and Hungary. A similar document for US-based institutes has not yet been signed, he said.

"Europeans are faster this time," he said. "We have overtaken the Americans."

Open-access publishing allows readers to access, copy, and distribute research papers freely, subject to proper attribution of authorship. In both its commercial guise, as pioneered by [BioMed Central](#) (the publisher of *Genome Biology*), and the not-for-profit version being developed by, among others, the Public Library of Science ([PLOS](#)), open-access publishing is gaining increasing attention in the current international debate about scholarly communication.

Schlögl said that a web site containing a list of signatories to the Berlin Declaration will be updated to allow other European institutions to sign in support of the declaration.

He also said that US representatives attending the conference had agreed to hold a joint conference on open access in April at a location yet to be determined. Earlier this year, a meeting of interested parties in the United States produced the [Bethesda Statement](#) on the principles of open-access publishing.

The Max Planck Society strongly supports open access and has made "several hundred thousand euros" available to help cover the cost of the transition from current practices, Schlögl said.

Rather than charging readers to access research, open-access publishers charge researchers or their institutions to publish.

Schlögl was reluctant to specify the extra cost of publishing during the transition period. But when pressed, he said the Max-Planck-Society has estimated the additional cost at around 10%. "That is just an estimate," he said. "We will see how it goes."

When the transition is complete, publishing costs for open access will be about the same as now for paper, he said. That transition time will vary according to scientific discipline, he said. For example,

physics and mathematics research publishing is already advanced while "life sciences is on the slow end of the spectrum," he said.

He estimated it would take around 5 years to make the total transition to open access.

## References

1. Berlin Declaration on Open Access to Knowledge in the Sciences and Humanities, [<http://www.zim.mpg.de/openaccess-berlin/berlindeclaration.html>]
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