Project Context and Objectives:

The MedOANet Project (Mediterranean Open Access Network - www.medoanet.eu) addressed the need for coordinated strategies and policies in Open Access to scientific information in Europe. The project’s purpose was to enhance existing policies, strategies and structures for Open Access and contribute towards the implementation of new ones, in six Mediterranean countries: Greece, Turkey, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal. Furthermore, the project aimed at spreading awareness and understanding of Open Access policies, strategies and structures, in these countries and beyond. For its two years’ duration, the project has a budget of 964,552.75 €.

More specifically, the project was designed along three lines of work:

First, it mapped the open access ecosystem in the six countries by performing surveys in order to obtain a nuanced understanding, especially regarding open access policies, and provide a basis for policymaker engagement and coordination at the national level. It also developed an online tool, the Open Access Tracker. The tool tracks the development of open access policies and initiatives (such as funder policies, repositories, etc.), by drawing data from international registries and displaying them for each country, effectively creating a country profile.

An important line of work was to facilitate coordination at the national level: project partners engaged national policymakers, developed task forces that brought together the major national stakeholders, and organised national workshops.

A third line of work comprised regional and European coordination: Aside from project partner interaction, this was achieved through a workshop with the participation of policymakers from all six countries, as well as the development of guidelines for policy development, directed to funder and institutional policymakers in the six countries and available in all six local languages other than English.

Project Results:

The MedOANet project since its beginning worked towards coordinating strategies and policies in Open Access to scientific information in six Mediterranean countries (Greece, Turkey, Italy, France, Spain and Portugal), with a view to enhance existing policies, strategies and structures for Open Access and contribute towards the implementation of new ones. The main results achieved by the project are the following:

- It set up national task forces in order to bring together all open access stakeholders and decision-makers and coordinate efforts in the development of national policies.
- It performed surveys to map the open access ecosystem in the six countries. Of special interest were the policies among research funders, research performing organizations and publishers.
- It organized Open access workshops in collaboration with the task forces to bring the main stakeholders in each country together, to increase the awareness of open access issues and facilitate future coordinated action.
- It developed the “Open access Tracker”, a tool that tracks the development of open access policies and initiatives (such funder policies, repositories, etc.), by drawing data from international registries and displaying them for each country, effectively creating a country profile. The tracker provides information and encourages involved stakeholders to register their open access resources with appropriate registries.
- it facilitated regional coordination by bringing policymakers together in a European workshop at the University of Minho and a European Conference at the National Documentation Centre
- it developed coherent Guidelines and Recommendations towards implementing open access policies to facilitate the development of national plans and policies aligned to current best practices and the European Commission’s policies.

Potential Impact:

The MedOANet Project focused on national and regional coordination of Open Access strategies, policies and structures in the six Mediterranean countries, through their identification and mapping into an online “Mediterranean Open Access Tracker”, while it systematically engaged significant policy makers and other stakeholders (Research Performing Institutions, Research Funding Organisations, publishers, policy makers, etc) with the ability to affect change in policies, in a top-down approach. It did so by means of strengthening, expanding and systematizing the activities of an already active regional network of partners from Mediterranean Europe. It also succeeded in creating a functioning network of partners. Through the formation of national task forces, the MedOANet European Workshop (Braga, Portugal) and the final MedOANet European Conference, the project has created new relationships with other European projects, policymakers and the major stakeholders on Open Access, capitalised on existing ones and further developed them. Finally, the project used the knowledge acquired and produced the MedOANet Guidelines on implementing Open Access policies, that provide concise and targeted guidance for a harmonized approach towards policy development.

One of the most important impacts of the project was the raise of awareness on Open Access and relevant policy implementation, due to the project’s activities and the advocacy towards the relevant Ministries and main stakeholders. The National Task Forces for Open Access, created during the MedOANet project, in most of the countries have agreed to maintain the activities of the groups after the end of the project. In the case of Portugal, they have also decided to organise a face-to-face meeting once a year at least. In fact, they considered very advantageous the heterogeneity of the representatives and the possibility to share experiences and knowledge arose from the group interaction.

Recently, in Italy the project had impact on the law that approved on October 7th an open access mandate deposition of peer-reviewed articles in institutional or discipline based repositories publicly funded. Also, the Ministry of Education University and Research (MIUR) launched the first call to fund projects for young researchers for 2014. The call is named SIR (Scientific Independence of young Researchers) includes a mandate clause on open access which is based on the Horizon 2020 guidelines on OA for publications. Definitively the active role of the italian National Point of Reference has had a strong impact in the last few months, as well as the recent Horizon 2020 guidelines on OA. However, MedOANet paved the way in the last two years, by sending info, writing proposals to the previous ministry, involving its collaborators in the National Task Force, keeping them abreast of all the important achievements abroad etc.

The project managed to increase awareness of key issues at the policy level, fostering the conditions for coordinated policies at national and institutional levels that are currently largely lacking in these Mediterranean countries. For example, Dr Gregoriou, the President of NHRF discussed during the MedOANet European Conference, the institution is at the forefront of developments with respect to open access, and is considering adopting an open access policy based on the MedOANet model policy.
List of Websites:

www.medoanet.eu

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