

## Belgium - Open science country note

### Open science and the national context

In Belgium there is currently no connection between open science and national policy agendas: science and innovation policy is regionalised. Joint consultation on open access and open data among the different actors has, however, been initiated. The International Co-operation Commission and Federal Co-operation Commission (ICC-FCC) Open Access Consultation Group ([www.belspo.be/belspo/coordination/scienPol\\_FCC\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/coordination/scienPol_FCC_en.stm) [1]) was created on 28 October 2013; its mission states that Belgian institutions agree to pursue conformity with and interoperability of implemented systems. The Open Access Consultation Group's members share knowledge and best practices, inform other parties, stimulate initiatives, co-ordinate international reporting and events to raise public awareness, and explore related fields. This is a bottom-up initiative with no link to formal national strategic objectives.

### Open science research and innovation actors

Belgium is a federal state with regions and communities. The Flemish, Walloon and Brussels Capital regions are responsible for applied science and innovation in industry. The French and Flemish communities are responsible for basic research and education. The federal government covers research in certain fields, carried out in federal research institutions.

#### 1) Research councils and funding agencies

*Federal:* Belgian Science Policy Office (BELSPO), [www.belspo.be/belspo/index\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/index_en.stm) [2]

*Regional – Flemish Authority:* Dept. of Economy, Science and Innovation (EWI),

[www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/en](http://www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/en) [3]

*Regional – Flemish Authority:* Agency for Innovation by Science and Technology (IWT),

[www.iwt.be/english/welcome](http://www.iwt.be/english/welcome) [4]

*French Community, renamed Wallonia-Brussels Federation:* Direction of Scientific Research,

[www.recherchescientifique.cfwb.be](http://www.recherchescientifique.cfwb.be) [5]

#### 2) Ministries for higher education and research

*Flemish Authority:* Research Foundation Flanders, [www.fwo.be/en](http://www.fwo.be/en) [6]

*Wallonia-Brussels Federation:* Fund for Scientific Research, [www.fnrs.be](http://www.fnrs.be) [7]

#### 3) Higher education institutions

Nearly all Belgian universities boast open access repositories, but the Ghent University Library (<https://biblio.ugent.be/> [8]) and the Liège University Library (<http://orbi.ulg.ac.be/project?id=03> [9]) are international frontrunners in the open science field.

#### 4) Public research organisations and other government labs

The Science and Technology Information Service (STIS) ([www.stis.belspo.be/en/stis.asp](http://www.stis.belspo.be/en/stis.asp) [10]), a BELSPO subsidiary, takes care of all international, national and federal co-ordination with regard to Belgian open science, and is implementing a federal open access repository. The allocated budget

for the repository is EUR 100 000 for 2014-15. On an institutional level, some specialised federal and Flemish research centres boast repositories that have evolved to varying degrees, but these are fewer than universities.

## **Policy design - Open data**

**Belgian actors** are formally committed to promoting open data and open science. See 4b.

Both the Flemish and the federal governments have initiated talks on providing access to government data, an issue related to open data as it is an effort to support published scientific research results.

[www.epsiplatform.eu/content/belgian-committee-reports](http://www.epsiplatform.eu/content/belgian-committee-reports) [11]

[www.bestuurszaken.be/vlaams-actieplan-open-data](http://www.bestuurszaken.be/vlaams-actieplan-open-data) [12]

## **Policy design- Open/increasing access to scientific publications**

The Federal Authority, the Flemish Authority and the Wallonia-Brussels Federation jointly organised the signing of the Brussels Declaration on Open Access to Belgian Publicly Funded Research (<http://openaccess.be/2012/10/22/brussels-declaration-on-open-access/> [13]) on 22 October 2012 at the initiative of *Open Access Belgium*, which is, among others, composed of members of the Belgian OpenAIRE Helpdesk. All three science policy ministers formally committed to supporting the dissemination of publicly funded scientific research through Open Access Belgium. The Brussels Declaration encourages the creation of institutional repositories with embargoes of no more than 6 or 12 months, and invites authorities to investigate possibilities of covering the costs of open access publishing. It also invites authorities to investigate open data and open science.

The Belgian Federal Science Policy Office's management plan states its commitment to free online availability of scientific information – in particular, that of research results and collections from federal research institutions – in compliance with the Berlin Declaration.

Currently, STIS (see 2.4) is consulting all federal departments that finance research in order to draft best practice for a federal open access policy. An OA working group tackles different policy aspects one by one (business plan, authors' rights, licences, mandates, awareness, use of international standards, etc.). A final proposition will be available mid-2015.

On 28 February 2014, the Flemish Authority held a special hearing on the development of Flemish open access policy. Research Foundation Flanders (FWO), however, already has an OA mandate. Flanders Research Information Space (FRIS) is the Flemish research portal that provides information on Flemish researchers, organisations and projects. FRIS' goal is to eventually harvest the publications produced by these projects.

Liège University adopted its open access mandate in May 2007. Researchers have to archive their outputs themselves, following the principle of Immediate-Deposit & Optional-Access (IDOA). Assessment of research performance and the evaluation of researchers within this university are exclusively based on the outputs that are deposited in the Open Repository and Bibliography (ORBi). This model is often referred to internationally as the "Liège Model".

Within the Wallonia-Brussels Federation regional funding agency (FNRS), new regulations took effect on 30 June 2013 that somewhat translated the Liège Model to the FNRS. Hence the IDOA principle is now equally applicable to researchers funded by the FNRS (mandates and grants). All research output published since 2008 must be deposited in the repository of the researchers' institutions. The deposited output constitutes the only basis for evaluation of research performances.

The BICTEL project ([www.bictel.be](http://www.bictel.be) [14]) gathers theses of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation universities for deposit in a common repository in order to make it freely accessible on line, in full text. Several servers are installed, each institution being responsible for the gathering (via self-archiving), the organisation, the authentication and the maintenance of its scientific production.

PoPuPS [15] is a portal for the publication of scientific journals of the [Wallonia-Europe University Academy](#) [16], which is composed of Liège University and [Gembloux Agricultural University](#) [17]; the portal was established by Liège University's [Library Network](#) [18]. Its goal is to permit journals – existing or new – published by members of the Academy and others to be distributed through open access, easily and free of charge, through an institutional tool interoperable with similar international initiatives. Beginning 4 March 2014, 15 academic journals will be available via the portal.

Finally, a feasibility study has been conducted regarding integration of research in the social sciences and humanities – financed by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation, i.e. other than through the funding of universities or the research funding agency) – into a single OA portal

### Open science and international co-operation

The National Open Access Point of Reference (NPR) for Belgium is mandated by the ICC-FCC Open Access Consultation Group to represent all Belgian actors within the EC NPR Network.

Representatives of the various Belgian administrative levels are also involved with:

- Max Planck Institute's biannual open access state of the affairs conference
- The European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) open access task force
- The European Research Area and Innovation Committee (ERAC) Roadmap/Competition Council
- Joint Programming Initiative (JPI) Climate's Access to Knowledge policy
- PASTEUR4OA Horizon2020 Open Access Advocacy project
- The OECD Working Party on Innovation and Technology Policy (TIP)'s revised terms of reference for open science
- UNESCO's Global Open Access Portal (GOAP) Evaluation Team.

**Source URL:** <https://www.innovationpolicyplatform.org/content/belgium-open-science-country-note>

### Links

[1] [http://www.belspo.be/belspo/coordination/scienPol\\_FCC\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/coordination/scienPol_FCC_en.stm)

[2] [http://www.belspo.be/belspo/index\\_en.stm](http://www.belspo.be/belspo/index_en.stm)

[3] <http://www.ewi-vlaanderen.be/en>

[4] <http://www.iwt.be/english/welcome>

[5] [http://www.recherchescientifique.cfwb.be/index.php?id=sirs\\_page1&no\\_cache=1&L=1](http://www.recherchescientifique.cfwb.be/index.php?id=sirs_page1&no_cache=1&L=1)

[6] <http://www.fwo.be/en>

[7] <http://www.fnrs.be>

[8] <https://biblio.ugent.be/>

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- [9] <http://orbi.ulg.ac.be/project?id=03>
  - [10] <http://www.stis.belspo.be/en/stis.asp>
  - [11] <http://www.epsiplatform.eu/content/belgian-committee-reports>
  - [12] <http://www.bestuurszaken.be/vlaams-actieplan-open-data>
  - [13] <http://openaccess.be/2012/10/22/brussels-declaration-on-open-access/>
  - [14] <http://www.bictel.be/>
  - [15] <http://pupus.ulg.ac.be/>
  - [16] [http://www.ulg.ac.be/cms/a\\_16258/academie-wallonie-europe](http://www.ulg.ac.be/cms/a_16258/academie-wallonie-europe)
  - [17] <http://www.fusagx.be/>
  - [18] <http://www.libnet.ulg.ac.be/>