BACKGROUND: PREPARATION OF THE 2022-2024 CONTRACTS NEGOTIATIONS

Until early 2021, FCT, the Portuguese national funder, had pursued a "green OA" policy, significantly hindered by the embargo periods imposed by most publishers.

In February 2021, FCT joined cOAlition S, bringing in a new paradigm for Open Access to Portuguese funded research.

This new reality also provided a new focus to b-on, the national consortium, shifting the negotiation goal to achieve Transformative Agreements for the cycle 2022-2024.

THE RESULT: SUMMARY OF 2022-2024 B-ON AGREEMENTS

Throughout the negotiations of its first round of transformative agreements, b-on was faced with the high research output institutions paradox:

- limited funds (and historically substantiated);
- healthy publication pattern.

As a result, b-on was able to secure circa 60% coverage of the overall output of its authors (in the 12 TAs negotiated).

The 12 TAs represent 80% of the b-on output, i.e. in practice the 12 TAs cover around 50% of the publication needs.

THE GOLD SHARE

Analysis of the OA status trend of articles by b-on authors (source: WoS + Unpaywall), show a strong drive in the community towards immediate Open Access:

- In 2019, Gold represented 30% of the b-on output, reaching 43% in 2021 (an average annual growth of +37% in the volume of articles).
- In 2022 the growth of the Gold share slowed down significantly (+3% in the volume of articles), reaching 45% of the overall output.

This slowdown possibly indicates that the Portuguese researcher community has reached capacity (in the ability to pay) and that APCs constitute a barrier for further growth.

THE HYBRID SHARE

The Hybrid share remained stable from 2019 to 2021 at 3-4%. This may reflect a resistance to the higher APCs charged by hybrid journals, together with the Portuguese National Funder policy, which is to not support hybrid APCs.

In 2022, the Hybrid share jumped to 10% reflecting the usage of the b-on transformative agreements.

CONCLUSIONS

- There is a strong interest of the b-on community to publish in immediate OA.
- The recent drive towards paid OA is reaching a plateau, most likely due to financial limitations.
- Hybrid OA via Transformative Agreements helps complement the need of b-on researchers, but its coverage will remain insufficient over time due to publishers’ caps.

BEYOND 2024

The question now facing b-on is:

- How to continue to promote b-on author’s work through immediate OA whilst maintaining financial sustainability?

The goal of the next round of negotiations will have to steer away from APCs as "currency" and move to fairer and innovative approaches.

Failing that, the focus should shift towards new OA models such as diamond initiatives.