

APCs in a Diamond Wonderland: the profile of APC journals in countries with predominantly diamond publishing ecosystems

Iva Melinščak Zlodi¹, Milica Ševkušić², Jadranka Stojanovski³, Jan Erik Frantsvåg⁴, Željka Salopek¹, Anna-Kaarina Linna⁵, Didier Torny⁶, David Pontille⁶, Victoria Brun⁶, Ignasi Labastida i Juan⁷, Virginia de Pablo Llorente⁸, María Ángeles Coslado⁸

¹ University of Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Croatia

² EIFL, Lithuania

³ University of Zadar, Croatia

⁴ UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Norway

⁵ Federation of Finnish Learned Societies/Publication Forum, Finland

⁶ Centre de Sociologie de l'Innovation Mines Paris - PSL - CNRS, France

⁷ University of Barcelona, Spain

⁸ FECYT, Spain



Motivation for this research

- Insufficient understanding of the economy of publishing outside of the realm of big international journal publishers (small, institutional, diamond, non-profit, national...) and lack of research in this area.
- Polarized depictions of for-profits (with exorbitant subscription or APC prices) vs. small non-profit diamond alternatives. Where do small national APC-based journals fit in?
- Realizing that there are thriving national ecosystems of dominantly diamond publishing within Europe, where at the same time a small share of journals adopt the APC mechanisms. What do we know about that share?
- Understanding the motivation for adoption of APC revenue models and the way they coexist with public investments in national publishing.

Goals & research questions

1. Share of APC journals (among OA ones) in several dominantly diamond countries: Croatia, Finland, France, Norway, Serbia and Spain
2. Range of prices of author charges?
3. Relation of existence of APCs and it's price range with other properties of OA journals (country, discipline, type of publisher, receipt of public funding or indexation in relevant journal lists/databases)
4. Terms used to describe the charges, their specificities (discounts, waivers etc.), and the transparency of the informations on APCs, based on the information from the journals' websites



Challenges related to sampling, data sources and definitions

- Effort to capture info on **ALL** OA journals in a country
- Need to combine data from various sources
 - DOAJ as a main source (but low coverage for certain countries)
 - WoSCC, Scopus, Ulrich's
 - National sources (Finnish Publication Forum, Norwegian Register for Scientific Journals, Series and Publishers, Serbian Citation Index, doiSerbia, HRČAK)
 - Informal gathering of additional information
- Definitions with porous boundaries
 - "OA" journal (even, a "journal")
 - "APC" (used as an pseudonym)
 - "French"/"Norwegian"/"Serbian"... publisher?

Context



Diversity of funding mechanisms across countries

- Regular (bi/tri)annual calls for subsidies from public bodies responsible for science in Serbia, Croatia, France, Norway and Finland, where eligibility criteria vary:
 - Only OA journals in Croatia or France (APC journals are eligible) and Finland (where it can be via only green with an embargo)
 - OA is not a criteria in Serbia
 - In Norway, special funds are allocated to diamond (in HSS in Norwegian language only)
- Criteria of quality for journals vary
 - Some rely mostly on presence in international databases
 - Other have nationally administered registries of quality publications or quality seals (Norway, Finland, Spain)

Public funding

- the amounts allocated and the number of journals covered vary
 - Croatia: 168 journals (8,770 EUR in average, ranging from 1,300 to 21,000 EUR) in 2022, including 15 journals with APC
 - Norway: 28 journals up to 2023, 37 from 2024 onwards
 - Serbia: the list of subsidised journals is not publicly available, nor are the amounts granted (informal estimations: subsidies range from less than 1,000 EUR to ca. 15,000 EUR; between 150 and 200 journals are covered)
 - Finland: About 80 journals per year (7,000 in average, the median is just over 5,000 EUR)
- In some countries, there are publicly owned or publicly funded central national infrastructures for OA journals (Finland, Croatia, Serbia, France)

Types of publishers

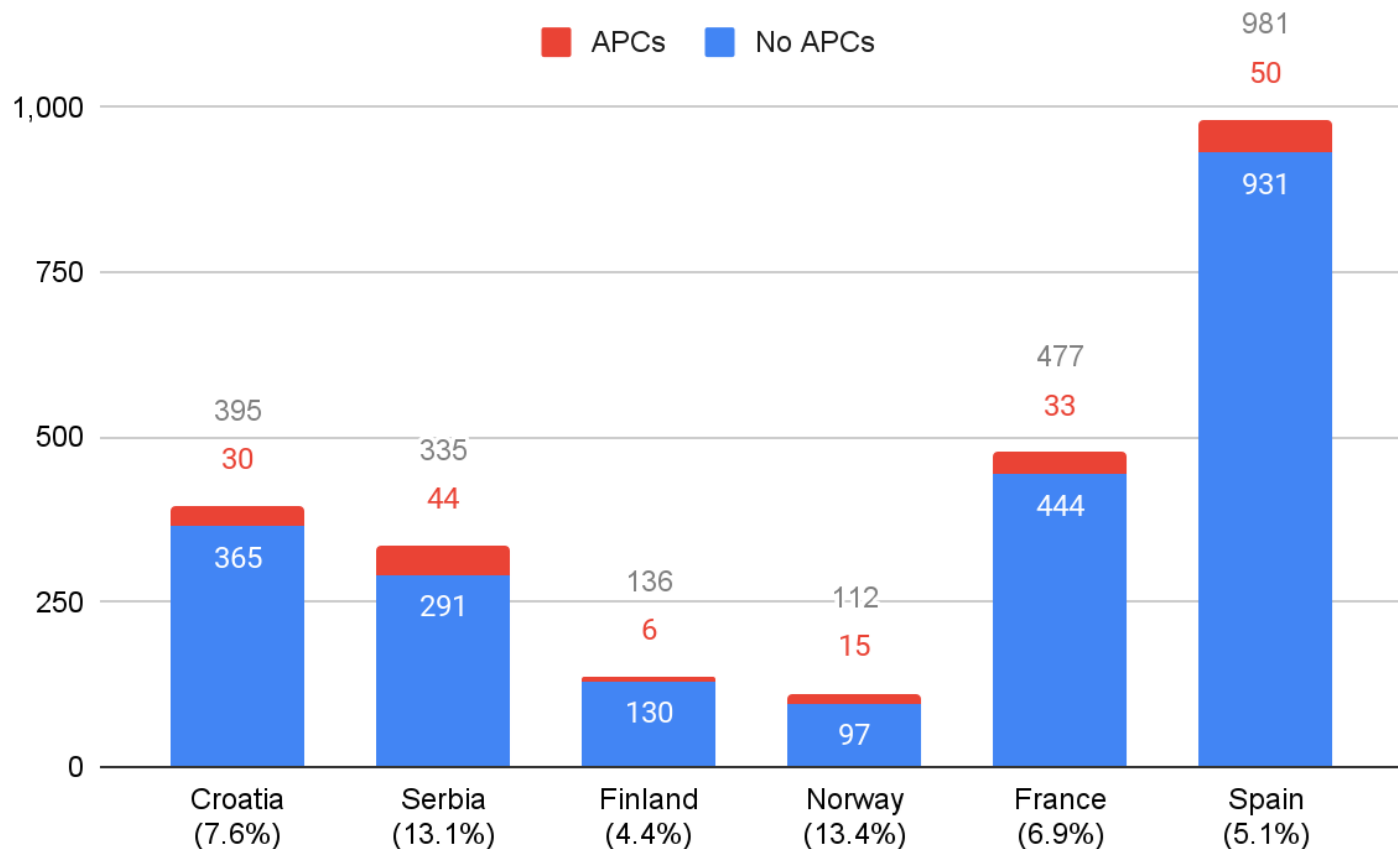
- In different countries, there are different types of publishers dominating the national scenes, with varying degree of importance of big international publishers
 - Serbia and Croatia - dominance of small non-profit publishers, very small for-profits, and occasional presence of international companies acting as co-publishers
 - Norway: both national commercial publishers and institutional publishers are present
 - Finland: dominance of learned societies
 - France and Spain - instances of branches of big internationals



Results

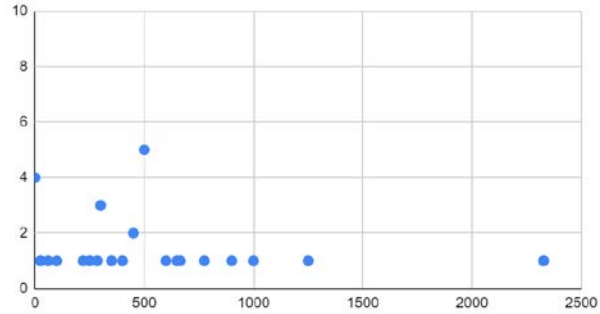


Numbers and shares of APC-based among OA journals



Distribution of APC prices per country

Croatia





APCs and disciplines

<i>DOAJ top-level subject category</i>	Spain	Serbia	France	Croatia	Norway	Finland
Medicine	21	8	11	2	1	1
Technology	5	10	12	9		
Social Sciences	5	10	2	9	1	
Science		5	5	8		3
Education	6	3			2	
Geography. Anthropology. Recreation	4	1			2	1
Fine Arts	1		2	1	2	
Philosophy. Psychology. Religion	4				1	
General Works	3	1			1	
Agriculture		3	1			1
Language and Literature	1	1			2	
Law		2			1	
Music and books on Music					2	
Naval Science				1		
Grand Total	50	44	33	30	15	6



High range APC prices (1000+ EUR) and disciplines

<i>DOAJ top-level subject category</i>	France	Norway	Spain	Serbia	Croatia	Finland
Medicine	7	1	5			1
Technology	4			2	1	
Science	2			2		1
Social Sciences					2	
Music and books on Music		2				
Language and Literature		2				
Law		1				
Fine Arts		1				
Grand Total	13	7	5	4	3	2

Shares of APCs among the WoS or Scopus indexed journals

	Croatia		Finland		France		Norway		Serbia		Total	
WOS												
No APCs	100	83%	6	55%	22	71%	4	67%	15	63%	147	77%
APCs	20	17%	5	45%	9	29%	2	33%	9	38%	45	23%
Scopus												
No APCs	134	86%	15	79%	59	74%	18	82%	68	80%	294	81%
APCs	21	14%	4	21%	21	26%	4	18%	17	20%	67	19%
All OA												
No APCs	365	92%	130	96%	444	93%	97	87%	291	87%	1327	91%
APCs	30	8%	6	4%	33	7%	15	13%	44	13%	128	9%



Shares of WoS or Scopus indexed journals among those who charge APCs

	Croatia		Finland		France		Norway		Serbia		Total	
WOS												
no	10	33%	1	17%	24	73%	13	87%	35	80%	83	65%
yes	20	67%	5	83%	9	27%	2	13%	9	20%	45	35%
	Croatia		Finland		France		Norway		Serbia		Total	
Scopus												
no	9	30%	2	33%	12	36%	11	73%	27	61%	61	48%
yes	21	70%	4	67%	21	64%	4	27%	17	39%	67	52%

Differences observed in descriptions of APCs

- What do they charge for? (submission, publication, proofreading, language editing...)
- Unit of charging fees (paper/author/page...)
- Different forms of waivers/discounts (not all journals have them - majority do in Norway and Finland; majority do not in Serbia and Croatia)
- Different terminology
- Issues with transparency!
 - Intentional or not?
 - Due to journal presence on different platforms and websites
 - Due to multilingual editions

Limitations of the study

- Main one: no evidence of trends & changes (research performed in one point in time)
- No available and transparent information on all parallel sources of funding and revenue (even some public funding schemes do not reveal information on allocated funds) - no possibility to assess the general overlap between publicly funded journals and journals that charge APCs
- Need for a more qualitative approach to understanding the motivations of publishers for introducing APCs and their experiences after the introduction.

Thank you!