Supporting the Slovenian Scientific Publishing Field

Guidelines based on RDA outputs and recommendations to improve data citation, sharing and reuse in connection to scientific journal publications.

The challenge

Open science aims to improve the accessibility of research outputs, including articles, data, and other research objects, so that the researchers, the industry and the public can make use of, build on, and ensure the validity of these research outputs. In Slovenia, we are faced with a low level of data citation, sharing and reuse of research data in connection to scientific journal publications. The National Strategy of Open Access to Scientific Publications and Research Data in Slovenia 2015-2020 (hereafter: the Strategy) states that publicly funded journals containing peer-reviewed articles must be openly accessible, along with research data that had been created with public funding. While open access to publications has become a firmly established practice, no measures have been implemented to ensure open access to the underlying research data. Generally, Slovenian scientific journal policies do not list any requirements regarding access to data. In addition, data sharing culture is largely absent in the Slovenian research space and there are different levels of awareness about the importance of data sharing among disciplines. In certain scientific fields, this is exacerbated by the lack of knowledge of data management and/or by the lack of appropriate data services, while elsewhere the existing data infrastructure is underused. Editorial teams are understaffed and underfinanced, which further hinders the introduction of new open science practices.

The RDA outputs adopted

To provide reliable guidelines to the Slovenian scientific publishers, the Node applied the relevant articles of the Strategy to the Research Data Policy Framework (DOI: 10.5334/dsj-2020-005/), developed by the Data policy standardisation and implementation Interest Group. The key common elements of data policies summarized by the Framework were adapted to the specifics of the Slovenian research community, clarified, elaborated, and implemented in the Node's Guidelines for the implementation of scientific publishing policies of research data citation in scientific publications and assuring access to primary data, used in publications (hereafter: Guidelines), a guidance document for scientific publishers and editors who are preparing research data policies. The Framework provided a concise and exhaustive source on current best practices. Structure of the Framework allows for the upgrades with nationally relevant instructions and explanations. The tiered approach to data policies was helpful for the evaluation of policy features both to the Node and later on to the journals' teams during the implementation phase.

Other RDA results and documents were also among the sources of the Guidelines. Draft recommendations by the Sharing reward and Credit IG and FAIRsharing Registry and Recommendations by the joint RDA-FORCE11 FAIRsharing Working Group were cited for evaluation of deposited research data. For citation of data sources, the Tromsø recommendations for citation of research data in linguistics by the Linguistics Data IG and the Data Citation WG's Data Citations of Evolving Data recommendations were consulted. Licencing guidelines were supported by the Legal Interoperability Of Research Data: Principles And Implementation Guidelines by the RDA-CODATA Legal Interoperability IG. Lastly, the CoreTrustSeal as a basic certification standard for repositories, arising from the RDA/WDS Certification of Digital Repositories IG, was referred among the criteria for selection of an appropriate repository.

The full text of the Guidelines is available at https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3757282.

Benefits of adoption and impact

By applying the RDA recommendations, the Node was able to demonstrate the need for new approaches to research data underlying scientific publications, to introduce international experience and expertise, and to provide model instructions to equip editors with knowledge and examples of good practices of data sharing that eased the process of implementing data policies at their journals. In doing so, Node contributed to the rise of data-sharing culture by fostering a grass-root approach in an area where national decrees had made little impact and had not provided any support or guidance. The project also strengthened the ties between national data services and their user communities.

The adoption process

The adoption process was part of the Open Data Journal Policy and Research Data Citation pilot project of the Node. The project consisted of the following stages:

1. Coordinators of the Node prepared draft Guidelines, drawing from the preprint of the Research Data Policy Framework and other recommendations.

2. Select journals' representatives were invited to discuss and comment on the draft.

3. In collaboration with the Node, representatives of four journals (Socialno delo [Social Work], Slovenščina 2.0 [Slovenian 2.0], Contributions to Contemporary History/ Prispevki za novejšo zgodovino, Documenta Praehistorica) drafted data policies adjusted to the specifics of respective fields and author communities and provided further feedback to the Guidelines.

4. Final version of the Guidelines was presented at a conference and published.

5. Following the conference, representatives of further three scientific journals joined the project to implement new data policies for their publications (Central European Public Administration Review, Les/Wood journal, and Acta medico-biotechnica).

Lessons learned

While the Node's partners were instrumental in formulating the final version of the Guidelines, the work they carried out in their scientific communities was perhaps the most valuable output that the Node aimed to achieve. The draft data policies they produced stemmed from a careful analysis of the types of data they encounter, the common practices of the researchers in the respective scientific areas, the necessary restrictions to data access in cases of using sensitive personal data, and of the range of services offered at the available (national) data services.

About RDA Node Slovenia

RDA Node Slovenia (hereafter: the Node) was established within the RDA EU 4.0. project and is currently coordinated by the Slovenian Social Science Data Archives (Arhiv družboslovnih podatkov – ADP), the national data service provider for the social sciences. ADP was established in 1997 to manage social science data and data-connected services to support research and education in the public interest. ADP is a member of CESSDA (Consortium of European Social Science Data Archives) and acquired CoreTrustSeal 2017–2019 certification in 2018.

Initially, the Node's partners were the University of Ljubljana, DARIAH-SI (the national data service provider for the humanities) and CLARIN.SI (the national data service provider for language technologies). The Node quickly grew in membership and consists today of 60 members, coming predominantly from the Slovenian academic/research community. Node serves as a contact point between the RDA, the national funders and the national data practitioners. It collaborates closely with representatives of other national projects and initiatives in the field of open science. One of the aims of the Node is to promote data citation, sharing rewards and crediting best practices amongst Slovenian scientific publishers and to stimulate the development of journal policies of research data deposits in connection to scientific journal publications.

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Find out more at:

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