

Introducing 'Science International'

Background

'Science International' is a new coalition of major international science bodies. Participating in the initiative are the International Council for Science, the International Social Science Council, The World Academy of Sciences and the InterAcademy Partnership¹.

Objectives of Science International

- To consolidate a fragmented global science policymaking landscape, creating a single, recognised and authoritative global voice of policy for science.
- To deepen strategic alignment amongst partner organizations and develop a platform to catalyse future high-impact initiatives².
- To tackle one issue of relevance to global science policy each year and to follow up on its recommendations over the following two to three years.

Science International 2015: Big Data/Open Data

For the first edition of Science International, the four partner organizations have selected the issue of 'Big Data/Open Data'.

'Big data' has emerged as a major opportunity for scientific discovery, while 'open data' will enhance the efficiency, productivity and creativity of the public research enterprise and counteract tendencies towards the privatisation of knowledge. In addition, concurrent open publication of the data underpinning scientific papers can provide the basis of scientific 'self correction'. For organisations, individuals and society to maximise the benefits of big data, however, will depend on the extent to which there is open access to publicly-funded scientific data.

In this regard, there are a growing number of calls from various actors, both within and outside the scientific community, and from inter-governmental bodies such as the G8, the OECD and the UN, for open access to publicly-funded scientific data, especially regarding data of particular importance to major global challenges.

Full exploitation of 'big data', however, will also depend on the extent to which national science systems are able to develop the capacity to use it, on avoiding the creation of new 'knowledge divides', and on deciding which data can be made open for use and re-use.

'Big Data/Open Data' will therefore be the subject of the first meeting of Science International, to be held in Pretoria, South Africa, from 7-9 December 2015. The meeting will be hosted by South Africa's

¹ The InterAcademy Partnership is an umbrella organization that brings together IAP - the global network of science academies, the InterAcademy Medical Panel (IAMP), and the InterAcademy Council (IAC). It is expected to be launched formally in early 2016.

² In time, Science International will seek participation from other international scientific organisations as well as opening its meetings to members of partner organisations.

Department of Science and Technology and held in parallel with the first South African Open Science Forum and the Ministerial Forum of the G77 + China.

At the meeting, the Science International partner organizations will agree an international science 'accord' on Big Data/Open Data. The accord will be prepared by an expert working group jointly appointed by the partner organizations and will be presented in Pretoria at the G77 + China Ministerial Forum and the Open Science Forum.

The meeting will also recommend a global plan for data science capacity development, with an initial focus on Africa.

Objectives of the Accord

- Develop and advance an internationally-agreed set of principles and associated processes that will help to ensure that data remains open to review and widely available. This will maximise the creativity and productivity of national and international science systems and help ensure the transparency of the research enterprise.
- Seek the support of national governments, research councils, academies, scientific publishers, donor foundations and other scientific institutions for the principles expressed in this accord.
- Provide a set of guidelines that can form the basis of a new capacity development effort on open data in developing and emerging countries.

Expert Working Group

The following have agreed to participate in the expert working group, which will lead the process of drafting the Big Data/Open Data accord:

- Chair: Geoffrey Boulton (president, CODATA)
- Dominique Babini (coordinator, open access programme department, Latin American Council of Social Sciences - CLACSO)
- Simon Hodson (executive director, CODATA)
- Jianhui Li (Computer Network Information Centre, Chinese Academy of Sciences)
- Tshilidzi Marwala (University of Johannesburg, South Africa)
- Maria Musoke (Makerere University, Uganda)
- Sally Wyatt (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences).
- Paul Uhler (independent consultant, formerly National Academy of Sciences, USA).

This core group will be assisted by a wider network of expert 'readers' identified from among the members and networks of the Science International partner organizations.

Process

15-16 October Meeting of the Expert Working Group, Paris, France

Webinars will be broadcast on 15 and 16 October to allow the 'readers' and other members of Science International partner organizations to provide for feedback on the draft accord. Based on feedback from the webinars, a revised draft accord will be reviewed by the executive bodies of the Science International partner organizations.

7-9 December Meeting of Science International leadership and expert working group, Pretoria, South Africa

Agreement of final text of the accord. Worldwide release of the accord and presentation to participants of the G77 + China Ministerial Forum and the South African Open Science Forum.

Decision of topic to be covered by Science International in 2016.

For further information

For further information, please contact:

For ICSU – Heide Hackmann – heide.hackmann@icsu.org

For ISSC – Vivi Stavrou; Mathieu Denis – vivi@worldsocialscience.org;
mathieu@worldsocialscience.org

For TWAS – Romain Murenzi – edoffice@twas.org

For IAP – Peter McGrath – mcgrath@twas.org

Chair of working group – Geoffrey Boulton – g.boulton@ed.ac.uk