
News from Editing Societies

NECOBELAC, a European project to promote the diffusion of scientific information in public health

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NECOBELAC – Network of Collaboration Between Europe, Latin American and Caribbean Countries, www.necobelac.eu – is a three-year project started on 1 February 2009 and funded by the European Commission within the 7th Framework Program. It aims at enhancing the production and dissemination of quality scientific information in the field of public health and focuses on two main objectives: the promotion of training initiatives intended to improve the scientific writing skills of all professionals working in the health-related areas, and the implementation of scholarly communication systems based on the concept of immediate, open, and permanent access to research results. The six partners are represented by academic and scientific institutions from Italy (project coordinator), UK, Spain, Portugal, Brazil, and Colombia; they have gained sound experience in providing information services and outputs through networked initiatives. The project intends to raise awareness on shared principles of good practice among all stakeholders (authors, editors, publishers, information professionals, funding agencies, institutions, learning societies) of the scientific information chain and to promote a cultural change in the information production and dissemination process.

Project motivations and ideas

Since 2006, the descriptions of all scientific works published by ISS (about 1600 publications including contributions on ISS serials) have been accessible online through DSpace ISS (<http://dspace.iss.it/dspace>), the institutional repository, which complies with OA principles. It holds more than 25,000 items and is a focal point for the scientific papers produced by Italian research institutions in the biomedical area.

All NECOBELAC partners play a significant role within the OA community at both national and international level. Their shared opinions on OA strategies strongly enhanced the NECOBELAC partnership. Several project partners and supporters are members of EASE (European Association of Science Editors) and guarantee full and professional awareness of editorial issues from both technical and ethical points of view; other partners are actively involved in the main networks created for scientific information dissemination both in Europe and Latin America (SHERPA,

www.sherpa.ac.uk; DRIVER, www.driver-repository.eu; SciELO, www.scielo.br/; Virtual Health Library, www.virtualhealthlibrary.org). They have common expectations towards the idea of integrating the existing initiatives in health information services, such as those provided by the National Library of Medicine in the framework of the Medline system. Their collaboration is also oriented towards a democratization of knowledge, particularly in the field of public health.

The project's design envisages an evaluation of the single phases of the project by a subcontractor party involved as consultant within similar international initiatives.

Project characteristics

One of the key elements of the NECOBELAC project is facilitating cultural change in the production and dissemination of scientific information, not merely changing infrastructures. The project's main aim is to promote a bidirectional exchange between Europe and Latin America/Caribbean countries, to overcome the Eurocentric perspective of a unidirectional transfer of information and training activities towards Latin America.

The wealth and variety of the informative resources available in the two continents will benefit to all the countries that are involved and promote new collaborative research activities.

European partners, particularly the University of Nottingham (United Kingdom) and the Universidade do Minho (Portugal), have been leaders in the Open Access community in Europe. The Centro Latino Americano e do

NECOBELAC partners

Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS), Italy; Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), Spain; University of Nottingham (UNOTT), United Kingdom; BIREME, PAHO, Brazil; Instituto de Salud Pública (ISP), Colombia; Universidade do Minho (UMINHO), Portugal.

Key Perspectives Ltd, United Kingdom, and Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (UNED), Spain, are respectively subcontractors and third party within WP2 and WP4.

Caribe de Informação em Ciências da Saúde, BIREME, PAHO, the Brazilian partner (a PAHO specialised centre), has expertise in the management of online scientific information services.

NECOBELAC is unique among OA initiatives in focusing on public health. This will provide a well-focused operative strategy able to meet the specific information and training needs in this domain.

Project activities

The NECOBELAC project foresees the creation of a network of institutions collaborating to implement a training plan on scientific writing and on the spread of the Open Access movement to research outputs.

The first phase of the project is to implement a prototype flexible training course for teaching staff in European, Latin American, and Caribbean countries. It will be adapted to train authors of scientific publications at a local level, according to the specific needs of the different institutions participating in the network. The project's website (www.necobelac.eu) will facilitate the communication and availability of the training initiatives.

The project is split up into seven work packages (see box), to which all partners contribute, to ensure awareness and collaboration during the different phases of the project.

Work packages in the NECOBELAC project

WP1 – Project Management (ISS) – Implementation and administrative aspects of the project management directly associated with WPs development and “rules and procedures” to be followed by project management.

WP2 – Project Strategy and Impact Assessment (ISS) – Definition of appropriate strategies and networking EU-LAC within a shared operational plan, as well as assessing the impact of the project activities as a whole.

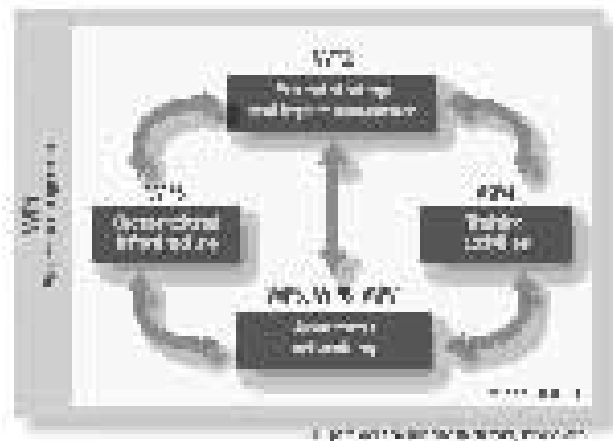
WP3 – Cross-National Advocacy Infrastructure (University of Nottingham) – Development of a cross-national advocacy infrastructure including a website for all stakeholders within the network EU-LAC countries.

WP4 – Training Activities (CSIC) – Organization of training activities for trainers to spread know-how in health information production, dissemination and use in EU-LAC countries.

WP5 – Promoting the Project Infrastructure to Guarantee its Usage in EU-LAC Countries (UMINHO) – Development of the most appropriate actions so that the new infrastructure is fully utilized in EU-LAC countries and training activities fully developed.

WP6 – Networking LAC-EUROPE Countries (BIREME) – Stimulation of the production of information tools and infrastructures on ongoing health activities in LAC and EU countries.

WP7 – Focus on Health-Related structures in LAC Countries (ISP) – Creation of awareness and collaboration among health-related structures in LAC countries to further increase the impact of the project.



A core element of the work packages is networking. The joint efforts of all partners and their background of experiences represent an investment aimed at launching and stimulating new collaborative research activities.

Project activities are closely connected, and will be performed simultaneously (see figure). The shared operative strategy, the constant evaluation of its impact (WP2), together with the web infrastructure (WP3) and the training activities (WP4), are integrated with the tasks of WP5, WP6 and WP7, which are intended to create awareness of the importance of networking institutions to achieve the project goals.

The project benefits from the collaboration of Key Perspectives Ltd (UK) in the evaluation of activities (WP2) and relies on the experience of the Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia (Spain) for the training initiatives (WP4). It will include an external evaluation panel of experts on scientific writing and OA communication models.

Expected achievements

The duration of the project is three years; its results will include activity reports, training course prototypes, online and residential training courses, production of teaching materials, and pilot programmes for the implementation of digital archives that are OA compliant.

A grid of indicators will facilitate collection of all the information relevant to the capacity of each partner to produce scientific publications in public health and to disseminate them through the internet. This will allow monitoring of progress in terms of training courses performed, number and type of scientific publications issued and posted on to institutional repositories, free access to online journals, and establishments of new collaborations, etc.

The project will promote the launch of new international collaborations through training programs on scientific writing and OA models and through a network of health institutions that will continue to work towards common goals even after the conclusion of the project. The ultimate objective is the long-term use of the materials and services provided by NECOBELAC in the framework of an increasing cooperation between Europe and Latin America for the progress of scientific culture. The project has promoted the collaboration of FAO with regard to applying the training programmes in other geographical areas.

sTANDEMpex: a standardized assessment system for English for medical purposes

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The main objective of this multinational project is to achieve international educational harmonization in the assessment of language skills related to English for medical purposes (EMP) by designing, implementing, and providing a standardized system of EMP tests for levels B1, B2, C1, and C2 as described in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The project was initiated by leading EMP specialists at universities from seven countries of the European Union (Austria, France, Hungary, Romania, Poland, Spain, and the UK) and Japan and Serbia. Currently the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), the European Medical Writers Association (EMWA), and the Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche en Anglais de Spécialité (GERAS, France) are supporting the project as silent partners. Further participants and partners are welcome to cooperate in the sTANDEMpex platform.

Objectives

At a conference held in Budapest, Hungary, in January 2009 the following objectives were decided upon.

The sTANDEMpex project is supposed to satisfy the needs:

- (1) of health care professionals to demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively in an international environment, eg when they work in other countries (above all the EU);
- (2) of universities and other organizations to develop a framework and standards for their EMP programmes;
- (3) of health care providers and other stakeholders to ascertain that those co-operating with institutions abroad, and seeking training opportunities or employment in an international medical setting are able to communicate effectively in an international environment.

Target groups are:

- (a) physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other allied health professional staff;
- (b) European medical and health sciences students;
- (c) researchers in the fields of medicine and biomedical sciences.

Objective (1)

For the first objective, the distinctive needs of the different target groups were specified, eg for physicians, pharmacists, and nurses.

For physicians:

- to enhance the transfer of clinical research information of import to the potential improvement of patient care;
- to enhance communications among international colleagues (medical and allied health) regarding

diagnoses and treatment;

- to rapidly access and extract essential information from the international literature (printed and electronic);
- to be able to write papers that will be accepted in international journals and contribute to textbooks in their speciality;
- to attend international conferences and seminars held in English.

Similar needs analyses were performed for the other target groups.

Objective (2)

The following needs were identified in relation to the second objective:

- a common assessment system to facilitate the exchange of students, teachers, and other staff, as well as for carrying out different kinds of collaborative programmes;
- suitable and updated preparatory programmes and materials regarding EMP;
- a common framework of reference in EMP according to the CEFR;
- promoting the implementation of transnational collaboration projects in order to meet the objectives of the European Commission.

Project objectives

Specific objectives of the project are:

- to research the particular situation of EMP education in the countries involved;
- to design, implement and provide a common standardized assessment system of competence in EMP according to the guidelines of the CEFR.

Products

The targeted products of sTANDEMpex consist of:

1. a report on the situation and needs of universities and different organizations providing EMP courses;
2. a standardised assessment system for EMP competences;
3. test specifications to be used as a basis for the production of a common framework of reference for EMP in accordance with the guidelines of the CEFR;
4. printed materials based on this framework that promote harmonization of medical English education;
5. a sTANDEMpex website providing a platform for project development, information, and implementation, as well as for the dissemination of project results.

The proposal, which has already been broken down into work packages, will be submitted for the next calls of the appropriate EU programmes (Erasmus or Leonardo da Vinci) in February 2010.

ISMTE: a new society connecting editorial offices

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The International Society of Managing and Technical Editors (ISMTE) was launched in early 2008. Its mission is to enhance the professionalism of staff in scholarly journals' editorial offices by providing peer-to-peer networking and training infrastructure; establishing and providing resources for best practices; and studying, benchmarking, and reporting on editorial office practices. Our members are drawn from the entire spectrum of journals and include managing editors, administrators, editorial assistants, and editors-in-chief.

The society fills a valuable niche for an underserved community. Editorial office professionals have traditionally worked in isolation, with limited opportunities to meet and share ideas. Opportunities for training and updating current thinking have been sparse. Despite the dispersed nature of the community and different experiences based on journal size and subject matter, editorial offices have many goals and challenges in common.

Across the industry, editorial offices are gradually undergoing a makeover, with many staying rooted to one location thanks to the possibilities of editors and other colleagues working remotely through online submission and peer-review systems. Continuity of editorial office staff provides possibilities and benefits, and publishers are encouraging the emergence of a new class of professionals who are able to grasp best practice ideas, are better informed about ethical issues, and are able to perform a critical support role in journal development strategies. Indicating their belief that ISMTE can deliver enhanced professionalism to the editorial office, several publishers have invested in corporate memberships in the society.

ISMTE has begun developing a rich and informative website that serves as both a virtual gathering place and a source of information (www.ismte.org). This is one of several benefits members enjoy. Most notably, we offer a monthly online newsletter, *EON (Editorial Office News)*, which contains valuable instructional articles, tips and tricks, topical debates, and editorial office profiles. Recent articles have included information on sophisticated methods of reviewer assignment, analysing/reporting peer-review data, handling publication ethics and how to cope with increasing submission levels. We also offer a lively discussion forum and are now starting to provide a suite of resources of practical use for enhancing journal peer review.

In 2009 ISMTE will hold two international meetings under the banner "The Professional Editorial Office in

2009". The first – Managing your journal in print and online – will be held in Baltimore, USA, on 4-5 August and will feature workshops and discussions on editorial office best practices as well as keynote presentations from Kent Anderson (Executive Director, International Business and Product Development, *New England Journal of Medicine*) and Peter Binfield (Managing Editor, PLoS). Our second meeting, "Managing Ethical Issues and Ensuring Best Practices in Peer Review", will be held at St Hugh's College, Oxford, UK, on 25 August. In addition to opportunities to discuss handling ethical issues with peers, the keynote speakers are Harvey Marcovitch, former chairman of the Commission of Publication Ethics, and Professor Roy Pounder, founding co-editor of *Alimentary Pharmacology & Therapeutics* and editor-in-chief of *GastroHep.com*.

ISMTE looks forward to continued growth and new member benefits in 2009. For more information on membership and upcoming meetings, please visit our website, www.ismte.org, or contact me directly at journal@ahsnet.org.