Opening Doors to Open Science:
A Welcome Kit Designed for Sharing

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Abstract

Open Science is becoming an increasingly important component of research activities, driven by institutional, national and European policies that promote the accessibility, transparency and reuse of publicly funded research outputs. While researchers are expected to comply with a growing number of requirements related to Open Access, research data management, responsible publishing and research integrity, newcomers to academia often struggle to identify relevant information and support services.

Building on their long-standing collaboration around the ORBi institutional repository and shared Open Access policies, the University of Liège (ULiège) and the University of Mons (UMONS) launched a joint project to develop an Open Science Welcome Kit for newcomers. The initiative aims to provide a simple, visual and practical entry point to Open Science for doctoral candidates, early-career researchers and newly recruited staff, while directing users towards existing institutional services and resources.

The project began with an analysis of existing Open Science training materials and onboarding resources. Although numerous courses, toolkits and guides were identified, few resources combine brevity, adaptability and ease of reuse. To address this gap, the partners collaboratively developed a modular bilingual Welcome Kit composed of six thematic fact sheets covering major Open Science topics. The content was designed to be concise, visually engaging and easily customisable by different institutions. Subject experts from both universities contributed to the review process to ensure accuracy and relevance.

The resulting Welcome Kit provides a reusable framework for introducing researchers to Open Science principles, obligations, tools and support services. Released under an open license and accompanied by guidance for adaptation and reuse, the resource is designed to benefit not only ULiège and UMONS but also other research libraries and institutions. The project underlines how collaboration can reduce duplication of effort, strengthen Open Science support services and contribute to improving Open Access practices across the wider European research community.

Keywords: Open Science; Open Access; researcher onboarding; collaborative work

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1. Introduction

Open Science occupies an increasingly central role in research activities. Researchers are now expected to engage in a growing number of practices and requirements related to Open Access, responsible publishing, research data management and the dissemination of research outputs. At the same time, institutional, national and European policies are reinforcing expectations regarding the accessibility of publicly funded research outputs. While this evolution creates important opportunities for transparency, visibility and impact, it also contributes to a more complex research environment that can be difficult to navigate, particularly for those entering academia.

Both the University of Liège (ULiège) and the University of Mons (UMONS) have observed a growing need for Open Science support among newcomers, including doctoral candidates, postdoctoral researchers, newly recruited researchers and academic staff. Although both institutions provide a wide range of Open Science services, the diversity and dispersity of available information, tools and regulations can make it difficult for newcomers to identify where to start and which support services are available to them. There is therefore a need for concise and adaptable materials that can serve as an effective entry point to Open Science for newcomers as well as a *"cheat sheet"* for more experienced researchers.

This need is particularly important for early-career researchers, who constitute a key audience for Open Science policies and practices. Habits and knowledge acquired at the beginning of a research career often shape future research behaviours. Providing newcomers with a basic understanding of Open Science from the start not only facilitates compliance with institutional and funder requirements but also promotes a culture of openness throughout their careers.

2. Background

The creation of the institutional repository ORBi ULiège in the early 2000s marked a decisive institutional response to the growing strategic importance of Open Access within the academic landscape. Initially conceived as a publication deposit tool, ORBi progressively developed into a wider framework supporting Open Science practices. Building on this foundation, ULiège and the University of Luxembourg as well as the University of Mons (UMONS) established a formal collaborative partnership enabling each institution to benefit from shared expertise, tools and governance principles. Beyond providing a common technical infrastructure for the management, dissemination and preservation of research outputs, ORBi has fostered a shared culture of Open Access and Open Science between these institutions through awareness-raising initiatives, communication strategies, and training activities for researchers, administrative staff or PhD students. ORBi has played a pioneering role in promoting the visibility and accessibility of publicly funded research and has become a cornerstone of institutional research dissemination strategies.

The national collaboration between ULiège and UMONS directly addresses the requirements set by regional, national, and European bodies. Over the last decade, the policy landscape surrounding Open Science has evolved. Researchers are now expected not only to publish their results but also to ensure that these results are accessible and reusable.

In Belgium, the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles Open Access Decree[1] requires that peer-reviewed journal articles resulting from research funded wholly or partly by the Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles must be deposited in an institutional repository and made openly accessible, with an embargo period limited to six months in science, technology and medicine, and twelve months in the humanities and social sciences.

[1] Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles. (2018). Décret du 3 mai 2018 visant à l'établissement d'une politique de libre accès aux publications scientifiques (open access). *Moniteur belge*, 28 mai 2018. https://archive.pfwb.be/100000002091010

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The Belgian copyright framework[2] further strengthens researchers' ability to share their work through a secondary publication right, allowing authors to make accepted manuscripts openly available under specific conditions, regardless of publisher agreements.

The F.R.S.-FNRS, Wallonia's principal research funding organisation, requires funded researchers to deposit their publications in institutional repositories and make them openly accessible whenever possible[3]. Similarly, The European Union has positioned Open Science at the core of its research policy. Under Horizon Europe, Open Science is a legal obligation, scientific publications resulting from funded projects must be made openly accessible, and research data are expected to follow the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) principles[4].

Besides this, ULiège and UMONS both have similar Open Access mandates[5,6]. In 2008, the University of Liège introduced a pioneering mandate requiring researchers to deposit their scientific publications in ORBi, linking repository deposit to research evaluation and thereby establishing Open Access as an integral component of the institution's application process for funding or a career promotion. Recognising the effectiveness of this model, UMONS subsequently adopted both the ORBi platform and the same deposit mandate, creating a shared institutional approach to the visibility, dissemination, and preservation of research outputs. As a result, researchers at both universities operate within a common environment where publication deposit, Open Access dissemination and compliance with funder requirements are supported through similar workflows and shared services.

Beyond repository-based Open Access, ULiège and UMONS actively support a diversity of sustainable Open Access models. ULiège hosts PoPuPS, a platform supporting Diamond Open Access journals, as well as e-Publish, a platform dedicated to the dissemination of Open Access books and monographs. Both institutions are also involved in broader initiatives aimed at strengthening community-governed scholarly communication, including national efforts toward the development of a Belgian Diamond Open Access Foundation. These initiatives reflect a shared commitment to sustainable and researcher-centred Open Science infrastructures.

Despite the growing policy support for Open Science, significant barriers remain. The European Commission study[7] that formed the basis of the LIBER Action Plan found that researchers still face substantial legal, contractual and practical difficulties in accessing and reusing research outputs and data.

Within the ULiège and UMONS communities, the ORBi team has identified several recurring challenges that could be effectively addressed through this initiative:

- persistent uncertainty among researchers regarding copyright rules and self-archiving rights;
- the need for reassurance regarding repository deposit procedures (for publications and data);
- increasing obligations linked to funder and institutional mandates;
- varying levels of awareness of Open Science practices among researchers, doctoral candidates and support staff;

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[2] Belgique. (2018, 30 juillet). Loi portant dispositions diverses en matière d'économie (art. 29). *Moniteur belge*, 5 septembre 2018. https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/eli/loi/2018/07/30/2018031589/moniteur

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[7] European Commission: Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. (2024). *Improving access to and reuse of research results, publications and data for scientific purposes : study to evaluate the effects of the EU copyright framework on research and the effects of potential interventions and to identify and present relevant provisions for research in EU data and digital legislation, with a focus on rights and obligations*. Publications Office of the European Union. https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/633395.

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- the proliferation of questionable or predatory publishing practices creating risks for research quality and visibility.

These challenges justify continued investment in training, awareness-raising and coordinated support mechanisms.

Specifically, newcomers to academia (including PhD candidates, postdoctoral researchers and newly recruited staff) struggle to navigate this environment despite the existence of available support services.

The proposed Open Science Welcome Kit seeks to address these challenges by providing a concise, practical and easily reusable resource introducing the key principles, obligations, services and tools that every researcher should know upon arrival at ULiège or UMONS. By offering harmonised information across both institutions, the project will facilitate researchers' understanding of Open Science practices from the beginning of their careers and contribute to improved compliance with institutional and funder requirements.

The project is aligned with LIBER Action Plan *Improving Access and Reuse of Research Results by Addressing Copyright and Data Legislative & Regulatory Issues*[8]. The Open Science Welcome Kit mostly contributes to Action 1. "OA supporting services for a diversity of routes to OA" by providing newcomers with practical guidance on self-archiving, open access publishing, open data sharing, open source. It aims at facilitating the understanding and appropriation of the different Open Access routes by researchers. It also contributes to Action 5. "Monitor the progress of OA", since improved awareness of requirements and supporting tools and services should help increase the proportion of compliant deposits. This way, it strengthens the capacity of institutions to monitor and report on Open Access outputs through the tools they provide (ORBi for ULiège and UMONS).

The project aims to have an impact beyond ULiège and UMONS through its commitment to making the Open Science Welcome Kit openly available and reusable. The Welcome Kit will be released in Open Access under a Creative Commons CC BY licence, enabling research libraries, universities and other research organisations to freely access, adapt, translate and reuse its contents according to their local contexts and needs. By sharing support materials, the project embodies the principles of openness, knowledge sharing and reuse that underpin Open Science. This approach is in line with LIBER's recommendations to strengthen practical Open Access support services and facilitate the dissemination of good practices across institutions. While the immediate goal is to support newcomers at ULiège and UMONS, the resulting resource is designed to be transferable and modular. By providing a ready-to-use, adaptable Open Science onboarding toolkit, the project enables other European research libraries/institutions to benefit from the experience accumulated through the ORBi partnership and to implement similar awareness-raising initiatives without having to develop materials from scratch. This reduces duplication of effort, encourages collaboration among research libraries and promotes a more consistent understanding of Open Access and Open Science practices across Europe. Thus, this project contributes to the broader objective of improving Open Access practices within the European research library community and beyond.

3. Approach/methodology

As we wanted to propose an Open Science Welcome Kit for newcomers, we began searching for similar initiatives in other institutions. We found Open Science resources for research support staff and librarians, such as the UNESCO Open science toolkit 9 or the Open Science training

[8] van der Graaf, M., Reilly, S., Fenlon, A.& Ludwig, J. (2025). *Improving access and reuse of research results by addressing copyright and data legislative and regulatory issues - A LIBER Action Plan*. Zenodo. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15183443

[9] UNESCO. (2023). *UNESCO open science toolkit* (SC-PBS-STIP/2023/OST/ALL). UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000387983

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handbook10. We found long format courses as the French MOOC "La Science ouverte"11 or a collaborative MOOC on Open Science12 currently being developed. We also found numerous webpages and guides from research libraries, with special mention of the practical guides compiled and presented by the Université de Lorraine (France)13 and the "Passport for Open Science – A Practical Guide for PhD Students"14.

However, to the best of our knowledge, there is no short, adaptable practical guide to serve as an entry point for information on Open Science that could also be tailored to the specificities of our Belgian landscape or even for our institutions. We thus wanted to produce a resource that could not only be useful for both our institutions but could also be easily modified and re-used by other institutions, making our work even more impactful.

To put the kit together, we kicked off the project with a brainstorming session to lay the groundwork. This is where we faced a challenging situation: we must provide concise yet accurate entry-level content for the major aspects of Open Science. The content should also be able to redirect researchers towards higher-level content. During our second meeting, we agreed that the kit would need to be bilingual, French and English, as our universities are in the French speaking part of Belgium and that our community is also international. We decided to split the kit into 6 modular fact sheets dedicated to the major Open Science aspects and defined who oversaw each sheet. Each sheet comprises a general section describing the topic in an entry-level fashion, and a second one that can be customised to the institution's specific needs (links to institutional resources, training courses, useful links, etc.).

Given the wide diversity of Open Science, we asked the experts in our institutions to review our content to ensure the best quality. Again, we had to find a balance between conciseness and clarity. To make the material accessible it was designed to be short, intuitive and easy to navigate, using visual approaches whenever possible. The Welcome Kit aims at providing essential messages, highlighting available services and resources that researchers need to know when joining the institution. It does not provide exhaustive information on every aspect of Open Science but helps raise awareness of the institutional support ecosystem available.

The first version of the sheets was written in French and then translated into English with the help of DeepL translator and Microsoft Copilot. The layout of the kit was developed in Canva, which is a proprietary software but whose content can be exported in several formats. The sheets were exported from Canva in PowerPoint format (.pptx) and then saved in OpenDocument Text (.odt), an open format that can be used with both open-source software such as LibreOffice and the Microsoft Office suite.

In line with the principles it promotes, the Open Science Welcome Kit will itself be made available as an Open Access resource on Zenodo under CC BY licence when finalised. Other universities, research libraries and research organisations will be able to reuse, adapt or translate the material according to their own contexts and needs. Indeed, proper documentation will accompany the files to explain the structure and how to tailor the content. By sharing a practical and reusable onboarding resource, the project contributes not only to supporting newcomers at ULiège and UMONS but also to the broader objective of strengthening Open Science awareness and improving Open Access practices across the European research community.

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[10] Tóth-Czifra, E., Woutersen-Windhouwer, S., van den Eynden, V., Gassó Miracle, E., Leenarts, E., Manske, M., Albagli, S., Arefiev, P., Aryani, A., Błaszczyńska, M., et al. (2018). *Open Science Training Handbook*. OpenAIRE/FOSTER. Retrieved September 10, 2026, from https://open-science-training-handbook.gitbook.io/book

[11] Alliance Sorbonne Université. (2026). *La science ouverte [MOOC]*. FUN-MOOC. Retrieved September 10, 2026, from https://www.fun-mooc.fr/fr/cours/la-science-ouverte

[12] Open Science MOOC. (n.d.). *Open Science MOOC*. Retrieved September 10, 2026, from https://opensciencemooc.eu

[13] Université de Lorraine. (n.d.). *Boîte à outils*. Science Ouverte. Retrieved September 10, 2026, from https://scienceouverte.univ-lorraine.fr/ressources-pratiques/

[14] Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Recherche. (2024). *Passeport pour la science ouverte : Guide pratique à l'usage des doctorantes et des doctorants*. https://www.ouvrirlascience.fr/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/24-02-22-PSO-FR-WEB.pdf

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Integration into existing communication and training channels will be a key factor in the success and sustainability of the Open Science Welcome Kit. Rather than creating a standalone resource that researchers may struggle to discover, the project aims to embed the kit within the institutional ecosystem already used by the target audience. Existing onboarding events, doctoral training programmes, Open Science workshops and training courses and other institutional information sessions will therefore be identified as priority dissemination channels. Collaboration with internal stakeholders like doctoral schools and human resources departments will help ensure that the Welcome Kit reaches newcomers at the most relevant stages of their academic journey.

The contents of the kit should also be integrated into existing communication platforms, including institutional websites, library webpages, Open Science portals, doctoral school resources and webpages dedicated to new staff and researchers. This approach will increase the visibility of the material while ensuring its long-term accessibility and maintenance within existing support structures.

The kit will therefore be promoted in our institutions through different channels and events. For example, at ULiège, the kit will be distributed during the "Let's start a PhD" seminar and “Ethics and scientific integrity day” events. Moreover, the research administration and valorisation cell, RISE, will send the kit to all newcomers so that they all start on a strong basis. The kit will also be available on the ULiège Open Science website. In a similar fashion, the kit will be promoted in UMONS during the “Mois du doctorat” event that occurs in March each year. The Department for Research Support and Technology Transfer is also in charge of onboarding new researchers and will include the kit into their welcome pack.

Beyond the two partner institutions, the project seeks to maximise its impact through broad dissemination within the research library community. The Open Science Welcome Kit and its accompanying implementation guide will be shared with existing institutional and professional networks. Thanks to LIBER, our OS Welcome Kit will already receive a lot of visibility through the publication of this report and the webinar, and the publication of a blog post on LIBER website planned for Q4 2026. We will also share the kit within the Open Science groups we participate in (as the CRef Open Science working group and Open Access Belgium) and our partners for Open Science projects (partner universities from the UniGR[15] for example).

4. Impact

The Open Science Welcome Kit project aims to strengthen Open Science awareness and adoption among researchers, PhD candidates and research support staff by providing a structured, accessible and reusable onboarding resource. The project addresses a common challenge faced by many institutions: while numerous Open Science resources, policies and services already exist, they are often dispersed across different platforms and remain difficult for newcomers to identify and navigate.

At ULiège and UMONS, the kit will centralise existing training activities and support services by offering an entry point to institutional resources, guidance documents and training opportunities. It is expected to facilitate researchers' understanding of Open Science requirements and reduce barriers to engagement with good Open Science practices.

The project is also strengthening collaboration between ULiège and UMONS through the joint development of shared resources and potentially harmonised approaches to Open Science support and training. It can be of interest for our other ORBi partner, the University of Luxembourg as well.

Although long-term impacts will only become measurable after implementation, the project is expected to:

- Increase awareness and understanding of Open Science principles among new researchers and PhD candidates.

[15] University of the Greater Region (UniGR). (n.d.). Our partner universities. Retrieved September 10, 2026, from https://www.uni-gr.eu/en/node/1956

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- Improve engagement with institutional Open Science services and training opportunities.
- Facilitate compliance with Open Access and Research Data Management requirements.
- Strengthen the visibility of existing Open Science support structures.
- Provide a reusable model that can be adopted or adapted by other European research institutions.

To assess the usage of the Welcome Kit we will:

- Monitor the number of views and downloads of the Welcome Kit (on Zenodo, on ORBi, access through the ULiège Open Science webpages).
- Monitor the number of paper versions distributed during events in our institutions, especially events dedicated to newcomers.

One of the primary goals of the Welcome Kit is to serve as a gateway to existing services. We will therefore monitor participation in Open Science training sessions and the uptake of complementary resources and tools promoted through the Welcome Kit. An increase in engagement with these services could indicate that the Welcome Kit successfully directs researchers towards available support. An informal assessment of newcomers' basic knowledge on Open Science and of their ability to identify where to obtain support could also be considered.

Beyond immediate use, success will also be measured through the creation of a sustainable and reusable resource for the wider research community. The project will be considered particularly successful if the Welcome Kit becomes a model that can be adapted and reused by other research libraries, thereby contributing to the broader objective of improving Open Access practices in European research libraries through the sharing of practical, easily reusable Open Science support materials. We will therefore register the reuses, adaptations or translations by other institutions and our contacts with external institutions wishing to reuse the material.

The LIBER Action Plan played a significant role in shaping the design and objectives of the Open Science Welcome Kit. From the outset, the project sought to address one of the key challenges identified by LIBER: the need to provide researchers with practical support that enables them to understand and adopt Open Access and Open Science practices.

Support from the LIBER Cascading Grants programme has been helpful in reinforcing the collaboration between ULiège and UMONS. Beyond the financial support, the project benefits from the visibility and dissemination opportunities offered by LIBER. The publication of this report, the planned LIBER webinar participation and the accompanying blog post will help promote the Welcome Kit within the European research library community and facilitate its reuse by other institutions.

More broadly, the project demonstrates how relatively small-scale collaborative initiatives can contribute to the implementation of the LIBER Action Plan by transforming Open Science principles into practical tools that researchers can use from the beginning of their careers.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Building on the long-standing partnership between ULiège and UMONS around ORBi and shared Open Access policies, the development of a joint Open Science Welcome Kit enabled both institutions to pool expertise, experiences, existing resources and good practices. Rather than developing separate onboarding materials addressing largely similar needs. This collaborative approach led to more efficient use of resources while producing outputs of higher quality and broader relevance.

The project responded to a common challenge faced by many research institutions: helping newcomers navigate an increasingly complex Open Science environment. Early-career researchers, PhD candidates and newly recruited academic staff are expected to understand a growing number of requirements related to Open Access, research data management, responsible publishing and funder compliance. At the same time, support information is often dispersed across multiple websites, guidance documents and institutional services. The Open Science Welcome Kit was conceived as a practical response to this challenge by providing a concise, visual and accessible entry point into Open Science and directing researchers towards existing support structures.

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By making all outputs reusable and adaptable, the project aims to reduce duplication of effort across institutions and maximise the impact of Open Science support activities. Collaborative development of shared resources represents an effective and sustainable way to strengthen Open Science support services, improve researcher awareness and contribute to a more coherent Open Science ecosystem within the European research community.

Some issues were encountered throughout this project. First, Open Science policies, services and support structures vary across institutions, which means that a fully generic resource is difficult to achieve. Some level of local adaptation will always be necessary. For this reason, the Welcome Kit was designed as a flexible framework rather than as a fixed product.

Second, balancing simplicity and completeness proved challenging. While newcomers benefit from short and accessible information, some Open Science topics involve legal or technical considerations that cannot be fully explained in a brief format. The solution adopted was to position the Welcome Kit as an entry point, supported by references to more detailed institutional resources and services.

Third, measuring the long-term impact of awareness-raising activities remains difficult. While indicators such as downloads, participation in training events and engagement with support services can provide useful evidence, changes in Open Science practices are influenced by many factors beyond the Welcome Kit itself.

Future versions of the kit could be improved based on user feedback, continued assessment of newcomers' needs, and the creation of new visual content.

Based on the experience gained during this project, we recommend developing concise and practical resources that focus on key messages and help researchers identify the most relevant support services. To maximise their impact, such resources should be integrated into existing onboarding activities, training programmes, institutional websites and communication channels. Building on existing collaborations between institutions can reduce workload, improve consistency and allow expertise to be shared more effectively. Finally, resources should be designed from the outset to be easily reusable and adaptable by other institutions, ensuring a broader and longer-lasting impact.

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[2] Belgique. (2018, 30 juillet). Loi portant dispositions diverses en matière d'économie (art. 29). *Moniteur belge*, 5 septembre 2018. https://www.ejustice.just.fgov.be/eli/loi/2018/07/30/2018031589/moniteur

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AI use statement

Microsoft Copilot was used in the writing of this report to assist with the translation of content from French to English, the drafting of the abstract, and the reformulation of selected passages. All content, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions were developed and validated by the authors, who remain fully responsible for the final text.

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