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Establish and maintain/update Swiss-wide best practices of ORD expertise

Gap Analysis and Recommendations for the Higher Education Institutions

Context

As part of the Programme Open Science I and to implement Action Line B5.1 of the National Action Plan for Open Research Data (ORD), the Delegation Open Science of swissuniversities commissioned a project led by the University of Bern to examine the implementation and long-term promotion of ORD best practices from October 2024 to June 2025.

Key findings and identified challenges

- ORD implementation across Switzerland is uneven, with significant variations among institutions and disciplines. Data stewardship programs are in development, but they differ substantially in terms of structure, funding models, and maturity.

- Sustainable funding, awareness of ORD best practices among researchers, and strong leadership commitment remain areas of weakness. Institutional policies and expectations are not typically integrated consistently into research evaluation processes. Training and collaboration efforts are fragmented.

- Switzerland falls short in some international benchmarks, such as contributions to FAIRsharing and the early implementation of Data Management Plan (DMP) requirements.

Recommendations for the Higher Education Institutions in Switzerland

For higher education institutions, the report recommends to:

- develop institutional ORD strategies or policies, or align existing ones with national strategy; complement policies with clear guidance detailing implementation regulations, and where appropriate, accepted solutions for compliance; ensure clear communication of institutional ORD policy, corresponding strategic priorities and expectations to researchers

- integrate ORD practices into researcher training, research evaluation, promotion criteria, and internal funding decisions, according to the recommendations of the recORD project

- track internal ORD progress through self-assessment tools, periodic reporting, or similar, as a basis for development and adjustment of ORD policy and implementation regulations

- ensure clear communication of strategic priorities regarding ORD within institutional administration and foster internal coordination through regular exchange between all ORD-relevant actors (including but not limited to IT, legal services, grants offices)

- ensure sustainable funding for ORD support, both regarding infrastructures and staff
- where appropriate, enable non-ORD experts (e.g. IT, legal services, grants offices) to deliver ORD support collaboratively with ORD experts. This includes providing clear mandates as well as allocating necessary resources and internal training.

Recommendations for the ORD support community

The ORD support community – especially in networks like the Swiss Research Data Support Network (SRDSN) – should take an active role in collecting and sharing experiences and best practices. The report recommends establishing a node within the SRDSN that is tasked with initiating and/or carrying out the following activities:

- Create and maintain a shared knowledge platform where community members can contribute, access guidance materials and templates, etc.

- Facilitate structured exchange of best practices e.g., through regular meetings, webinars, or nodes

- Develop and/or share reusable resources (e.g. training modules, policy templates and toolkits) that institutions can adapt to their specific contexts

- Engage with national networks and initiatives to strengthen ties with communities of experts adjacent to ORD support and implementation; promote and facilitate collaboration across roles and disciplines (including but not limited to IT, legal, ethics experts) in community activities.

- Engage with international networks and initiatives relevant to ORD support and implementation to align with emerging international standards and bring insights into the Swiss context

Recommendations for the Delegation Open Science[1]

The report calls on swissuniversities and the Delegation Open Science (DelOS) to lead long-term strategic planning, ensure coordinated funding, and align national policies based on a broad involvement of all relevant stakeholders:

- Development of a national ORD policy and accompanying guidance on the basis of the existing ORD Strategy, including clear expectations and implementation regulations for various stakeholders

- A national mechanism should be established to monitor the development and implementation of ORD best practices at Swiss higher education institutions, with the aim to inform the national ORD policy and its future revisions. This could be delegated to a node of the SRDSN that focuses on best practices of ORD implementation

- DelOS should ensure that higher education institutions are supported in the implementation of the national ORD policy by promoting the establishment of full-time ORD support positions, issuing recommendations regarding the inclusion of ORD indicators in research evaluation and in hiring and promotion procedures, and by facilitating peer exchange (e.g. collaborative projects) between leading and less advanced institutions

- DelOS should leverage the expertise of the ORD support community, promote the inclusion of the SRDSN into the national ORD governance, and advocate to ensure the long-term sustainability of the SRDSN

For more detailed information, please refer to the final report of the mandate.

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[1] It should be noted that, in view of the planned national and cantonal cost-saving measures, a possible implementation of the above recommendations must currently remain open.