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# Empowering doctoral candidates in shaping institutional Open Science policy

22 January 2020 | [Roberta Moscon,](#)  
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Online courses in Open Science are ready and available for free and anytime, many upon the initiative of doctoral candidates who are engaged in advocacy and

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**dissemination events. As Roberta Moscon from the University of Trento explains, empowering doctoral candidates in shaping Open Science policy and making them ambassadors in the design and delivery of courses, as well as in coordinating and integrating institutional services is crucial to innovative doctoral training and research.**

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Empowering doctoral candidates to improve the academic experience, as well as providing them with tangible opportunities to change their departments and institutions, will equip them to transform their future work places – and ultimately influence how research is done and how research output is made available to society. Specifically regarding Open Science, supporting doctoral candidates as active collaborators and co-creators in the design, implementation and evaluation of research can also mean putting them in contact with university governance and faculty, librarians and research support staff, as well as the broader picture involving institutional, governmental and international practices and regulations.

Developing, co-creating and implementing a policy or producing training material or events on Open Science, are activities that doctoral candidates often do themselves. When they do not exist and need to be created, or even updated, this



requires knowledge of advances in services, processes and directives, implying a wide range of expertise and skill sets.



At many universities across Europe, a broad range of best training resources is offered on the initiative of entrepreneurial university staff and engaged and enthusiastic doctoral candidates who are keen on pursuing Open Science. For example, the **FOSTER platform** was produced within the European Commission Framework Program for Research and Innovation and is continuously updated by a transnational consortium of mostly librarians who have also written a **train-the-trainer handbook** for “high-quality training”. Meant to address the whole academic community, the FOSTER modules have also been recently included in the **EURODOC Ambassadors’ training** designed by former and current doctoral candidates. It also includes a series of talks of the most knowledgeable experts and practitioners in Open Science. Being well equipped is essential but being inspired and motivated is even more important when facing a change-resistant system or a lack of infrastructure or technical support, incentives to career advancement or rewards.

Besides training, the first 24 PhD EURODOC laureate ambassadors have started to spread the word and reach out to their peers, also as speakers and who took part to

dissemination and advocacy events across Europe. They also scaled up their expertise by attending more specialised training like the CODATA-RDA Data Steward School in Trieste. Heading towards a more data-intensive Open Science, their effort may pay off also for a future alternative within and beyond the academic career when, the “data tsunami” with 140 billion research products will go open and very few master or doctoral graduates will have the necessary skills to curate them.



Besides these free online, self-paced, multimedia, and hands-on training resources (including the [Open Access MOOC](#), also an initiative of European doctoral candidates and early-career researchers who put together their interdisciplinary expertise and experience to create a large mixed community of passionate members exchanging opinions and supporting each other), academic librarians and research support staff are still providing traditional training and assistance (while continuing their own education in order to stay relevant to the fast changing needs and growing complexity of scholarly communication). The former taking mostly care of their institutional repository (more for publications, less for data), facilitating assessment procedures and supporting the development of Open Access; the latter in keeping up with funders’ Open Access

policies (inspired by *How you can win EU grants with open science*) and providing contacts and exchanges with research stakeholders. In some higher education institutions, the two services have merged into single points of entry, others have defined transversal issues, agreed on common workflows and integrated service systems - which should optimise and improve services for doctoral candidates and the entire research community. Other still have the two services separated.



While some higher education institutions - with regional diversity and differences - have introduced new roles and offered new services, fully integrating Open Access practices into doctoral or even undergraduate training may transform the current informal training offered into a curricular expertise and a more efficient and effective practice. Formalising Open Science training in curricula and recognising the extra workload with credits (where credits are used) would also mean a greater institutional engagement in Open Science policies and practices, as well as a closer intersection between education and research.

Moreover, doctoral candidates, as representatives of different disciplines and having a foot in both education and research, as well as intermediaries of senior university staff and sometimes “gate openers” to external and

international research centers and institutions, should get involved in mutual collaboration with university administrators and practitioners for training, advice and support - as well as advocacy and dissemination activities, in particular where these activities are underdeveloped. A doctoral candidate-to-doctoral candidate training on ethical guidelines for research (with reference to peer reviewing and plagiarism, for example) focused on knowledge creation and sharing, as well as on collective research rather than punishment and scaring tactics, would probably turn out to be less petrifying and more empowering to early-career researchers.



Given that most processes of change take advantage of the combination of top-down and bottom-up solutions and that from a top perspective, Europe has a clear vision and direction, activism and holistic participation from doctoral candidates and future researchers are key in making Open Science principles happen on the ground.

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## **Roberta Moscon**

Roberta Moscon works for the University of Trento in the office for Open Access. Her role supports the new Open Science ecosystem aimed at making research impact more open, efficient and inclusive. In 2019, she facilitated the EURODOC OS Ambassadors training and she coordinated the Italian translation of the FOSTER+ Open Science Training Handbook. In the

past, Roberta was the executive director of an international doctoral programme at the University of Trento, as well as international relations coordinator.

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