

ENHANCING SCIENTIFIC COMMUNICATION ACROSS REGIONS: EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVES FROM CENTRAL EUROPE

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Abstract: Scientific communication in Central Europe faces the unique challenge of balancing the global dominance of English with the need to preserve national terminologies to ensure societies can use and benefit from locally conducted research. Since its establishment in 1999, the Journal of Central European Agriculture has served as a model for addressing these challenges through an innovative approach to multilingualism and institutional cooperation among nine countries in the region, utilising the advantages of digital publishing for the rapid exchange of knowledge generated after the social changes in the region at the end of the 20th century.

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Introduction

The social transformation in Central European countries at the end of the last century brought major changes to agriculture. The shift from central

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planning to a free market created an urgent need for rapid knowledge exchange and dissemination. All countries in transition faced similar problems; therefore, establishing a common journal was a logical step. The availability of electronic technologies has also created new publishing opportunities through lower costs, fewer restrictions on article length, the inclusion of additional material (such as data, graphics, maps, and videos), greater accessibility, and easier access for people in remote locations.

The Journal of Central European Agriculture (JCEA) was established to meet the needs of transitional Central European countries by sharing solutions to specific agricultural problems and by preserving and developing national languages and identities. It was initially founded by three universities from Croatia, Hungary, and Slovakia. Currently, the editorial board consists of members from nine countries, including Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Serbia, and Slovenia (in addition to the three countries mentioned above). The journal is now indexed in prestigious databases such as Web of Science (ESCI) and Scopus, demonstrating that a regional focus does not preclude global relevance.

International collaboration model in scholarly publishing

The journal is the result of collaboration between nine scientific institutions from the region. The International Editorial Board comprises nine national editorial boards with equal rights and obligations. The activities of the International Editorial Board are coordinated by an executive board that operates on the principle of editorial rotation: each year, a different member country assumes the role of the Executive Editorial Board, ensuring equal responsibility for managing the review process. In this way, the equal responsibility of the member countries in managing the journal, specifically the editorial review process, is maintained. The annual rotation of the journal's Executive Editorial Board introduces variability in the management of the editorial review process, further emphasising the role of the JCEA Editor-in-Chief, who is responsible for coordinating the activities of the national editorial boards.

Multilingualism in scholarly publishing

The question of language in science is the subject of intense discussion. According to Ammon (2012, cited by Pradier et al., 2026), English is “the native

tongue and the national language of the most influential segment of the global scientific community, but a foreign language for the rest of the world.” English has become the lingua franca of science, but insisting on monolingualism risks marginalising locally relevant research (Montgomery, 2023). The Helsinki Initiative on Multilingualism in Scholarly Communication (2019) advocates supporting the dissemination of research results for the benefit of society and protecting national infrastructures for the publication of locally relevant research, regardless of language. This Initiative asserts that the disqualification of local or national languages in academic publishing is the most important factor preventing societies from using and benefiting from research conducted where they live (COAR Confederation of Open Access Repositories), which is, unfortunately, quite prevalent in the agricultural sector (partly due to the age and educational structure of farmers).

JCEA’s editorial policy directly counters the monolingual trend by allowing the publication of papers in nine national languages of the member countries (Bulgarian, Croatian, Czech, Hungarian, Polish, Romanian, Serbian, Slovak, and Slovenian), in addition to English. This approach ensures the preservation and development of professional agricultural terminology in the native language. It also ensures that scientific discoveries are directly applicable to local agricultural practice, where field experts more easily consume content in their native language.

Although authors from the member countries have the opportunity to write in their national language, most choose to write in English. The published articles are largely written by researchers coming from JCEA member countries. However, there is an increasing trend towards manuscript submissions from non-member countries (e.g., from African, Middle Eastern, and South Asian countries). Approximately 85% of the articles published in JCEA in recent years have been written in English, while the remainder were written in national languages.

Review process issues and challenges of "visibility" that arise from multilingualism

To ensure international review and dissemination of results to a wider audience, manuscripts written in national languages from the JCEA member countries must include a title, abstract, keywords, table and figure captions, contents, and a detailed abstract in English. Authors may submit manuscripts written in English. Alternatively, authors may submit manuscripts in English

accompanied by the manuscript title, abstract, keywords, and a detailed abstract in their national language.

The presence of an international editorial board with representatives from up to nine countries provides the journal with a broad base of quality reviewers. Due to the similarity of the national languages of some member countries of the Editorial Board, articles written in one of the national languages can also undergo international review. Each article in a national language must have at least one reviewer coming from outside their country. Each university or institution organises a national editorial board responsible for reviewing articles in its national language (language quality assessment) and participating in the peer review process, which is particularly demanding for a multilingual journal.

Inclusion of the JCEA in international bibliographic databases such as Web of Science (ESCI), Scopus, Agris, and others provides authors with international visibility and the opportunity to disseminate their research results. Although articles in English have a higher Impact Factor™ and greater international visibility, articles in national languages have a deeper vertical impact, with high local citations in professional papers within their home countries, confirming their role in transferring knowledge to the local economy (agriculture).

It is important to emphasise the visibility of JCEA articles through metadata. The journal is indexed in databases with titles, abstracts, and keywords exclusively in English. This allows global search algorithms to identify the article, regardless of the language in which the full text is written.

Digital transformation and open access

As an exclusively electronic Open Access journal, JCEA leverages the digital era for the rapid exchange of information. The absence of Article Processing Charges (APC) further encourages collaboration among scientists from regions with limited publishing budgets. All papers are available through the Hrčak and DOAJ portals, maximising the reach of research. This publication model aligns with the modern principles of Open Science (Suber, 2012), which are key priorities of the European Commission and UNESCO, including goals to enable research to be more transparent, accessible, and reproducible.

Conclusion

Through a model of multilingual support, cooperation among nine institutions, and full implementation of Open Science principles, this journal successfully integrates the specific needs of Central European agriculture with global standards of scientific excellence, while ensuring that scientific discoveries are directly applicable to local agricultural practice, where field experts can more easily access content in their native language.

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