

ALTERNATIVE METHODS

Alternative methods incorporate the 3Rs of Replacement, Reduction and Refinement to minimise the use of animals. One of the top priority actions of Eurogroup is to give particular attention to the development, validation and implementation of alternative methods to animal testing methods which minimise the use of animals while delivering good scientific output in order to protect human health and environment.

BACKGROUND

An EU strategy is necessary to promote innovation and uptake of more humane state-of the-art methods, developed and based on science. There is little progress in decreasing the numbers of animals used in research: There are not enough alternatives, an increased demand for animal experiments; scattered responsibilities at EU level and internationally; and the authorisation process for animal experiments does not (always) function in practice. There are many reasons why there is an increased demand for animal experiments.

The development of new and revised legislation like that on endocrine disruptors, biotechnology, genetic engineering, nanotechnology, food and feed, novel food, various chemical legislations leads to requirements for testing. In addition, there are more and more new scientific questions, new technologies, new products, and new legislation - all which ultimately lead to additional animal testing.

CURRENT SITUATION

There are a number of initiatives in the EU that support alternative methods: The European Partnership for Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA) is a joint initiative from the European Commission and companies and trade federations active in various industrial sectors, with NGOs, regulators and scientists involved at some level. It was established in 2005 to accelerate the development, validation and acceptance of alternative approaches to further 3Rs of animal use in regulatory testing. EURL ECVAM (EU reference laboratory for alternatives to animal testing) -ECVAM was created in 1991 by the Commission following Directive 86/609/EEC which required that the Commission and the Member States should actively support the development, validation and acceptance of methods which could reduce, refine or replace the use of laboratory animals.

Through the new directive on animal testing, 2010/63/EU, the remit of EURL ECVAM has been extended. Alternatives are currently promoted through numerous EU policies. They include cell based cultures,

including development of human skin, and computer models. The EU desperately needs a horizontal strategy for policy development to ensure the proper implementation of the 3Rs and to prevent new animal testing requirements. There needs to be an obligation to include animal welfare in EU impact assessments carried out prior to the drafting of new policies or legislation. All old legislative requirements that exist need to be reviewed. It is important to stop relying on the use of animals as the golden rule and recognize that new methods advancing medical progress are possible without the reliance on animals. Informing and engaging with decision makers, and the development of collaborations and dialogue with external stakeholders and potential partners is essential.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- Eurogroup's aim is ultimately to see the replacement of animal testing with alternative methods. In the meantime, all efforts should be taken to ensure that fewer animals are used and that their suffering is limited.
- Increased funding for the development and research of alternative methods.
- The revision of outdated European legislation requiring animal testing to ensure the 3Rs are incorporated to their fullest.
- The promotion of the use of alternatives with scientists and regulators at the EU and international level.

RELATED LINKS

- [European Commission page on alternatives to animal testing](#)
- [Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing in Europe](#)
- [European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods](#)
- [European Partnership for Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing](#)
- [Alternatives to Animal Testing - Wikipedia page](#)