



Basel Declaration Society | Allschwilerplatz 1 | Postfach | CH-4009 Basel
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Engaging positively and proactively

Like all research, animal experiments should proceed with the consent of society. Research involving animals is emotive and sensitive and is rightly the subject of significant scrutiny and debate. Proactive and positive engagement in this dialogue requires openness about how and why research involving animals takes place. Scientists, and their institutions, must be open about their work and what it entails and actively seek productive discourse.

Engagement and dialogue should not be understood as 'education' but rather as a two-way inclusive discourse recognising that the issues are complex and that there are, and will continue to be, many different views. Positive engagement should not be couched in terms of convincing others of a particular viewpoint, but rather providing an opportunity for people to connect and develop their own informed position. It is important to consider different routes to engage with different audiences, and to build relationships so that the public can talk with researchers about their work.

Positive and productive engagement with those who have different viewpoints can be demanding, and it is understandable that there are concerns about engaging with antagonistic challengers. Aggressive or dismissive dialogue is unhelpful and should be avoided. Rather, respectful discussion with those who have different viewpoints and positions is to be welcomed, and one should seek opportunities to build relations and engage with those who have a different but balanced perspective.

Good practice

'Good practice' tips outlined below can be considered as starting points to build a proactive and positive dialogue on the use of animals in research. Significant scope exists to develop these further and they should be reinterpreted according to the individual context.

1. Engagement and dialogue

Scientists and their institutions should proactively seek opportunities to talk about their research involving animals, within institutions, locally and nationally. Not only does this include engagement in terms of the use of animals as a research model, but also ensuring that when scientific advances have been enabled by the use of animals this information is included as routine.

2. Preparation and co-ordination

Scientists should work together within their community and more broadly to develop shared resources and networks to support engagement activity and learn from each other's experiences.



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3. Patience

Building trust is a long process and a commitment to positive and proactive engagement must be for the long term. Scientific progress can be slow and difficult to communicate to non-technical audiences, so explore different ways of engaging.

4. Be open

Scientists should be open and honest about when, how and why animals are used in research, and open about the limitations of such research and the harms to the animals, as well as the benefits that accrue from it. With due consideration, opening research facilities to the media, policy-makers and the public more broadly can be an extremely positive experience and overcome concerns regarding both perceptions of how animals are treated and, conversely, any perceived attempts to show only the best aspects of facilities. Animal welfare and scientific rigour must not be compromised by opening facilities, which may limit such opportunities. Short video clips can therefore be an alternative to reach a broader audience, but again these must be truly open and not show just a 'sanitised' version of a facility.

5. Be reasonable

Rational and evidence-based discussion is crucial to positive engagement and the community must embrace this. In particular, credible discussion about the use of animals in research requires an acknowledgment that there are limits to the usefulness of animals and sometimes animal research has not been able to offer as much information to aid medical research as hoped.

6. The 3Rs

The '3Rs' are:

- Reduction – using fewer animals to achieve the same scientific goals.
- Refinement – optimising the welfare of those animals that are used.
- Replacement – using scientifically valid non-animal alternatives where they are available.

Not only is there an explicit obligation on licensed researchers in Europe to follow the '3Rs', it is also fundamental to animal welfare and high quality science. For many people their acceptance of the use of animals in research is conditional on researchers embracing the '3Rs' and continuing to drive these forward.

7. Government & Economics

Good dialogue is based on understanding each other's positions and the factors that have to be taken into account. As such, understanding your regional and national government's position on science and research more broadly and what other scientific debates are taking place can provide important context for discussions around the use of animals in research.

8. Commitment

A public policy is an important way to share how you work and your principles. Not only should this policy explain your principles, it should also make clear how seriously animal welfare is taken and how this is ensured, and how you are progressing the '3Rs'. Those who are not directly involved in this area are unlikely to have this insight unless you explicitly share your thinking with them.



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Resources

There are a large range of resources available across the EU to help to communicate the appropriate and regulated use of animals in medical research. As well as utilising these, it is always worthwhile to develop locally relevant materials and case studies to illustrate your work and how you apply high standards of animal welfare.

Resources highlighted below are not exhaustive but are illustrative of some of the elements discussed in the workshop.

Reports and statements

- In the UK the Concordat on Openness in Animal Research is an example of an overt commitment to improve transparency, which warrants consideration in a national context.¹
- The Nuffield Council on Bioethics established a working group and subsequent report in 2005 seeking to clarify the debate around the use of animals in research. The report aimed to help people think through the ethical issues that are raised. It also made practical recommendations for future policy and practice.²
- An independent report produced by a working group chaired by Sir David Weatherall FRS considered the use of non-human primates in biological and medical research.³
- The European Commission response to the 'Stop Vivisection' European Citizens' Initiative (ECI), which sets out their priorities and the actions that they intend to take.⁴

3Rs Organisations

- The NC3Rs is the UK's national organisation which leads the discovery and application of new technologies and approaches to replace, reduce and refine the use of animals for scientific purposes.⁵
- Swetox is a collaboration between eleven Swedish universities in order to further improve Sweden's ability to meet society's need for safe chemicals and a non-toxic environment, and embed and further the '3Rs' principles.⁶

¹ <http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/policy/concordat-openness-animal-research/>

² <http://nuffieldbioethics.org/project/animal-research/>

³ https://royalsociety.org/~media/Royal_Society_Content/policy/publications/2006/Weatherall-Report.pdf

⁴ http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-5094_en.pdf

⁵ <https://www.nc3rs.org.uk/>

⁶ <http://swetox.se/en/about-swetox/>



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- Norecopa is the Norwegian consensus platform for replacement, reduction and refinement of animal experiments.⁷
- The Danish 3R-Center, was established in June 2013 by the Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries, in a unique collaboration with both the pharmaceutical industry and animal welfare organizations. They focus on alternatives to animal testing and on creating better conditions for laboratory animals.⁸
- FICAM is the centre of expertise for alternative methods to animal experimentation in Finland. FICAM develops and validates human-cell-based tissue/organ models, shares information on alternative methods, educates experts, and acts as the Finnish reference laboratory.⁹
- The 3R Foundation in Switzerland provides funds for research projects to promote the development of '3Rs' methods.¹⁰

Animal research defence organisations

- Understanding Animal Research (UK)¹¹
- Pro-test Italia (IT)¹²
- Pro-test Germany (DE)¹³
- European Animal Research Association (EUR)¹⁴
- Research4Life (IT)¹⁵

⁷ <http://norecopa.no/about-norecopa>

⁸ <http://www.3rcenter.dk/Sider/About-us.aspx>

⁹ <http://ficam.fi/en>

¹⁰ <http://www.forschung3r.ch/en/information/index.html>

¹¹ <http://www.understandinganimalresearch.org.uk/>

¹² <http://www.pro-test.it/>

¹³ <https://protestdeutschland.wordpress.com/>

¹⁴ <http://eara.eu/home/>

¹⁵ <http://www.research4life.it/>