

Transparency Charter for Animal Research : first assessment after one year

38 major players in French research take stock of the first year of the implementation of the Transparency Charter on the use of animals for scientific and regulatory purposes.

Why a Transparency Charter?

The use of animals in research is a complex and poorly understood subject, which can be the subject of various controversies.

The scientific community is now aware that the general public needs to be informed about how animals are used in order to put an end to many preconceived ideas.

It is in this context that in February 2021, under the impetus of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and following the example of other European countries, Gircor launched the first Charter for transparency on the use of animals in research. This Charter now has 38 signatories, including numerous research establishments and institutes, universities, human and veterinary medicine companies, etc.

The Transparency Charter is based on 4 commitments:

1. To explain the reasons and conditions for using animals for scientific and regulatory purposes
2. To disseminate information to the general public and the media
3. To ease information flow with the general public and the media
4. To produce an annual document outlining the progress regarding public information

The first Charter report

The first Charter report is the result of this fourth commitment.

It is important to note that the signatories of the Charter form a very heterogeneous group, with organisations with more than 30,000 employees and much smaller structures, totally different organisations, and a more or less important share of activity dedicated to research... While this heterogeneity is a strength, since it allows us to have a good representation of the French animal research landscape, it also makes it difficult to interpret the numerical results, which are difficult to weight.

For the signatories, the Transparency Charter responds to two major concerns: to allow the general public to understand the interest of using animals and to improve the image of research. It is clear that management and staff are fully committed to the process and are motivated to change the image of animal research, even if the paradigm shift is sometimes complicated and takes time. Some staff have been used to a diametrically opposed discourse for years: to live happily, let's live hidden. It is now different.

However, communication in the field of animal research remains complex, the choice of words or images is particularly delicate with the fear of misinterpretation or misappropriation, especially as the staff, more used to presenting scientific results, are not always comfortable communicating on the issue.

And if the pandemic has been a brake on communication in many structures, it has also been a unique opportunity. It allowed us to explain the fundamental role of animals in research and their usefulness in managing an unprecedented crisis.

Beyond the Charter

Beyond the figures, this first report is a first step, it is the testimony of a global and positive dynamic. Firstly, at European level, since equivalents to this Charter have now been launched in seven other countries. Secondly, at the level of mentalities, since the year in which this Charter was launched was the same year in which the FC3R was created, the national reference centre for all questions relating to the 3Rs principle (Replace, Reduce, Refine), the keystone for all players in animal research. These events bear witness to an evolution in practices that meets the legitimate expectations of society.

There can be no transparency without exemplary practices.

Download the Transparency Charter report:
<https://www.gircor.fr/charte-transparence2022>

Contact :

Ivan Balansard, President and spokesperson of Gircor
(+33) 6 33 63 82 40 – secretariat@gircor.net

About Gircor

Gircor is an association of public and private research and education actors who use animals for scientific purposes.

Its mission is to answer the public's questions on the use of animals and alternative methods in research, their stakes and their necessity; to contribute to the improvement of practices for ethical and responsible research through the application of the 3Rs, the development of alternative methods and the "culture of care"; to promote the transparency of structures using animals for scientific or regulatory purposes.