



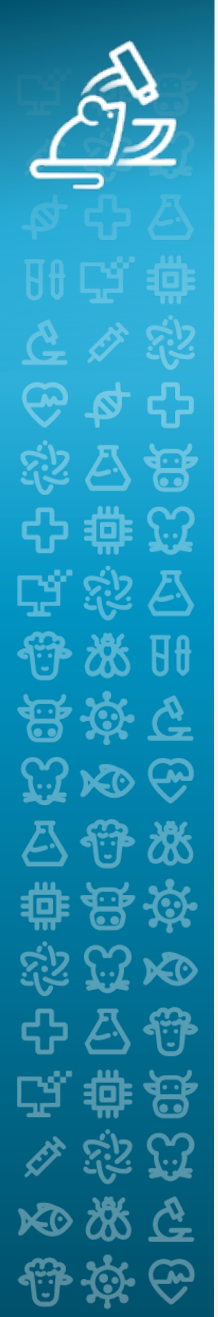
2021 ANNUAL REPORT

French transparency Charter on the use of animals for scientific and regulatory purposes





***We dedicate this first report to
Prof. André-Laurent Parodi (1933-2022),
who provided invaluable support for the
establishment of the Transparency Charter***



In a press release dated 20 July 2022, the four Academies (National Academy of Medicine, National Academy of Pharmacy, Academy of Sciences and the Veterinary Academy of France) welcomed the publication of this annual report



French transparency Charter

Biological and medical research aims to continuously increase scientific knowledge, improve human and veterinary medical therapies as well as better protect humans, animals and the environment.

Research, basic and applied alike, needs models to progress and evolve. It requires an integrated approach of synergic experimental methods based on data processing (*in silico*), biochemistry, cell and tissue culture (*in vitro*) and the use of living animals (*in vivo*), as well as clinical data. *In silico* and *in vitro* models are widely used, but are unable, based on current knowledge, to fully replace animal models. In order to carry out top quality research, the use of animal-based models remains therefore necessary.

The use of animals for the development and production of drugs for both humans and animals, also needs to meet safety and efficacy regulatory requirements. In the veterinary field, the studies are carried out on the animals for which the products are intended.

In accordance with the legal provisions of the Rural Code and the Civil Code, and by virtue of their convictions, the signatories of this Charter recognize that animals are living beings endowed with sensitivity. The use of animals in scientific and medical research is framed by specific regulations which protect them, ensure their well-being and enforce compliance with ethical rules.

Every citizen has the right to comprehensive, clear and accurate information regarding the reasons and conditions for the use of animals for scientific or regulatory purposes, but also the regulatory framework that guides this use, as well as the scientific and medical progress that result from it.

To this end, the signatories of this Charter, research establishments, laboratories developing drugs for humans or animals, their partners and their representatives, make four commitments:

1. To explain the reasons and conditions for using animals for scientific and regulatory purposes

- We are committed to respect a principle of transparency and openness regarding our practices around the use of animals for scientific or regulatory purposes.
- We inform the people working within our establishments but also outside the establishments that we carry out or participate in the realization of animal studies. We specify the reasons and conditions, whenever possible, without compromising the confidentiality of the people involved and the experiments.
- When we communicate on our progress, we specify the role of animal and non-animal models in these developments.

2. To disseminate information to the general public and the media

- We are committed to making information on the use of animals for scientific or regulatory purposes accessible to the general public and to the media.
- Thus, information on the use of animals in basic or applied research and for the development of human and veterinary drugs will be comprehensive to all and easily accessible on the different communication platforms of the establishments, including the institutional websites.

3. To ease information flow with the general public and the media

- We are committed to assist and encourage exchanges with the general public and communicate about them.
- Different methods of interaction will be put in place, such as implementing a point of contact for the media and individuals or setting up meetings with the public.

4. To produce an annual document outlining the progress regarding public information

- It is necessary to follow up on commitments to ensure the success of the Charter.
- To this end, we will report in an annual synthetic document, the actions carried out following the signature of the Charter.



The signatories



The supporters



In brief

The respondents

The response rate to the questionnaire was 84.2%.

43.8% of the responding signatories responding are public or private research organisations. They are followed by contract research organisations (CROs) at 15.6%, then by universities and the pharmaceutical or biotechnology industry (both at 12.5%). Nearly 80% of them directly house or use animals.

71.9% of the signatories have or are in the process of developing a web page referring to the use of animals in research. Several of them have integrated it into their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) policy or refer to it on a page presenting their activities in a transversal manner.

The signing of the Transparency Charter meets two major concerns: to enable the general public to understand the benefits of using animals and to improve the image of research in France. Reducing pressure from activists is a concern that strongly divides the respondents:

50% make it a priority concern and 50% consider it less important or do not feel concerned. Other expectations include:

- Need for common tools (guides, recommendations...) and to be able to organise joint actions.
- *"Demystify the subject of animal experimentation; generate trust among the media, politicians and the public; bring more serenity and recognition for professionals."*
- *"Motivate young people to join the world of experimental research".*
- *"Show the general public that the use of animals in research is carried out according to strict regulations that take into account animal welfare and suffering"*



In brief

Commitment 1 "To explain the reasons and conditions for using animals for scientific and regulatory purposes"

Nearly 72% of the signatories have or are in the process of drafting a charter or an institutional policy on the use of animals, including 31% who have made it available on their website, often in pdf format.

For staff working directly with animals, 96% of respondents have communication actions directly aimed at them, with a focus on specific actions adapted to each professional body. 92% of respondents organise courses or training on animal experimentation or ethics.

For staff not working directly with animals, more than 70% of signatories communicate on the use of animals in their organization. When they do so, it is most often in a global way for all staff. Among the most frequently mentioned actions, 60% offer to visit their animal facilities.

"Communication on the animal rehoming programme with a proposal to participate in actions (socialisation of dogs, walks, direct adoptions, etc.)".

The information provided to the public spontaneously concerns

more particularly the species and models used (69% of respondents) and examples of the application of the 3Rs rule (Reduce, Replace, Refine) for 34%. Information is most often displayed via websites or scientific publications but can also be provided through partnerships with external organizations (such as CNES or the Cité des Sciences et de l'Industrie).

As regarding the media provided to the public, it is primarily the accommodation conditions that are shown (with photos for 65% of respondents, videos for 25% and virtual visits for 13%). The personnel and animals in experimental procedures are much less highlighted.

Work involving animals is most often illustrated by the communication of scientific results, accompanied by images or videos and statements that take into account animal welfare.

The implementation of this first commitment most often involves the development of dedicated internet pages explaining the need to use animals, regulations and ethical rules; participation in national or international events (Brain Week, Science Day, etc.); and informing staff through meetings, seminars or e-learning.

In brief

Commitment 2

"To disseminate information to the general public and the media"

In general, respondents communicate little directly with the media, with just over 30% responding systematically or almost always to requests. 45% rarely or never do so and 25% say they are never solicited. The respondents fall into two distinct groups: the first is comfortable with the media and accepts the maximum number of requests; the second accepts with greater difficulty, if at all, because of problems of site security, personnel, the species used or the very sensitive subject (toxicology for example). Whether or not a solicitation is accepted depends on the subject of the article and the media (*"It all depends on the solicitations, the media, the subject, the objective"*). Some signatories refer to the Gircor when solicited.

Communication on the 3Rs and the use of animals is most often done via the respondent's website or during scientific communications. One of the signatories pointed out the *"existence of an e-mail address for the general public for questions of animal ethics issues"*. The creation of the FC3R was an opportunity for some to communicate on the issue.

Among the examples cited of collaboration with the media, we can mention:

- A report in a pet shop followed by an interview for the Magazine de la santé (France 5)
- Participation in La Terre au carré and Le Téléphone sonne (France Inter)
- Participation in articles in the press or in scientific popularisation (Le Monde, Le Quotidien du médecin, Pour la Science, Capital...)
- Visits to animal facilities by Le Monde

In brief

Conclusion 1/2

It is important to note that the signatories of the Transparency Charter form a very heterogeneous group: organizations with more than 30,000 employees to much more modest structures, a more or less important activity dedicated to animal research, totally different organizations, a more or less advanced culture of transparency... While this heterogeneity is a strength since it provides a good representation of the French animal research landscape, it also makes it difficult to interpret the figures, which can be difficult to weight. This first annual report of the Transparency Charter is only the beginning, a first impulse to measure the momentum.

Most of the directorates and teams are fully committed to the transparency process. Researchers are particularly aware that in order to accept the use of animals in research, the general public must understand the need for it and the conditions under which it is carried out. This will enable them to form an informed opinion. This need has been taken on board by the researchers, who are motivated to change the image of research and to communicate on the actions implemented in the context of animal welfare, even if the paradigm shift is 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 photos is particularly delicate** with

the fear of misinterpretation, especially as the staff, more used to presenting scientific results, is not always comfortable communicating on the issue. The obstacles to communication are linked to the image of research, which is not always good in public opinion, particularly because of the persistence of preconceived ideas or images from "another time". The fear of exposure to detractors is all the greater because, for some, activists do not hesitate to misuse certain information to achieve their ends. Staff do not always feel safe and anonymity is sometimes essential because they are 'afraid of reprisals'.

The pandemic has obviously had an impact on the transparency process:

The pandemic has limited the actions planned: *"The health situation linked to Covid-19 did not allow us to carry out a certain number of visits or open doors". Despite this, some structures managed to maintain their projects: "Maintaining visits in a complicated health context and always responding favourably to requests".*

The pandemic was also an opportunity to organize virtual visits or to explain the role of animals in research: *"Web press article on the use of primates for COVID vaccine development"; "With the pandemic, we were at the forefront of informing the public on the contribution of primates to Covid research".*

In brief

Conclusion 2/2

Respondents emphasised the need for support, including

Training: *"Training in communication, help in creating banks of images, videos and virtual visits"; "Training in communication and support for the creation of the website"; "Training on how to communicate with the media on the usefulness of animal research and how to address the general public through the media without getting into a polemic with those against animal research".*

Working together: Organizing working meetings between the signatories' communication departments; Supporting the signatories: meetings, training, annual exchange day, etc.; *"Putting them in contact with video makers/photographers capable of providing good quality communication materials. "*

For next year, the signatories plan to continue this dynamic and to pursue their commitment by improving the actions already undertaken or by investing in new ones. These include:

- Responding better to media requests
- Enhancing the content and visibility of the website
- Encouraging the development of internal media (photos and videos)
- Organizing real or virtual visits
- Communicate better internally

Finally, the questionnaire used as a basis for the annual report will be reviewed in order to facilitate the work of the respondents, optimise its processing and better highlight the actions undertaken in the framework of the Transparency Charter on the use of animals for scientific and regulatory purposes in France.



In brief

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 the 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.



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