



Belgian science unites in support of animal research

Twenty-one Belgian biomedical research organisations have come together in support of important and ethically responsible research using animals in an unprecedented collaboration ahead of World Day for Laboratory Animals (April 24th).

Leading biomedical research companies and universities from the three regions in Belgium have collectively published a joint statement to explain the importance of animal research in Belgium and to promote an evolving, open approach with the public. In the statement they explain that, when no alternative method is available, animal models play a small but fundamental role in support of the development of ground breaking treatments, cures and diagnostics which transform the lives of humans and animals.

This initiative is the beginning of a process of openness and transparency aimed at political decision makers and the general public with the intention of improving understanding and acceptance of animal research for biomedical purposes. This degree of cooperation in support of animal research is unprecedented. It highlights the great importance that the biomedical science sector places on this issue. The signatory organisations pledge to work together to improve transparency and public dialogue. The statement will be open for other relevant research organisations in Belgium to sign at a later date.

The European Animal Research Association initiated and coordinated this unprecedented collaboration as part of its ongoing efforts to improve animal research communications at the national and European level.

Guy de Vroey, Chairman of the Belgian Council for Laboratory Animal Science (BCLAS), said:

“We are very pleased to see so many different research organisations committed to improving animal research communications and promoting research interests. We hope this initiative will set a trend and encourage other organisations to participate. I am positive this new approach will have an impact on the public understanding of the role that animal research plays and the benefits it brings both for scientific research and our society as a whole.”

Kirk Leech, Executive Director of the European Animal Research Association (EARA), said:

“This is an historic statement. This widespread support for openness demonstrates a sea change in how the Life Sciences in Belgium will communicate to the public on the continued need for and benefit of animal research for scientific, medical and veterinary progress. We believe that greater openness on animal research seen here and in the UK should become the norm in all European countries.”



Statement in support of animal research in Belgium and a transparent approach

The Belgian life sciences sector is at the forefront of developing ground breaking treatments, cures and diagnostics which transform the lives of humans and animals. To maintain this position we need to continue increasing our understanding of biology in health and disease. In principle, we use cell-cultures and computer models. When for some complex processes these are not suitable, research may involve animals. A substantial proportion of animal research in Belgium is required to protect the safety of human and veterinary patients. We always strive to reduce the number of animals necessary, to refine the methodology and to develop viable alternatives. Animal research in Belgium is highly regulated; it is overseen by ethical committees and carried out by qualified people in accredited facilities.

Openness about animal research contributes to a higher level of public understanding and acceptance of the use of animals in research. Public scrutiny has also played an essential role in the world-leading ethical framework that supports our animal research and encourages us to meet the highest animal welfare standards, only studying animals where no alternative exists. Public confidence in our research rests on the scientific community embracing an open approach and taking part in an on-going conversation about animal research.

We realise the need to continue to develop an open dialogue between the research community and the public about when, why and how animals are used in research, and about the benefits of animal research to bioscience and human and veterinary medicine. We, the undersigned, therefore commit to work together to develop practical steps which will underpin a transparent approach to animal research in Belgium.

List of signatories

22 signatories to the statement





About the European Animal Research Association:

The European Animal Research Association (EARA) is a communications and advocacy organisation whose mission is to uphold the interests of biomedical research and healthcare development across Europe. The creation of EARA was prompted by the recognition by the scientific community that Europe needs a unified voice to improve citizens, journalists and politicians' understanding about animal research. www.eara.eu