

Launch of the Transparency Agreement for Animal Research

The DFG and “Understanding Animal Research” advocate for transparent information and open communication about animal experiments in research / Global Action Day on 1 July

The Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) and the information platform “Understanding Animal Research” of the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany are launching their “Transparency Agreement for Transparent Information and Open Communication about Animal Research in Germany” today, Thursday 1 July 2021. In the context of the initiative, research facilities from the field of life sciences undertake to transparently inform about animal experiments, to get actively involved in dialogue about animal research, as well as to exchange experiences and publicise activities. Among the 53 initial signatories of the initiative are universities, hospitals, non-university research institutions, corporations that conduct research, as well as scholarly societies and funding organisations. Planning provides for further organisations to join in the future. All signatories are listed on the website that has been set up for the initiative. Examples of successful communication about animal research and information for supporting the signatories in realising their goals are also provided on the website. The initiative follows similar activities in other European countries such as Britain, France and Spain.

“Animal experiments are a topic that is subject to controversial public debate. This is why transparent communication about scientific and ethical aspects of animal research is of special importance in explaining to the general public that sadly not all animal experiments can be avoided in life science research to date. At the same time it must be emphasised that animal experiments are only carried out following comprehensive ethical consideration of the balance between scientific knowledge acquisition and potential suffering caused to the animals,” says DFG President Professor Dr. Katja Becker.

Professor Dr. Brigitte Vollmar, Chair of the DFG Senate Commission on Animal Protection and Experimentation, is very pleased about the large number of initial signatories: “The Transparency Agreement is already supported by 53 research institutions! We are confident that many other organisations will fulfil their responsibility to provide transparent information about animal research, and will join the initiative. Support from the entire scientific community is vital to attach as much importance to the idea of transparency as possible.”

Professor Dr. Stefan Treue, head of the “Understanding Animal Research” steering group, thinks of the transparency initiative as another important step towards a more proactive approach to animal research: “The Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany launched the ‘Understanding Animal Research’ platform in 2016 to signal that the public interest in animal experiments is taken seriously, and to provide a foundation that enables everybody to deal with the issue based on solid and comprehensive information. The initiative launched today builds on this. We want to

support the signatories in advancing their transparent and open discussion about animals in research.”

Upon its launch on 1 July, the Transparency Agreement joins the ranks of various communication campaigns around the world. The initiative is launched on the “Be Open about Animal Research Day”, an event organised by the European Animal Research Association (EARA), sharing examples of openness and transparency in animal research. The accompanying social media campaign can be found via the hashtag #BOARD21.

The “Transparency Agreement Initiative” was started by the DFG’s Permanent Senate Commission on Animal Protection and Experimentation and the Understanding Animal Research platform that is coordinated by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany. The Senate Commission is an inter-disciplinary committee of experts that is dedicated to the latest scientific developments and the complex ethical and legal framework of animal welfare and animal research. It provides advice to the committees of the DFG, as well as policy-makers and authorities. Understanding Animal Research is dedicating to providing the latest fact-based information about animal experiments in publicly funded research and helps to communicate the importance of animal research for society.

In line with the current state of research, animal experiments are an important component of the spectrum of experimental methods in biomedical research. Animal research is essential to gain fundamental knowledge and to allow for medically relevant development. While recent methodological research allows for animal experiments to be replaced or reduced in scope by using alternative methods in certain experimental approaches, it is currently not yet foreseeable that animal experiments can be replaced entirely. Such experiments will also be necessary in the future, to gain knowledge and to develop new therapeutic approaches and methods.

Further Information

Visit the new website of the Transparent Animal Experiments Initiative:
www.initiative-transparente-tierversuche.de

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Learn about the DFG’s Permanent Senate Commission on Animal Protection and Experimentation and its activities: www.dfg.de/sktf

Visit the Understanding Animal Research website: www.tierversuche-verstehen.de

Further information about “Be Open about Animal Research Day”:
<https://www.eara.eu/post/celebrate-openness-in-animal-research-with-us-on-thursday>