



European Animal
Research Association

**EARA study
of EU-based
websites 2020**

EARA study of EU-based websites to assess institutional openness in animal research (2020)

(A report to the European Commission¹)

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¹ This report also includes website assessments for UK institutions, this is to provide consistency with the previous EARA website study in 2018.

About EARA

The [European Animal Research Association](#) (EARA) was set up in 2014 to improve the openness and transparency of communication about the use of animals in research in the biomedical sector in Europe. Among its strategies is to work with national networks of the life sciences, to help set up and co-ordinate Transparency Agreements where the signatories commit to being open and consistent with the public on their communication about the scientific, ethical and moral justifications for animal research.

Introduction

As a communications and advocacy organisation, representing nearly 100 institutions in the biomedical and life science sector across Europe, the central mission of EARA is to create an environment where the public is aware of the continued need for, and benefits of, the humane use of animals in scientific research.

An important part of the strategy to achieve this is for institutions that carry out, or are associated with, animal research to be open and transparent to the public about their research activities.

Institutional websites are a great tool for informing members of the public, media, decision makers and regulators about the use of animals in research and the contribution of animal research to biomedical science. Websites can also highlight the importance that the life sciences place on animal welfare, as well as the significance of the 3Rs (Replacement, Reduction and Refinement). We believe therefore that a study of the websites of EU-based institutions is a useful tool for encouraging greater transparency in animal research, in line with the recommendations made in Section 3 of the Review of [Directive 2010/63/EU](#), in November 2017.

In 2018, to provide a better understanding of the openness of institutions and the information available to the public, EARA carried out its [first study of the websites of EU-based institutions](#) to assess the openness and transparency of their research using animals. To see if the 2018 baseline has progressed and maintain an up-to-date landscape on the openness and transparency of EU institutions - and to see how this varies between member states - EARA has now repeated this website study for 2020. The study will identify areas of good practice, and areas which need improvement, while highlighting exemplary case studies for other institutions to follow. It will also help EARA provide guidance on best practice to its own member organisations (which cover 19 countries across Europe) and the wider biomedical sector across Europe. The findings of the 2020 study are now presented in this report.

As in 2018, the present study was completed with the support of the EU Commission which agreed to circulate an EARA online survey to all EU Competent Authorities, requesting that this be distributed to all relevant institutions. The online survey asked detailed questions on the content of any websites run by an institution involved with animal research; each response subsequently provided invaluable additional information to the EARA study. These replies complemented the work of the EARA researchers, who visited the websites of individual institutions within the sector to evaluate their levels of openness, and we would like to thank the Commission for its support.

This report also includes website assessments for UK institutions, this is to provide consistency with the previous EARA website study in 2018.

Assessment categories

All websites were assessed based on categories that aim to indicate a website’s level of openness towards animal research. These are in order of importance, with the most essential information that should be available presented first.

1. Does it have a statement on animal research?
2. Does it provide ‘more information’ on the research that is conducted?
 - The name of the species used and the type of research it is contributing to.
3. How prominent is animal research on the website?
4. Does it feature images/videos of research animals?
 - Is this an original image from that institution?
5. Does it provide a case study that includes research using animals?
 - Is this an intentional case study for communicating animal research?
6. Does it provide ‘extensive information’ on animal research?

Using these categories, the websites were ranked on their standards of openness and transparency towards animal research. More information on these categories can be found in the respective results sections below.

Executive summary of findings

All the categories assessed showed an improvement from the 2018 study (see Overall Summary for comparisons with 2018 study), suggesting that EU institutions are becoming more open about their use of animals in research, however, there is still a long way to go before a satisfactory level of openness will have been reached. As shown and discussed later in this report, a more detailed look at the findings shows that there remains a general lack of information directly addressing animal research. Many institutions do not actively acknowledge animal research on their websites, with the only information available about their research using animals presented in scientific publications, and with statements only regarding compliance with welfare legislation, and not directly mentioning involvement with animal research. See Table 1 below for a summary of the findings from the 1,065 websites assessed in this study (see also Data Analysis).

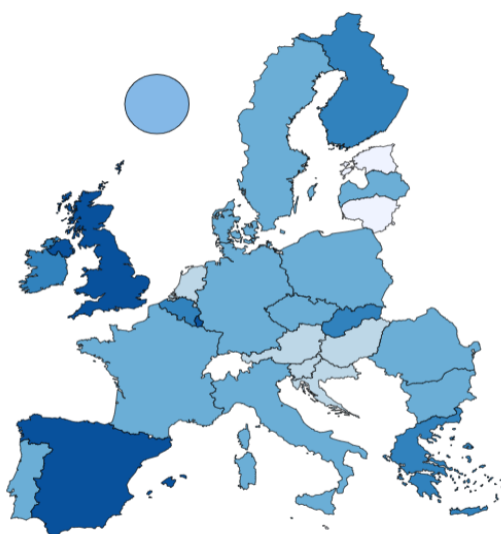
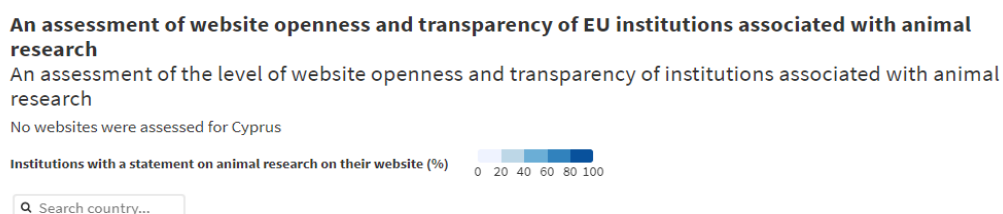
More than half the institutions assessed have a recognisable statement acknowledging the use of animals, or a commitment to the welfare of research animals.	59%
More than three quarters of the websites provide more information , such as the species of animal used and/or the type of research animals are used in.	77%
More than half the websites have animal research as a prominent feature, e.g. through high hit rates in the search bar of the website, or easy navigation from the homepage.	56%
Under half the websites assessed display at least one image of an animal used in research.	42%
More than two thirds of the websites contain an example of research using animals conducted at that institution, such as a case study or accessible publication.	68%
Fewer than a third of websites contain extensive information , such as statistics on animal use, frequently asked questions, or a general high volume of public-facing information.	31%

Table 1: Summary of category assessments across the EU & UK

Interactive map

EARA has produced an [interactive map](#) with a breakdown of the results in each category for each EU member state. The map also colour codes each country based on the percentage of institutions with a statement on animal research on their website.

Figure 1: Interactive map showing the websites analysed in the survey



Results and discussion

All data was collected between 7 January, 2020 and 19 June, 2020, by EARA. A total of 1,065 websites were assessed (172 more than the 2018 study). See Appendix 1 for a breakdown by country.

Below we present the results for each category assessed at the EU and Member State level. See Appendix 2 for a full breakdown of the results for each category by country.

1. Statement on animal research

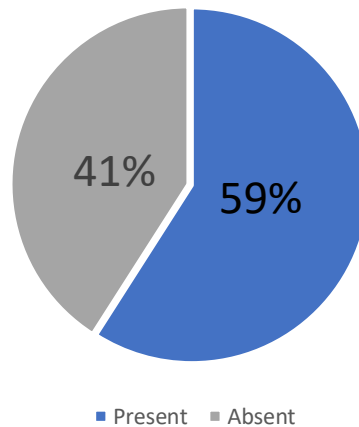
A statement on animal research was defined as a statement which deliberately acknowledges the institution's involvement with research using animals. This can take a wide variety of forms but should include at least one of the following:

- Support for an umbrella association's statement on animal research
- For example the [Basel Declaration Society](#) (now [Animal Research Tomorrow](#)), the [COSCE Transparency Agreement](#), the [Association of Medical Research Charities](#) (AMCR).
- A statement of commitment to the 3Rs, or other acknowledgment of animal welfare such as conducting research in accordance to a cited regulation - usually Directive 2010/63/EU.
- A declaration that animal research is an important part of that institution's research.
- A declaration that animal research is important for biomedical research in general.

We found that more than half the institutions assessed (59%) have a recognisable statement acknowledging the use of animals, or a commitment to the welfare of research animals on their website (see Figure 2).

UK (89%), Spain (81%) and Belgium (71%) all had a particularly high proportion of websites with statements. Whereas Austria and the Netherlands had the lowest proportion (39%), followed by France (42%), and Italy (43%).

Figure 2: Statement on animal research



On those websites which have statements, just over two thirds (70%) can be reached in three clicks or fewer from the homepage. It was also encouraging to see that the statement could be reached in one click from 28% of the institutions assessed.

Discussion

While now more than half the institutions in the study (630/1065) carry a website statement, most of these only refer to upholding the welfare of research animals, not specifically supporting their use in research at their institution. It also means that 435 institutions (41%) in the EU are yet to include a statement acknowledging their involvement with animal research.

On the other hand, it appears that when these statements are present, they can often be easily reached from the homepage. However, despite being less than three clicks from the homepage, statements can appear under headings that a member of the public is unlikely to realise will lead to a statement on animal research, for example under the heading 'Governance' or 'Sustainability'. Furthermore, some statements exist on the website under the 'News' section which will become increasingly difficult to find as they become buried by later news stories.

Good practice example:

[Maastricht University \(UM\)](#), Netherlands

UM provides a statement page on animal research. This starts by highlighting the benefits and necessity of animal research, then goes on to explain the strict laws and regulations to ensure the highest levels of welfare, including a concise explanation of the 3Rs principles. From this page, UM also detail the species used at the institution, including when they are used and the numbers involved. The statement page supplies many links for further reading and is very easy to follow.

[Novo Nordisk](#), Denmark

Novo Nordisk, a global healthcare company, provides a good example of an excellent statement that is very easy to find. The statement can be reached in one click from the home page by following the logical drop-down headings, which in descending hierarchy are 'Research & Development' then 'Bioethics' then 'Animal ethics' which then provides a statement on animal research.

[AstraZeneca](#), UK

AstraZeneca is a global biopharmaceutical company. Its statement page starts by acknowledging its use of animals, and then explains why their use is necessary. In the same statement there is an outline of the species used and the number of animals.

[Flanders Institute for Biotechnology \(VIB\)](#), Belgium

VIB is a life sciences research institute, in Belgium, that carries out basic research. It has a well-written statement that explains the necessity of animal research, names the species used and explains the 3Rs in a concise way.

[University of Ferrara](#), Italy

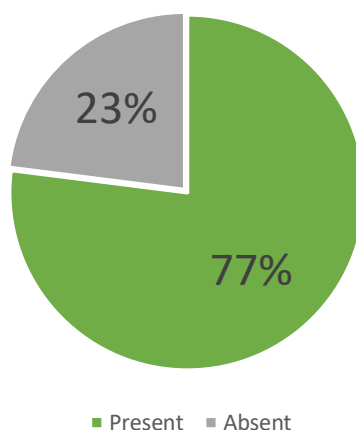
The University of Ferrara provides a clear statement on animal research. First it acknowledges the contribution of animal experimentation to biomedical research, and then addresses its own research activities which involve the use of animal models, stressing that it is always done with respect to the 3Rs. Throughout the statement it also provides several useful links to learn more about animal welfare.

2. More information

The minimum information required to meet this category is that somewhere on the website (not necessarily alongside the statement) the animal species used in research are named, or alternatively that the type of research conducted using animals, such as Alzheimer's research, is named.

More than three quarters (77%) of the websites provide 'more information', such as the name of the species used and/or the type of research animals are used in within the institution (see Figure 3). The results ranged from Belgium, where 86% of websites have 'more information', followed closely by Portugal (84%) and Germany (81%), down to Italy (62%).

Figure 3: More information



Discussion

It is good to see that the majority of institutions achieved this category. Ideally this information would be provided alongside a statement on animal research, however it was usually provided through searching key terms such as 'mouse' or 'rats' into a search bar leading to a project, publication, or a news story featuring animal research. It was also commonly found through searching through lists of publications usually featured on websites. Consequently, although providing more information, this was rarely displayed in the context of highlighting the use of animals in research.

Good practice example:

[German Rheumatism Research Centre Berlin \(DRFZ\)](#), Germany

DRFZ is a public research institute of the Leibniz Association specialising in rheumatisms. It has a dedicated 'Animal Experiments at the DRFZ' page with a large amount of clear and engaging information on its research using animals. This includes clearly naming the species used, which is exclusively mice, and the type of research they are used in, both broadly and specifically. The same page describes why animal experiments are done, information about animal-free alternative methods, and the strict welfare practices followed at DRFZ.

[University of Oxford](#), UK

The University of Oxford is a leading centre for biomedical research. On its website it lists detailed answers to common questions on animal research, including 'How many animals are used?' and shows, in tables, all the species used in procedures for the last year including the numbers of each used.

[University of Aveiro institute for biomedicine \(iBiMEDS\)](#), Portugal

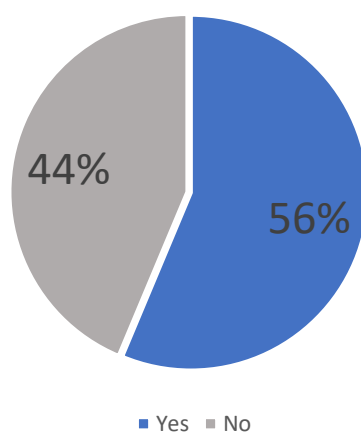
iBiMEDS declares in its statement on animal research that it houses mice and rats, which it explains have made major contributions in the development of novel therapies, including vaccines, antibiotics, anaesthetics and more.

3. Prominence of animal research

If a website provides a high volume of easy to navigate to information on, or involving, animal research, it is considered to have achieved the prominence category requirement. In general, the minimum needed is an easy to reach statement on animal research, i.e. three clicks or less, and/or several examples of how animals are used in research found within 10 minutes of searching.

More than half (56%) of the websites have animal research as a prominent feature, e.g. through high hit rates in the search bar of the website, or easy navigation from the homepage (Figure 4). Belgian websites performed the best (67%) followed by Sweden (64%), with websites in Poland (44%), Czechia (50%), and Austria (50%) with least information that was prominent.

Figure 4: Is animal research prominent?



Discussion

Despite only 56% of websites assessed featuring animal research prominently, this category showed the greatest improvement from the previous 2018 study, with a 28% increase in prominence.

In most institutions where animal research was found to be prominent, a high volume of results were achieved when searching for key terms in a search bar. However, some search engines prioritised recent over relevant information, which can push public facing information further back into the results, making these harder to find.

For those websites without a search bar, even if they had information on animal research, it made it much more difficult to find. The best solution for achieving prominence is to include 'animal research/experimentation/testing' as an option in the drop-down menus under a logical heading such as 'research', 'ethics', 'responsibility', or 'integrity'.

Good practice example:

Max Planck Society (MPS), Germany

MPS is a large, non-profit, group of research institutes, which represent a large proportion of the biomedical sector in Germany. The Society has a dedicated animal research portal which can be reached in one click from the homepage from the 'Research' drop-down menu. On this portal there is a high volume of engaging information on animal research that is easy to access, for example [an article](#) on how rat models have led to new multiple sclerosis drugs.

Charles River Laboratories

Charles River is a multinational company specialising in preclinical and clinical laboratory services. It provides a good example of the effective use of a search bar to increase prominence. Searching for 'animal', 'mice', and 'mouse' brings up a large volume of public facing information at the top of the search results.

Institute of Biomedicine of Valencia (IBV-CSIC), Spain

IBV-CSIC makes effective use of the drop-down menus so that animal research features prominently. Its statement can be navigated to in one click going from 'About us' then to 'Animal Ethics'.

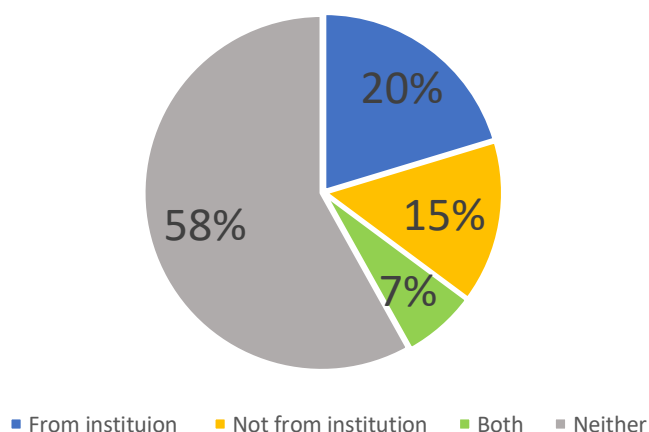
4. Images/videos of animals and research facilities

To meet this category, the website needed to present at least one image of animals in a research context. This includes original images from that institution, images not sourced from that institution, e.g. stock/library images, videos and infographics. Original images are preferable to library images as they give a truer reflection of the facilities at an institution.

Under half the websites (42%) of the institutions assessed, display at least one image of an animal used in research (see Figure 5 below), and just a quarter (27%) featured images sourced from the institution itself. Around half of the websites in Belgium (53%) and Sweden (52%) had images, whereas only just over a quarter did in Italy (26%) and less than a third in the Netherlands (31%).

The UK has several institutions with virtual tours of its animal facilities, four of which are available from a single [webpage](#). However, just 9% of all websites assessed were found to have videos featuring research animals.

Figure 5: Images of research animals



Discussion

The sector is failing to provide adequate imagery of animal research, with considerably less than half of the institutions assessed meeting this category. In addition, of those institutions that do include imagery, close to half are clearly stock/library photos or graphics, that were not produced from within the institution itself. This only contributes to the arguments of critics who say that research using animals is not transparent, as it can appear to the public that institutions using animals in research have something to hide. Where original images are used, they vary from images taken by colleagues to those professionally produced – either of these types of imagery are preferable over stock photography.

Furthermore, images and videos of animals undergoing a scientific procedure are very rare, which also contributes to a narrative of the sector being secretive. Presenting images of research animals both in their housing enclosures, as well as during procedures, provides a valuable opportunity to show the actual conditions that animals are kept in and the standards of welfare that are being met during procedures.

Good practice example:

Images – [Noldus Information Technology](#), International

Noldus is a biotechnology company providing solutions for both human and animal behaviour research. It presents an excellent example of a website which uses relevant and original imagery and videos of research animals throughout.

Images – [MRC Harwell Institute](#), UK

MRC Harwell Institute is an international leader in the study of mammalian models of disease. Its website has plenty of research animal imagery throughout the website, for example under the MRC Centre for Macaques section, each sub-heading is accompanied by a different image of a research macaque from its institution.

Video - [Complutense University of Madrid](#), Spain

Complutense is a public research university that is one of the biggest in Spain. Its videos combine expert explanation of the work conducted with animals, alongside footage of the research animals themselves.

Video – [Translational Neuroscience Unity \(TNU\)](#), [Radboud University Medical Centre](#), Netherlands

TNU has an excellent video which details why animal research is essential for neuroscience whilst showing rodents in a variety of both invasive and non-invasive procedures, and also in their enclosures.

Virtual tour - [French National Centre for Scientific Research \(CNRS\)](#), France

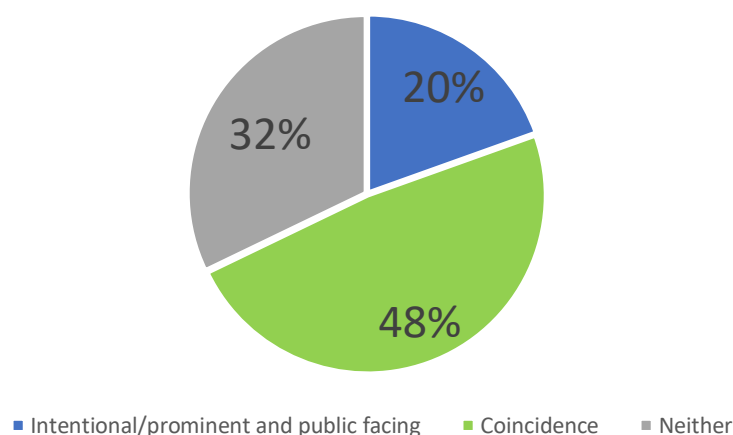
CNRS is a public organisation under the responsibility of the French Ministry of Education and Research. It has produced an interactive virtual tour of its animal facilities for public outreach. Throughout the tour there is the option to select several videos demonstrating and explaining the work it does, for example with primates.

5. Case studies

A case study is defined as any written description of research, at an institution, where animals are clearly identified as being used as models. A distinction was made between case studies that were written specifically to communicate animal research, or are public facing with animals as a central feature (intentional), and those written to represent research which just happens to include animals, for example in a list of publications (non-intentional). Non-intentional case studies were only searched for if an intentional case study could not be identified, meaning websites were recorded to have one *or* the other, but not both.

We found that more than two thirds of the websites (68%) contained an example of research using animals conducted at that institution, such as a case study or an accessible publication, but overall just 20% of the total were intentional case studies (Figure 6). Austria had a particularly high prevalence of case studies (82%), whereas Spain (59%) and Poland (59%) had some of the lowest numbers of examples. The UK was the only country where more than half of the case studies found were identified as intentional (57%), no other countries with more than 15 websites assessed were close to that figure - the nearest being Spain with just over a third of the website case studies found to be intentional - several had fewer than 10% (Italy, France, and Poland).

Figure 6: Case studies of animal research



Discussion

There are a high volume of case studies of animal research to be found, however these are not always public facing or directly aimed at communicating animal research and can often use many technical terms. This is largely due to the common practice of listing research publications and projects, particularly noticeable in public research institutes, where there is the additional incentive of showing the results of public funds. Nevertheless, this practice does contribute towards the transparency of animal research, albeit indirectly. The higher number of intentional case studies in the UK may be due to the presence of a longstanding transparency agreement, known as the [Concordat on Openness on Animal Research](#) (see also Transparency Agreements).

Good practice example:

[Katholieke Universiteit Leuven \(KU Leuven\)](#), Belgium

KU Leuven has a dedicated 'Research involving laboratory animals' page where one can find a high volume of engaging and informative information on animal research. On this page is an outline of six areas of research where the institution uses laboratory animals, including cancer research, fetal surgery, and transplantation. From each of these research themes, a detailed public facing overview of the research is provided, and shows how animal research contributes to it.

[University of Manchester](#), UK

The University of Manchester has a detailed section of its website on research involving animals. On the first page of this section the website presents seven case studies of how animal research has contributed to biomedical research at the University of Manchester, for example Professor Rob Lucas's [work using mice](#) to develop gene therapies for blindness.

[University of Lisbon](#), Portugal

The University of Lisbon has a practical and simple way to improve transparency as it links selected publications/articles involving animal research from the webpage containing a statement on animal research, along with an easy to understand summary of the research involved.

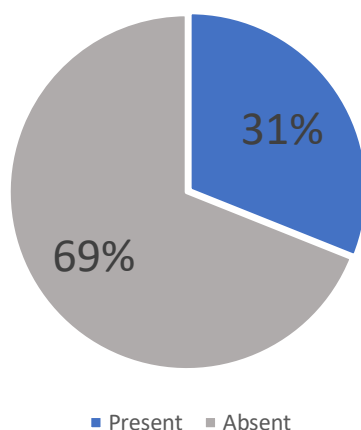
6. Extensive information

This assessment was met if the website provided information beyond the minimum to meet any of the categories previously mentioned. In general, if the website included any one of the following criteria it passed this category:

- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) on animal research
- Links to more information on animal research
 - e.g. links to [EARA](#) or [AnimalResearch.info](#)
- Press releases on animal research at that institution
- Statistics on animals used in research
- Information on the severity of procedures undertaken
- A general high volume of public facing information directly about animal research
- Advertisements of public events on animal research
 - This is included as, although not necessarily directly providing information on animal research, it still presents an avenue for finding out more about it made possible through the website.

This was predictably the poorest performing assessment category with fewer than a third of websites (31%) containing 'extensive information' (Figure 7). There were also wide variations from country to country in this category, for example France, Italy, and Czechia were all 20% or below, whereas Belgium (47%) and the UK (57%) were well above the average.

Figure 7: Extensive information



Discussion

This category was met predominantly by institutions with a dedicated page on their involvement with animal research or providing several links to more information on animal research. An FAQs section is probably the most concise way to communicate about animal research and often provided the broadest information, covering topics such as animal welfare practices or what species are used and why.

Good practice example:

[Biomedical Primate Research Centre \(BPRC\)](#), the Netherlands

BPRC is an excellent example of how to present extensive information for public consumption for an institute that specialises in animal research. Currently the BPRC are working to help develop drugs and vaccines to combat the Covid-19 pandemic using monkeys. On its website [it explains](#) why it is necessary to use monkeys for Covid-19 research, and the procedures that they go through. BPRC's research goes well beyond Covid-19 and in each case there are clear explanations of how and why monkeys are used, providing extensive public information.

[Imperial College London](#), UK

Imperial College London demonstrates how a research institute with many different non-animal related research themes can still provide extensive information on animal research. One of the features of the website is a [Frequently Asked Questions](#) section which addresses why animals are used, ethical questions, and why the number of animals used at the university are increasing.

[Maastricht University \(UM\)](#), Netherlands

UM's laboratory animal research and BioMedical Centre (BMC) page contains extensive information on animal research, including statistics on the types of animals used and detailed explanations of the animal welfare requirements. There is an excellent segment containing several interviews with researchers from UM, which highlights the importance of the use of animals in its research, [for example](#) Professor Jos Prickaerts work searching for an 'Alzheimer's pill'.

Overall summary

In terms of the openness and transparency of institutional websites, the biomedical sector in the EU is moving in the right direction, with results improving from the 2018 website study with 931 out of 1,065 websites now containing at least some information on how animals are used in research.

All assessment categories showed an increase from 2018, most notably the proportion of websites which featured animal research prominently doubled, suggesting that institutions are now much more prepared to make information on animal research available to the public.

Assessment categories	2018	2020	% point change
Statement on animal research	44%	59%	+15
'More information'	53%	77%	+24
Prominence of animal research	28%	56%	+28
Images of animal research	36%	42%	+5
Case studies	49%	68%	+19
'Extensive information'	23%	31%	+8

Table 2: Comparisons with previous EARA website survey

However, looking at the results in more detail shows there are still large areas for improvement. Too often the information available on websites is only indirectly addressing animal research. For a curious member of the public this means that the vast majority of websites still do not present information in a clear and straightforward way that is also easily accessible.

EARA believes that overall, the sector remains at an unsatisfactory level of openness and transparency in animal research, and that many institutions need to directly address the flaws and omissions in their website content.

On a more positive note, there are opportunities for some simple solutions to improve engagement with the public on the benefits and necessity of animal research. There are now many excellent benchmark examples of websites from institutions across the EU available for the sector to follow, as identified both in this report (for example from this survey we have identified 240 institutions which meet all six assessment categories), the 2018 website study report, and the [EARA Communications Handbook](#) (see Assistance from EARA below).

Transparency agreements

Inspired by the UK Concordat on Openness on Animal Research, other European transparency agreements (TAs) contain four commitments for institutions to provide more information about animal research. These commitments call for institutions to speak with clarity on their use of animals for research and provide adequate information for both the public and the media. In addition, they ask the institutions to work towards developing initiatives that generate greater knowledge and understanding of animal research.

Transparency agreements (TAs) on animal research exist in Belgium, Portugal, Spain and the UK, and in total include 297 institutions from both the private and public biomedical community. In every assessment category, TA institutions show greater openness and transparency on animal research than those institutions not in a TA (see Table 3). In particular, TA institutions have significantly better results in two categories – Statement on animal research and Extensive information.

Assessment categories	EU institutions outside transparency agreements (768)	EU institutions within transparency agreements (297)
Statement on animal research	47%	89%
'More information'	74%	83%
Prominence of animal research	53%	65%
Images of animal research	39%	47%
Case studies	66%	70%
'Extensive information'	24%	48%

Table 3: Comparison of institutions within and outside transparency agreements

A major success of TAs has been in increasing the number of institutions that have a recognisable statement on animal research, evident as the three best performing countries for statements (UK, Spain, and Belgium), all have TAs in place. Although Portugal had a less than average representation of statements (51%), signatories of TAs still only make up 18 of the 51 institutions assessed, and 72% of the Portuguese institutions who are part of the TAs did in fact present statements.

Moving forward

Assistance from EARA

The evidence from this report clearly shows that the biomedical sector is moving in the right direction on openness and transparency, and EARA is in a unique position to assist institutions in the EU with the process of improving the content of their websites. The EARA website study is a useful tool to measure this progress and we will continue to produce these reports in the future, to assess the quality of content provided by institutions. We hope to continue with our collaboration with the European Commission and the National Contact Points in this task.

As shown in the study, signatories of transparency agreements (in Belgium, Portugal, Spain and the UK) have a significantly higher proportion of institutions whose websites are open about their involvement with animal research. Working in collaboration with national bodies for the life sciences, one of EARA's strategic priorities is to continue to develop these national agreements. Our experience is that they have been a successful launchpad for greater efforts to produce useful information for the public about research at individual institutions, have seen a greater commitment by institutions to be more open and also enable the sector to speak clearly, and with one voice, on ethical issues.

Membership of EARA also allows individual institutions, both private and public, to receive greater assistance and advice on the production of materials and online content and as part of the follow-up to this study, each EARA member will receive a detailed assessment of their institution's website. We will also give feedback to those respondents to the EARA online survey who asked for further assistance with developing their online content. As part of our outreach work, we will continue to

hold workshops across Europe, presenting data from this report and presenting the national picture and the progress being made, or lack of it. Advice will also be given on how to improve case studies and the layout and accessibility of websites.

EARA is experienced and proactive in providing an advisory role in the development of images and videos and we can also assist members in arranging for the production of laboratory virtual tour videos and other web content to make an institution more accessible to the public. Ongoing updates of EARA's Communications Handbook are also part of this process to take into account the good practice in communications. The Handbook is free to EARA members and contains advice about developing and expanding a communications strategy, particularly with regards to an organisation's online presence. It distils the experience of years of working with the sector, in activities that range from briefing employees on the use of animals for research in an institution, through to the full-blown crisis management needed to respond to the actions of activists.

Another aspect of EARA's drive to improve openness in Europe has been to hold workshops about effective science communication on animal research. In 2020/2021 there are plans for workshops on Improving Openness in Animal Research in five countries (Belgium, Greece, Hungary, Italy and Israel) supported by the Federation of European Neuroscience Societies and the Society for Neuroscience, which will bring together communications experts from across the biomedical sector. A series of instructional webinars will also be made available.

At the EU level, other openness initiatives that EARA has conducted since the last website study report include, an EARA working group submission to the EU Commission on suggested [guidance advice](#) on how institutions can improve their non-technical summary (NTS) information to make it more accessible to the general public. In February 2020, EARA also produced a large amount of [online content](#) to publicise the Commission's statistical reports on the use of animals in research. The positive public reaction to this information showed that this type of statistical information is filling a gap that has previously existed.

EARA will also continue to work with the Commission and national authorities to discuss ways to encourage institutions to add a recognisable statement on animal research to their website as a priority and for each institution to publish its own annual statistics on animal use.

Methodology

Identifying websites

It is our understanding that all institutions featured in the 2020 study either conduct animal research, or support it, for example through funding, breeding of animals, providing equipment to keep animals, or advocacy. However, there are no official public lists of all the institutions in Europe which are associated with research using animals, hence this study is not yet an exhaustive list of all relevant institutions that conduct animal research in Europe, or those who may fund research using animals.

As with the 2018 study, the EU Commission has made a valuable contribution by circulating an EARA online survey to all EU Competent Authorities and requesting that this be distributed to all relevant institutions involved with animal research. The survey also helped identify institutions that did not feature in the 2018 study, for example an additional 21 institutions in Poland.

All websites identified from the 2018 website study were reassessed, with additional websites identified from the EU survey, [EARA's interactive map](#) of research using animals to combat Covid-19, and other sources.

Website search technique

The website search technique applied was done to mimic a curious member of the public trying to find out about that institution's involvement with animal research. The following steps were taken:

1. Begin from the institution's homepage.
2. Search through the website without using a search bar to attempt to navigate to information on animal research.
3. If a search bar is present, search for the following terms in both English and the national language, where appropriate, of that institution's country of residence:
 - Animal
 - Animal testing
 - Animal research
 - Animal experimentation
 - Animal Welfare
 - 3Rs
 - *In vivo*
 - Mice, mouse, murine, rats, primate, monkey, zebrafish
4. Finish search after 10 minutes
 - Note that this means even if information on animal research is present, if it cannot be found in this time period it is marked as absent.

Data analysis

Results for each of the categories were calculated as percentages to the nearest whole number for the EU as a whole. Only countries with more than 15 websites (see Appendix 1) assessed at the country level are cited as examples in this report.

In the 2018 study, 1,219 websites were initially analysed, but only 893 were shown to be associated with animal research and these were the websites that were assessed and included in the results. This is why despite the number analysed being greater in 2018, the number *contributing* to the results (1,065) is greater in 2020.

When making comparisons with the 2018 study, we only included institutions that were assessed in the 2018 study for fair comparison. However, the additional 172 websites not in the 2018 study make less than 1% difference to the final results for the 2020 study whether included or not.

A degree of caution must be taken when comparing these results. In each study the data was collected by a single person, and their ability to find the information within the 10-minute time period likely varied. Nonetheless, the difference between the assessors is unlikely to account entirely for any significant changes, hence EARA is confident in saying that there appears to be a genuine improvement in transparency across Europe.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Number of websites assessed for the 2020 study by country

Austria	28
Belgium	51
Bulgaria	2
Croatia	13
Czechia	16
Denmark	27
Estonia	2
Finland	10
France	150
Germany	123
Greece	7
Hungary	7
Ireland	8
Italy	61
Latvia	6
Lithuania	2
Luxembourg	3
Malta	1
Netherlands	77
Poland	27
Portugal	51
Slovakia	9
Slovenia	10
Spain	180
Sweden	25
UK	159
Romania	10
Cyprus	0
Total	1065

Appendix 2: By country results for the assessment categories

Country	Statement (%)	More information (%)	Extensive information (%)	Case study (%)	Images (%)	Prominence (%)
Austria	39	75	29	82	36	50
Belgium	71	86	47	75	53	67
Bulgaria	50	100	50	100	0	50
Croatia	38	92	23	69	46	46
Czechia	50	75	19	69	44	50
Denmark	48	78	22	70	44	63
Estonia	0	100	0	100	100	100
Finland	70	90	40	90	40	60
France	42	75	19	67	50	54
Germany	51	81	30	68	38	57
Greece	71	86	14	29	57	29
Hungary	29	86	43	86	29	86
Ireland	63	88	25	88	25	63
Italy	43	62	20	64	26	57
Latvia	50	67	17	67	50	67
Lithuania	0	50	0	50	0	0
Luxembourg	100	100	100	100	67	100
Malta	0	100	0	0	0	100
Netherlands	39	68	26	65	31	52
Poland	44	70	26	59	37	44
Portugal	51	84	27	71	41	51
Slovakia	67	100	11	44	44	67
Slovenia	30	90	10	70	40	40
Spain	81	77	28	59	36	54
Sweden	44	80	40	76	52	64
UK	89	76	57	72	49	63
Romania	40	90	20	40	40	30

END