



European Animal  
Research Association



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dierproeven

# Transparency Agreement on Animal Research in the Netherlands

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ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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STICHTING INFORMATIE DIERPROEVEN & EUROPEAN ANIMAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION |

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## Table of contents

About the Transparency Agreement .....	2
Responses to the survey by commitment.....	3
Commitment 1: We will be clear about when, how, and why we use animals in research. ....	3
Commitment 2: We will enhance our communications with the media and the public about our research using animals.....	6
Commitment 3: We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals.....	7
About management of the Transparency Agreement .....	8
Overview of activities/events/accomplishments of 2022 .....	9
Signatory meetings .....	9
Article in VAP Visie Analyse.....	10
Open Week .....	10
FELASA conference, Marseille.....	10
Be Open about Animal Research Day (#BOARD22) .....	10
Nieuwsuur .....	10
Conclusions.....	11
Summary of the results.....	11
Outlook and goals 2023 and beyond.....	13
Attachment 1: statements about Transparency Agreement.....	14
Attachment 2: statements on animal testing .....	15

## About the Transparency Agreement

The Transparency Agreement on Animal Research in the Netherlands was launched on 2 November 2021, with 15 signatories.

At the end of 2022 there were a total of 20 signatories: Amsterdam UMC, Biomedical Primate Research Centre, Charles River Laboratories Den Bosch B.V., Envigo RMS B.V., Erasmus Universitair Medisch Centrum, Herseninstituut, Hubrecht Institute, Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen, Universiteit Leiden, Leiden Universitair Medisch Centrum, Nederlands Instituut voor ecologie, Nederlands Kanker Instituut, Radboudumc, Radboud Universiteit, Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, TNO, Universiteit Maastricht, Vereniging Sportvisserij Nederland, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam and Wageningen University & Research.



By signing the Transparency Agreement, the signatories commit to the following:

1. We will be clear about when, how, and why we use animals in research.
2. We will enhance our communication with the media and the public about our research in the Netherlands.
3. We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals and the regulations that govern it.
4. We will report on progress annually and share our experiences.

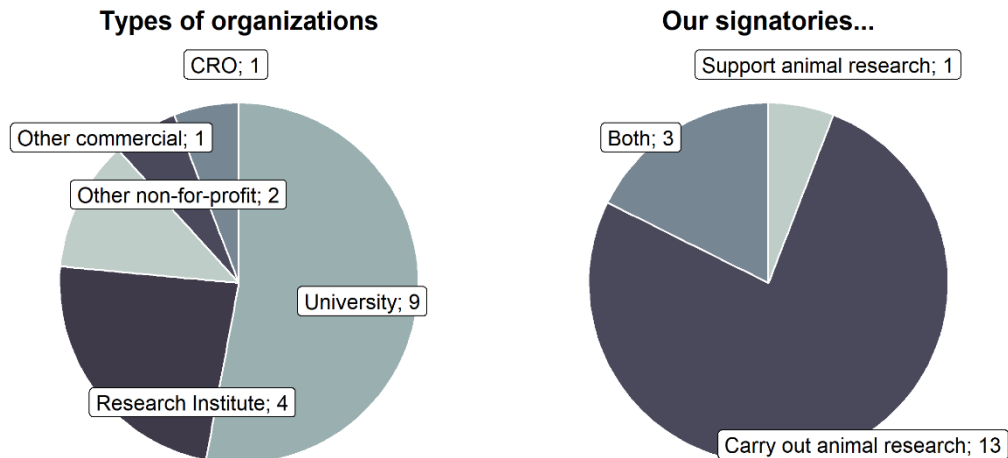
The Transparency Agreement was written by a steering group consisting of representatives of the first signatories and was inspired by progress in other European countries (the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal and Belgium) which have similar agreements in place. This was done with support from the [European Animal Research Association](#) (EARA) and the [Stichting Informatie Dierproeven](#) (SID). Since the launch of the agreement, SID is, with support of EARA, taking a coordinating role in the agreement as an initiative and network by distributing relevant information, organising meetings, and facilitating the common initiatives/events.

At the end of 2022, a survey was conducted with the signatories. The purpose of this survey is to determine the level of openness and transparency of our signatories and to measure our progress since the launch of the Agreement. The summarised results, as part of this year's report, will be made public.

The results of this survey will also be used to start the discussion on what to work on within the Transparency Agreement in the coming years.

The survey was sent out to the signatories in December 2022 and answers were collected throughout December 2022 and January 2023. All signatories responded to the survey, resulting in answers from seventeen organisations. The Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen (KNAW) acts as an umbrella organisation and answered on behalf of itself as well as its three member-organisations (Herseninstituut, Hubrecht Institute and Nederlands Instituut voor ecologie).

The answers to this survey concern activities at the signatory institutions within the calendar year 2022.



All signatories are involved in animal research, sixteen of which carry out animal experiments, while four institutions support animal research indirectly. Most signatories are public research bodies (universities, research institutes).

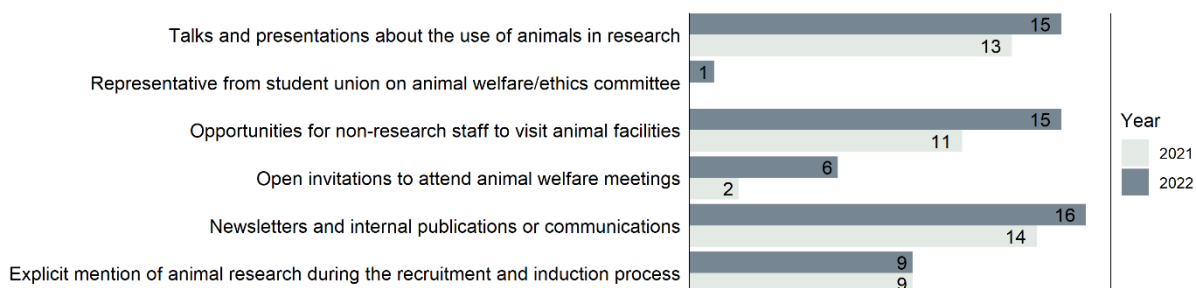
## Responses to the survey by commitment

### Commitment 1: We will be clear about when, how, and why we use animals in research.

The purpose of the first commitment is to ensure all signatories acknowledge their involvement in animal research within their organisation and towards the outside world. Communication serving this purpose should always be transparent and realistic about the use as well as the limitations of the relevant animal experiments.

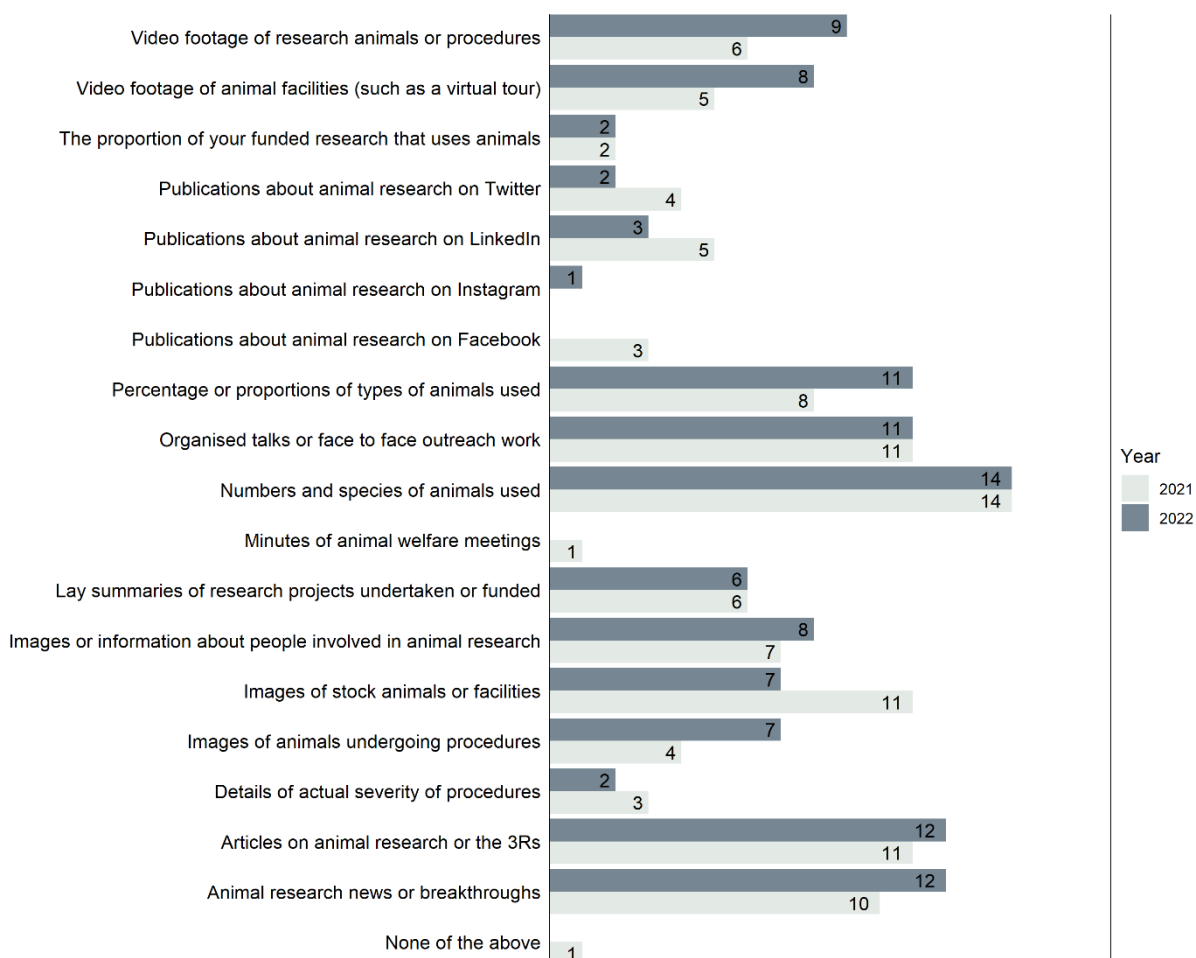
Most signatories have already created opportunities for their staff to learn about the animal research they are involved in before the launch of the Agreement and after the first year, we have seen a further improvement. Almost all signatories communicate about animal research in their internal written communication and provide opportunities for staff to visit the facilities. Also, the animal welfare meetings in several institution have become more accessible to staff and students who are not directly involved in animal research themselves.

**Do you make your use of/support of animal research clear to researchers, staff or students, beyond those who work directly with animals, through any of the following?**



There are many ways of communicating animal research externally. Popular activities remain reporting the institutions statistics on animal use, reporting news on animal research, as well as giving talks and publishing articles on animal research and/or the 3Rs (the replacement, reduction, or refinement of the use of animals in research). A clear positive trend is the increased use of images and video footage of research animals, including animals undergoing procedures, which can help the general public who do not automatically have a good picture of what animal research actually looks like. Still, various signatories make use of social media, though its popularity seems to have decreased. Lastly, details around the severity of procedures are rarely made public.

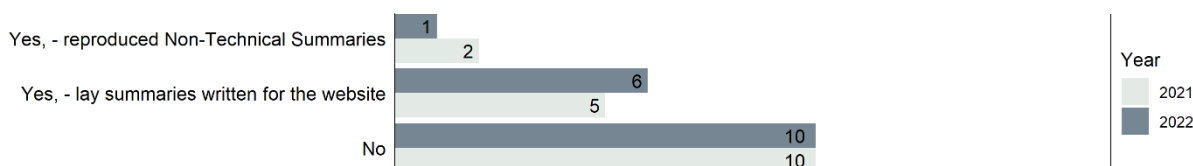
**Please indicate whether you proactively provide the following information to the public.**



Non-technical summaries (NTS) can be used to inform those interested in what types of research is going on in an organisation. In the Netherlands, it is mandatory to publish the non-technical summary as part of all project license applications, which is done on the [website](#) of the Central Commission for

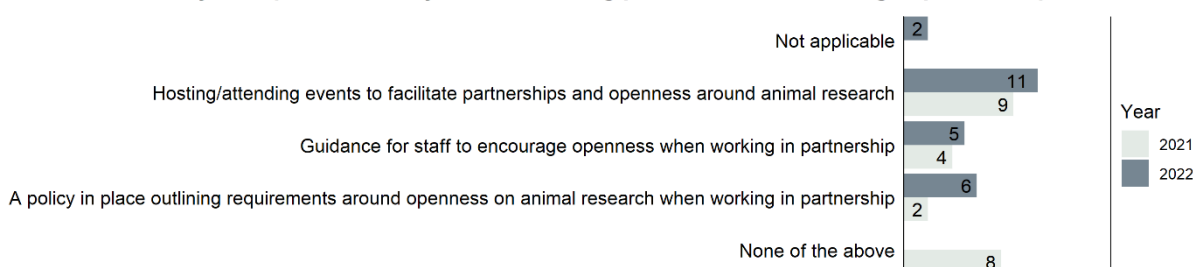
Animal Research (Centrale Commissie Dierproeven, CCD). Before the launch of the agreement, some institutions published such research summaries, either the NTS from the project license application or a newly written one, on their own website as well and this number has remained stable one year in.

**Please indicate whether you included research summaries on your website.**



The signatories clearly had more attention for openness around animal research in collaborations in 2022. We see an improvement in policies that define requirements for openness when working in partnership, with six signatories now having such a policy in place.

**Have you implemented any of the following practices when working in partnership?**



It is important to have a strategy in place to answer questions about animal research, both for internal and external questions. All signatories report to aim to answer every single question to the best they can. They approach this in various ways, though there is also much overlap among signatories. This year, signatories provided more detail in their reported strategies for both internal and external communication, indicating it has been higher on the agenda for at least some signatories in 2022.

Reported strategies to deal with internal questions:

- Internal questions are most often answered by the Animal Welfare Body.
- Encouraging staff to talk about their work with animals within the institute.
- Having a general email address/letter box to send questions to.
- Having an open-door policy (works especially well for the smaller institutes).
- Staff are welcome to visit animal facilities.

Reported strategies to deal with external questions:

- Having a general email address to send questions to.
- Having questions sent to the press office/communication department first and then, if needed, having them forwarded to the staff member with the right expertise.
- Pro-actively providing information on the own website (general information, video-based information, non-technical summaries).
- Encouraging staff to talk about animal research when they present their research for the public or social media.
- Being responsive to the media/politicians/stakeholders.
- Inviting people with questions to visit the facilities.

Most signatories report optimism about the further implementation of the first commitment (acknowledging involvement in animal research internally and externally). However, openness and

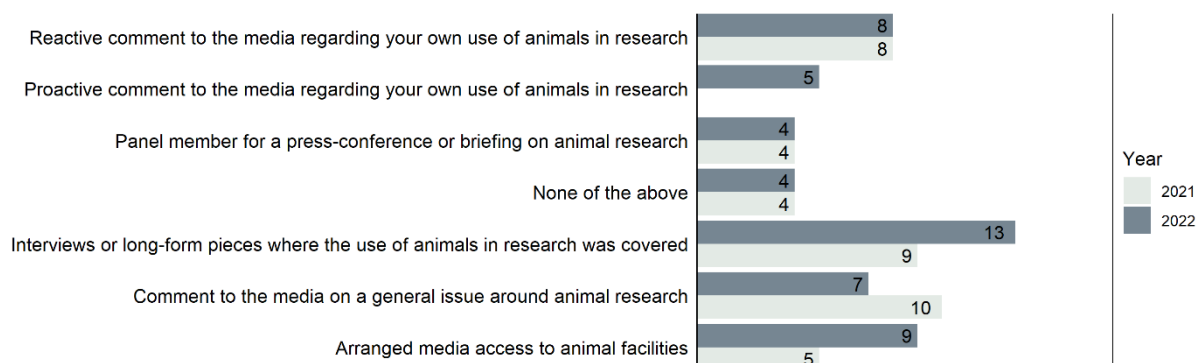
transparency always meet at least some barriers. The (potential) barriers that the signatories collectively report include:

- Time/staff/capacity constraints for communication or implementing strategies (four signatories).
- Confidentiality towards collaboration partners or customers (one signatory).
- Researchers can be hesitant to openly communicate about animal research (one signatory).
- An increase in activity from activists in response to increased openness and transparency (one signatory).

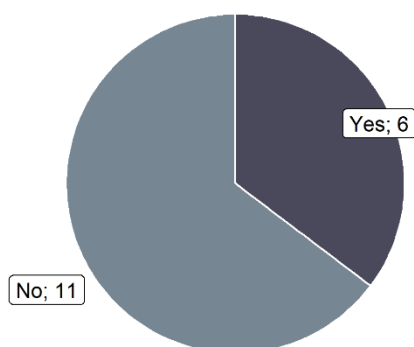
## Commitment 2: We will enhance our communications with the media and the public about our research using animals.

The purpose of the second commitment is to ensure that relevant information about the use of animals is accessible for the public. Compared to the year before, signatories have engaged with the media more often. As many as thirteen signatories did an interview or long-form piece in which the use of animals in research was covered. Strikingly, whereas previously no signatory reported a proactive comment to the media about their own use of animals, five institutions report to have done so in 2022. Also, the number of signatories that granted the media access to their facilities went up from five to nine. No single signatory refused to engage with the media, but four signatories also did not actively seek it either. Last year, six signatories provided media training to staff, a slight drop compared to the year before (eight signatories).

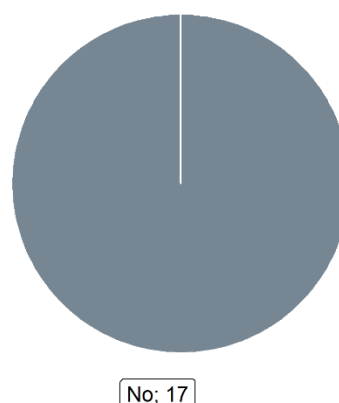
### Have your organisation, researchers or staff provided any of the following in the last year?



### Do you provide media training to staff who wish to engage with the media on animal research?



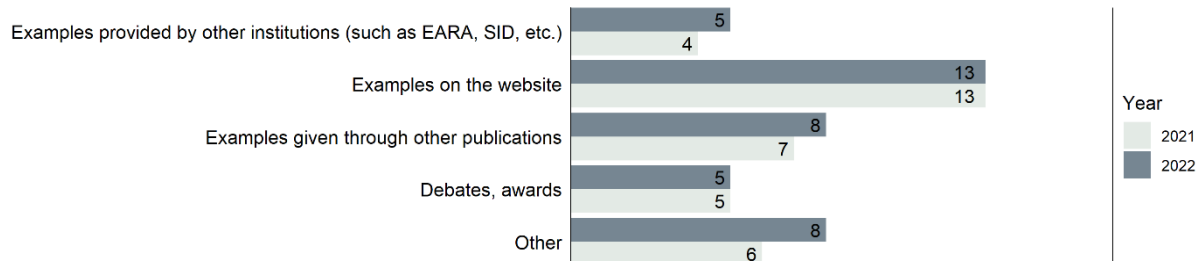
### Did your organisation refuse to engage with the media about animal research?





Information about the 3Rs and their implementation at the signatories' institutes is communicated primarily through the institution's website, a trend that has largely stayed stable since the launch of the Agreement. The 3Rs are preferably explained and displayed in examples on the institute's websites or in other places. Some institutes hold debates or hand out awards related to the 3Rs.

#### How did your organisation promote the communication about the 3Rs?



One of the requirements of the Agreement is that the signatory organisations have a statement on the use of animals in research on a publicly accessible website. This is an important first step towards more openness and taking accountability towards the work with animals that takes place at or is supported by the signatories.

#### Does your organisation have a statement on the use of animals in research on a publicly available website?



Whereas at the launch of the Agreement, some signatories were still working on a statement, one year later, they have redeemed their promise, leading to all signatories having a statement on the use of

animals in research on their website. The weblinks to all statements can be found in [attachment 2](#).

Most signatories express optimism, also regarding the second commitment (engagement with the media and public) and do not report seeing difficult barriers to implement this commitment. The (potential) barriers that they collectively report include:

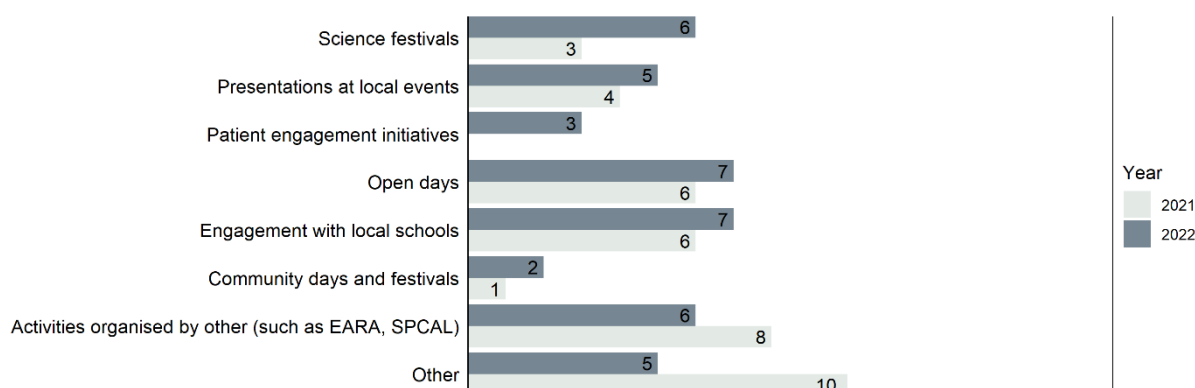
- Time/staff/capacity constraints (six signatories).
- The media is not always as interested in positive news stories around animals in research (one signatory).
- Animal facilities that are not very suitable for on-site visits (one signatory).
- An increase in activity from activists in response to increased openness and transparency (one signatory).

### Commitment 3: We will be proactive in providing opportunities for the public to find out about research using animals.

The purpose of the third commitment is to start and encourage the public debate in the Netherlands. Building on the first two commitments, the third is about more interactive activities. The number of signatories participating in these activities has not changed much, though more institutions took part in science festivals and three signatories took part in patient engagement initiatives, whereas the year before, no single institution reported this activity.



### Did you institution talk about or discuss animal research when participating in the following popular activities?



Many signatories allowed visits to their animal facilities, mostly from students or staff from other institutions and to a lesser extent to special interest groups. Part of the visits for politicians, parliamentarians, and MEPs as well as the open doors days that the signatories reported was part of the Agreement's first Open Week on animal research. This was a combined effort between multiple signatories, which also received attention in the media (more information on the Open Week can be found on page 10). Only one signatory said they did not provide access to their facilities and no signatory turned down a visit to their facilities.

### Have you provided access to your animal facilities to visitors from outside your organisation?



As for the first and second commitment, the signatories are positive about the implementation of the third commitment (to encourage the public debate). Although some (potential) barriers that they collectively reported include:

- Time/staff/capacity constraints (four signatories).
- On-site visits require careful planning in terms of logistics and safety (two signatories).
- The health status of the animal facilities makes on-site visits impossible (one signatory).
- An increase in activity from activists in response to increased openness and transparency (one signatory).

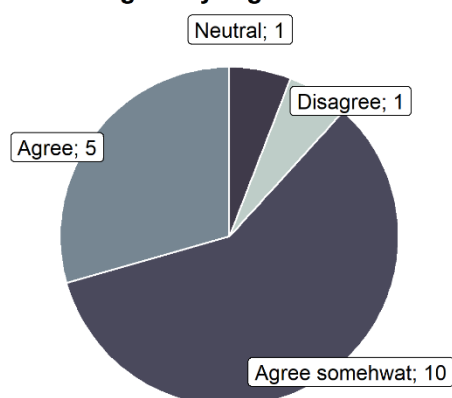
## About management of the Transparency Agreement

Overall, the signatories agree that the Transparency Agreement is an important step forward for the biomedical community in the Netherlands and that the Agreement will lead to changes in signatory organisations. Most signatories are confident that they will be able to meet the Agreement's conditions.

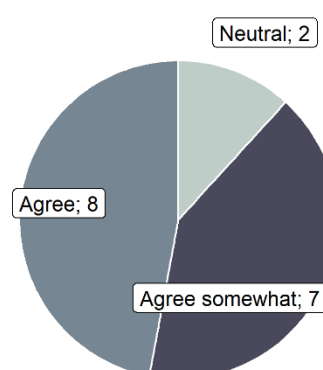
In the survey, we also ask the signatories for suggestions on how the Agreement could be improved. Their suggestions include:

- Expand the Transparency Agreement in terms of signatory numbers with a bigger variety across different fields (e.g., animal husbandry, agricultural, veterinary research) to show the importance of animal research across sectors, not just the biomedical sector.
- Expand the Transparency Agreement to include the bigger institutions who have progressed far with openness and transparency as well.
- Create more structure in the organisation of the Transparency Agreement with a central point that is aware of initiatives going on among signatories and that can stimulate collaboration between signatories.
- A more active role for SID in terms of content creating/sharing related to the Transparency Agreement.
- A yearly event on animal research to increase the visibility of the Transparency Agreement.

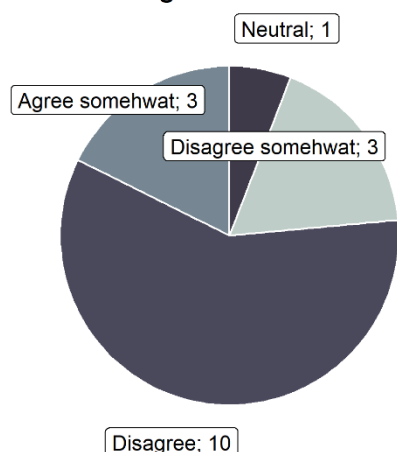
**The agreement is likely to lead to real changes in signatory organisations**



**The transparency agreement is an important step forward for biomedical research in The Netherlands.**



**I am worried that my organisation will not be able to meet the agreement commitments.**



## Overview of activities/events/accomplishments of 2022

### Signatory meetings

In 2022, we organised two signatory meetings with presentations on topics related to the Agreement and communicating (animal) research and with open discussions on these topics.

The first meeting took place online on 26 January. We looked back on the launch of the Agreement and looked forward to events planned for the rest of the year and the plans we had with the Agreement. Bob Tolliday (EARA communications manager) gave a presentation: *How to make your website more open and transparent about the use of animals in research*.

The second meeting took place in Nijmegen on 9 May. In this meeting, we left plenty of time in the schedule for open discussions between the representatives of the signatories and discussed for example how one can respond to protests against animal research and what a proactive media policy could look like.

### Article in VAP Visie Analyse

After the launch of the Transparency Agreement on 2 November, 2021, VAPvisie Analyse (now called AnalyseVisie, a magazine for biomedical laboratory analysts) invited us to write an article about the transition to animal-free research and the launch of the Transparency Agreement. This resulted in a 4-page cover story, which can be read here:

<https://www.stichtinginformatiedierproeven.nl/nieuws/transitie-naar-proefdiervrij-nederland/>.

### Open Week

In May of 2022, an [Open Week](#) was introduced. In the week from 9-13 May, signatories organized (online) events to discuss animal experiments. The following organisations participated:

- Radboudumc
- Radboud University
- Charles River Laboratories
- Sportvisserij Nederland
- Biomedical Primate Research Centre

More information about the events can be found in Dutch on the [website of SID](#). The Open Week resulted in eight publications. Here are some examples from [Omroep West](#) and [Omroep Brabant](#).

### FELASA conference, Marseille

To promote Transparency Agreements internationally among researchers, EARA organised a session, at the FELASA conference, in Marseille, about how to set up, maintain and grow a Transparency Agreement. Co-ordinators from Agreements in six different countries, including the Netherlands, took part in a panel discussion, moderated by Kirk Leech, EARA Executive Director.

### Be Open about Animal Research Day (#BOARD22)

In June, EARA co-ordinated the second Be Open about Animal Research Day – [Get on #BOARD22](#), a 24-hour global social media campaign to celebrate proactive communication about the use of animals in research.

Seven signatories officially supported the initiative and re-shared their previously created content on the day. The Netherlands Cancer Institute participated with [a video](#) showing the lab facilities, including interviews with staff as well as procedures with animals. Charles River's Wilbert Frieling did [an interview](#) with Eureka, Charles Rivers' science blog, about animal research and his job.

### Nieuwsuur

TV news show "Nieuwsuur" approached all 81 organisations with a license to perform animal research, including all signatories to the Agreement, with a small survey about the current state of animal-free research in the context of replacing animal research. Two signatories contributed to the eight-minute-long item broadcast on Sunday 17 July during prime-time - the Biomedical Primate Research Centre in Rijswijk and the Netherlands Cancer Institute. In the item, procedures with primates and mice were

shown, as well as their housing facilities. It included interviews with Jan Langermans (directeur Biomedical Primate Research Centre), Marieke van de Ven (Hoofd Mouse Clinic Antonie van Leeuwenhoek), Saskia Aan (Wetenschappelijk adviseur Stichting Proefdiervrij) and Henk Smid (Nationaal Comité advies dierproevenbeleid). The Nieuwsuur episode can be found at: [https://www.npostart.nl/nieuwsuur/17-07-2022/VPWON\\_1334592](https://www.npostart.nl/nieuwsuur/17-07-2022/VPWON_1334592) (item starting at 8.25).

## Conclusions

With our first year of Transparency Agreement behind us, there is much to reflect on with the coming years in mind. Though we did not have the resources we hoped we would have in 2022, with the help of motivated signatory organisations, we can report progress among the signatories to be open and transparent about animal research.

### Summary of the results

Though the Transparency Agreement does not set extensive and strict requirements to its signatories (due to the variety among signatories, a one-size-fits-all-type of concept would simply not be realistic), one requirement to be part of the Agreement is to have a statement online that talks about the signatory's involvement in animal research and what the signatory's position on that.

2022 goal: All signatories have a statement on their website ✓

Most signatories already had such a statement on their website prior to launching the Agreement, but also the remaining organisations now have their statement online. Each statement can be found in attachment 2.

Overall, we can conclude that more signatories have taken opportunities to show or talk about animal research in 2022. More signatories report that they communicate about animal research internally to staff that are not directly involved, by giving presentations or organising visits to the facilities.

More signatories have participated in popular science events, have made use of images and/or video footage of laboratory animals in their facilities and have had contact with the media. Especially nice to report is that multiple signatories have proactively commented to the media about animal research, whereas none of the signatories reported on this previously. Also, the increased use of footage of laboratory animals at the signatories own facilities as opposed to the use of irrelevant, generic stock images, will help the public understand what animal research is about. The number of signatories reporting their animal statistics and documents such as non-technical summaries remained the same; seven signatories report to publish these.

Currently, the Transparency Agreement has mostly public research institutions and solely organisations that directly work with laboratory animals, mostly in the biomedical research sector. However, there are many different types of organisations that are involved, or depend, on animal research in different ways, for example funding of animal research or animal research for the benefit of the environment or animals themselves. To be able to collectively communicate the importance of animal research across all fields and sectors, our goal is to recruit more of those organisations to whom animal research is important.

2022 goal: recruit more signatories ✗

Unfortunately, in 2022 we did not welcome any new signatories. This is explained in part by a lack of funding. We were awaiting a subsidy from the Netherlands government to contract a central co-ordinator, who will recruit new signatories. Once this subsidy is received, we will kick-off the outreach to potential new signatories. This is a priority for 2023.

In conjunction with growing the Transparency Agreement and gaining new signatories, we want to promote the Agreement and raise awareness in the Netherlands that, collectively, we have the ambition to be as open and transparent as possible around animal research.

### 2022 goal: create awareness around the Transparency Agreement

In general, we use the SID website as well as the SID and EARA Twitter accounts to report on the Transparency Agreement. The SID website has been renewed and updated in 2022. There is now a dedicated page for the [Transparency Agreement](#). The Twitter accounts are mostly used to report on research news from signatory, as well as non-signatory, institutions in the Netherlands and abroad, but are also used to spread the word when there is specific news around the Transparency Agreement (e.g., new signatories, events taking place). Apart from those channels, there have been different opportunities to publicise the Agreement further, like the article in VAP Visie Analyse and the session at the FELASA conference in Marseille, as explained on page 10).

An ambition stated by signatories, in discussions at the start of the Agreement, is to share best practices on communication among signatories on a more regular basis. This way, signatories can learn from each other's experiences and grow into implementing openness and transparency in their daily practices.

### 2022 goal: regularly share best practices among signatories

We planned to accomplish this by bringing together the representatives of all signatories three times per year; once on-site and twice online. In these meetings, we plan time for open discussions on a predefined topic related to communicating animal research. Both researchers and communication specialists take part, and feedback has shown this has been valuable for both. In 2022, we held one online and one on-site meeting, where almost all signatories were represented, and discussions were active and fruitful.

A relatively easy way to communicate more frequently about animal research is to put more stories out of successes, but something that was repeatedly mentioned in discussions among signatories is that context is frequently neglected in research stories. The ultimate goal is to go a step further and not only talk about "cool science", but about the relevance and the actual implications without overselling results from a single study.

### 2022 goal: focus on context in communicating animal research

Some of the examples explained on pages 9-10 are good examples of placing the science in the right context. Some signatories were contacted by Nieuwsuur (TV show) with questions regarding animal research and alternative methods. All signatories were informed about this request and together formulated answers to the questions from the journalist and had the greater picture of transparency in mind, which was reflected in the item.

The Nieuwsuur episode also contains interviews with researchers who explained more about the daily reality of doing research with animals, how the animals are taken care off, what rules, regulations and procedures come with that to ensure the animal's wellbeing. They also explained more about what is possible and what is not yet possible in terms of animal-free research. Then, the interview with the NCaD gave more insight into the role of funding and the government in animal research. Another event where we made the link to the government and politics was in the Open Week, where signatories invited not only researchers and journalists, but also politicians to visit their facilities and have discussions about the use of animals in research.

Overall, we have been seeing progress in terms of communicating animal research, both internally and externally. However, something that multiple signatories report as a potential brake on communicating animal research is a lack of time/staff to do the actual communicating. Often there is the motivation to start and execute initiatives, but constraints in manpower prevents the ball from continuing to roll. Secondly, one signatory reports that when they communicate more (openly) about their role in animal research, they see an increase in activity from activist groups towards them. Overall, the majority of signatories believes the Agreement is an important step forward for the biomedical sector and that it will lead to changes within their organisation.

## Outlook and goals 2023

As mentioned before, so far SID does not have the resources to assign someone to co-ordinate the Transparency Agreement, which slowed down our progress. However, SID applied for a subsidy from the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in November 2021. In 2022, SID had to provide some extra information and detail. At the end of 2022 we received positive news from the ministry and our grant application was granted. The subsidy is expected in Q2 of 2023. This means we can hire Monique Havermans, who will dedicate eight hours per week to co-ordinating the Agreement and moving it forward.

With more time on our hands, one of the priorities is to recruit more signatories to the Agreement, including more institutions that do animal research of a different type or for different purposes than most of our current signatories. This way, we hope to better represent animal research across the spectrum and make the less known animal studies better visible.

Another priority is to streamline communication between signatories and SID as the central point, as well as between the signatories. SID should be aware of what is going on in all signatory organisations, which will help with connecting the right signatories for sharing experiences and finding support if needed. In addition, SID as the central point can take the initiative for collective communication efforts if there is the need, which signatories can then join in on.

In 2022, we organised our first Open Week, which is an initiative of which we hope we can make it grow bigger over the next years. We will be looking for interested institutions for a potential new edition in Q3 this year.

This report was made by:

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Melanie Kant (SID) [info@informatiedierproeven.nl](mailto:info@informatiedierproeven.nl)

Questions? Please reach out to Monique Havermans and Melanie Kant.

More information about the Transparency Agreement can be found on a [dedicated page](#) on the website of SID.



## Attachment 1: statements about Transparency Agreement

Amsterdam UMC:

<https://www.amsterdamumc.org/nl/vandaag/amsterdam-umc-tekent-voor-transparantie-in-proefdieronderzoek.htm>

Biomedical Primate Research Centre:

<https://www.bprc.nl/nl/blog/lancering-transparantieovereenkomst>

Envigo RMS B.V.:

<https://www.inotivco.com/concordat-on-openness>

Erasmus Universitair Medisch Centrum:

<https://amazingerasmusmc.nl/biomedisch/transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven-gelanceerd/>

Herseninstituut:

<https://herseninstituut.nl/nieuws/lancering-transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven/>

Hubrecht Institute:

<https://www.hubrecht.eu/nl/maatschappij/transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven/>

Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen:

<https://www.knaw.nl/nieuws/lancering-transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven>

Leiden Universitair Medisch Centrum:

<https://www.lumc.nl/over-het-lumc/het-lumc/maatschappelijk-verantwoord-ondernemen/dierproeven-verantwoord/verantwoording-en-documentatie/>

Nederlands Kanker Instituut:

<https://www.nki.nl/news-events/news/dutch-institutions-sign-transparency-agreement-about-their-research-using-animals/>

Radboudumc:

<https://www.radboudumc.nl/nieuws/2021/lancering-transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven>

Radboud Universiteit:

<https://www.ru.nl/over-ons/nieuws/lancering-transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven>

TNO:

<https://www.tno.nl/nl/over-tno/maatschappij/dierproevenbeleid/>

Universiteit Maastricht:

<https://www.maastrichtuniversity.nl/nl/nieuws/lancering-transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven>

Wageningen University & Research:

<https://www.wur.nl/nl/onderzoek-resultaten/onderzoeksinstituten/livestock-research/show-wlr-wur-ondertekent-transparantieovereenkomst-dierproeven.htm>



## Attachment 2: statements on animal testing

Amsterdam UMC:

<https://www.amsterdamumc.org/nl/proefdieren.htm>

Biomedical Primate Research Centre:

<https://www.bprc.nl/vragen-antwoorden-bprc#overproefdierbeleid>

Charles River Laboratories Den Bosch B.V.:

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