

Transition to non-animal research. *About the possibilities for phasing out animal procedures and stimulating innovation without laboratory animals*

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World leader in innovations without laboratory animals by 2025. That is the aim of the Dutch Minister for Agriculture, Martijn van Dam. In March 2016, the Minister asked the Netherlands National Committee for the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (NCad) to draw up a schedule for the phasing out of animal procedures. In December 2016, the NCad presented its advisory report 'Transition to non-animal research - – *About the possibilities for phasing out animal procedures and stimulating innovation without laboratory animals*'.

Although there is scientific, economic and social potential for innovations without laboratory animals, according to the NCad, these are currently not being sufficiently exploited to promote and accelerate the transition process. Only with a broad-ranging and coordinated effort by the ministries involved and other stakeholders can significant progress be made in reducing the use of laboratory animals in research. In its report the NCad makes recommendations under three different themes: Clear transition objectives, Transition strategy and Management of the transition.

If we are to make the transition to non-animal research methods, we must make a paradigm shift away from existing mindsets and practices. That way, says the NCad, we can focus heavily on innovations without laboratory animals in a number of fields in the period up to 2025.

In the case of *regulatory research*, the NCad sees potential for a significant reduction in the use of laboratory animals. The use of laboratory animals in regulatory safety testing of chemicals, food ingredients, pesticides and (veterinary) medicines can be phased out by 2025, whilst maintaining the existing safety level. The same applies to the use of laboratory animals for the release of biological products, such as vaccines. At this stage, regulatory pre-clinical research cannot be phased out at the same pace.

In the field of *fundamental scientific* research, the opportunities for a substantial reduction in the use of laboratory animals vary from one field to another. The NCad recommendation to the Minister for Agriculture concerns the development of a ten-year vision for each area of fundamental scientific research (or for each cluster of disciplines) in consultation with the public and the scientific community. These visions must include clear transition objectives that are linked to the core focus of the area of research concerned. They must also give an insight into the potential of innovations without laboratory animals in these areas.

The NCad believes that, in the field of *applied and translational research*, more rapid progress can be made than is being made at the present time. There is a great deal of innovative potential that could be better exploited. In this context, the NCad advises the Minister for Agriculture to focus more heavily on innovations without laboratory animals, amongst others in the field of the development of human models for human diseases and by promoting cross-sectoral and multidisciplinary collaboration on innovation policy. That way, the Netherlands can be an international leader in the field of innovations without laboratory animals in this area of research by 2025.

The transition to non-animal research methods will not happen on its own; it will require management and focus. International collaboration involving all stakeholders is the key to success. The NCad advises the Minister for Agriculture to play a guiding role in the process, and to also involve other ministries in order to ensure that a consistent and coherent policy is developed at national level. In addition, the NCad recommends establishing an Agenda for Innovation Without Laboratory Animals, based on a joint approach by all national stakeholders. This Agenda must focus on specific objectives that are both ambitious and achievable.

This poster will give an overview of the advisory report by the NCad and the actions taken by the stakeholders ever since.

Reference

<https://www.ncadierproevenbeleid.nl/documenten/rapport/2016/12/15/ncad-opinion-transition-to-non-animal-research>