

3. Funding for animal-free research methods

According to scientists and innovators, an important reason for the sluggish transformation of research practices towards animal-free science is that very large sums of money are still flowing towards animal-based research methods. This is evidenced by the fact that more than 23 million animals were impacted by science in the EU alone in 2017. This number is unprecedentedly [high](#) due to more transparency in the reporting of data by Member States.

Many scientists have been and are putting forward [strategies](#) that describe how combinations of methods not involving the use of animals can provide the necessary data for the development and [testing](#) of new therapies by providing a complete model of [disease in humans](#). However, these same scientists have a recurrent complaint: they have limited support to continue their research.

Despite the efforts of some organisations to promote animal-free research, they are dwarfed by those of the major funders. It's a vicious circle: our long-term reliance on animal-based research has led to practices that are strongly rooted in regulation and in our social and scientific norms, [making change difficult](#).

Governments remain the major funding bodies of non-animal research in all Member States that use the highest number of animals in science, mainly through the funding of non-animal based research projects carried out by public research organisations or through the funding of 3R centres. A study carried out by Eurogroup for Animals in 2019 shows that many animal-free approaches have been developed and are commonly used by most public research institutions.

However, the use of non-animal models is still very limited compared with the animals used in these research institutions. Several private organisations also fund non-animal research, but since these organisations rely exclusively on private donations, the funds made available for the development of alternative approaches remain relatively poor. Finally, in all these countries, only a handful of private laboratories completely rely on non-animal models to conduct their research.

What does the public think?

In a [survey](#) from 2020, found that three quarters (75%) of adults in EU member states think the EU should invest more in the development of alternative methods to animal testing. An earlier [survey](#) conducted in the UK in 2018 found reached the same conclusion: 75% of respondents agreed that more investment is needed in non-animal methods.

Policy - current state of play

The European Commission has invested in research into non-animal science in its framework programmes, but it is still far from being a main priority. At the same time the EC also puts money into animal research, thus weakening a move towards humane and relevant human-based science. This investment policy is far from the innovative nature of these programmes.

The next European framework programme to fund research, Horizon Europe, will start in 2021. Although Recital 39 of the proposal for Horizon Europe states that “the use of animals in research and testing should be reduced, with a view ultimately to replacing their use”, there is no clear

commitment to change the direction from what were the lack of strategies to move towards non-animal methods in H2020, which has run for the past seven years, and Framework Programme 7 before that.

As with H2020, Horizon Europe does not foresee any monitoring and evaluation of scientific methods used in its research projects. This gap in the legislation will allow the flow of money towards animal-based research to remain as it is, without collecting any evidence of where animals continue to be used or where investment in non-animal methods is most needed. Nor will there be any information about the effectiveness of experiments that use animals. There is also no information on what the European Commission is doing about its own [commitment](#) to move towards non-animal science.

In the study carried out by Eurogroup for Animals in 2019 it became clear that in countries that use the highest number of animals in science, the major funding bodies in life sciences are public bodies. We also found that, although these bodies fund both animal and non-animal based research, a big part of the methods in the research institutions still use animals. Moreover, funding programmes do not seem to be part of a concrete strategy to move towards non-animal methods in specific areas of research, education, or testing.

Eurogroup for Animals

Eurogroup for Animals wants to make sure that Horizon Europe invests more in non-animal approaches, and restricts funding of animal-based research. To that end, Eurogroup for Animals is seeking the support of the European Commission, Members of the European Parliament, and other relevant parties to incentivise animal-free research, and provide greater challenge to the proposed use of animals in research in relevant Horizon Europe missions and projects, as well as other life sciences public funding programmes.