



2022 annual report

# French transparency Charter on the use of animals for scientific and regulatory purposes





# French transparency Charter for the use of animals for scientific and regulatory purposes



Biological and medical research aims to continuously increase scientific knowledge, to improve human and veterinary medical therapies and to enhance better protection of humans, animals and environment.

Research, either fundamental or applied, requires models to progress. It requires an integrated approach of synergic experimental methods based on data processing (*in silico*), biochemistry, cell and tissue culture (*in vitro*) and the use of living animals (*in vivo*), as well as clinical data. *In silico* and *in vitro* models are widely used, but are unable, based on current knowledge, to fully replace animal models. In order to carry out high quality research, the use of animal-based models remains therefore necessary.

The use of animals for the development and production of drugs for both humans and animals, also needs to meet safety and efficacy regulatory requirements. In the veterinary field, the studies are carried out on the animals for which the products are intended.

In accordance with the legal provisions of French legislations (Code rural and Civil Code civil), in line with their convictions, the signatories of this Charter recognize that animals are living beings endowed with sensitivity. The use of animals in scientific and medical research is framed by specific regulations which protect them, ensure their well-being and enforce compliance of ethical rules.

Every citizen has the right to have access to comprehensive, clear and accurate information regarding the reasons and conditions for the use of animals for scientific or regulatory purposes, but also the regulatory framework that guides this use, as well as the scientific and medical progress that result from it.

To this end, the signatories of this charter, research establishments, laboratories developing drugs for humans or animals, their partners and their representatives, agree on four commitments :

## 1. To explain the reasons and conditions for using animals for scientific and regulatory purposes

We are committed to respect a principle of transparency and openness regarding our practices around the use of animals for scientific or regulatory purposes. We inform the people working within our establishments but also outside the establishments that we carry out or participate in the production of animal studies. We specify the reasons and conditions, whenever possible, without compromising the confidentiality of the people involved and the experiments. When we communicate on our progress, we specify the role of animal and non-animal models in these developments.

## 2. To disseminate information to the general public and the media

We are committed to making information on the use of animals for scientific or regulatory purposes accessible to the general public and to the media. Thus, information on the use of animals in basic or applied research and for the development of human and veterinary drugs will be comprehensive to all and easily accessible on the different communication platforms of the establishments, including the institutional websites.

## 3. To ease information flow with the general public and the media

We are committed assisting and encouraging exchanges with the general public and communicate about them. Different methods of interaction will be implemented, such as implementing a point of contact for the media and individuals or setting up meetings with the public.

## 4. To produce an annual document outlining the progress regarding public information

It is necessary to follow up on commitments to ensure the success of the charter. To this end, we will report in an annual synthetic document, the actions carried out following the signature of the charter.

# > Introduction



The launch of the Transparency Charter on the use of animals for scientific and regulatory purposes in February 2021 set France on a general course that has since been followed by other countries such as Germany and the Netherlands.

Informing the general public about the use of animals in research is now essential: complementarity with alternative methods, existence of a very strict regulatory framework, major scientific and medical advances... these are all subjects on which the signatories of the Charter are committed to shedding light and responding to a legitimate expectation on the part of society.

This profound and essential paradigm shift is all the more necessary now that science is regularly called into question in favour of ideological convictions or beliefs propagated by so-called experts who are often devoid of scientific competence. In this context, where misleading information and false promises abound, scientific communication and dialogue between researchers and the general public have become major issues for our society.

By signing this charter, the signatories have undertaken to open up to the general public and the media. We strongly encourage them to continue and intensify their efforts in this direction.

The signatories have also undertaken to contribute to the drafting of an annual report that will enable them to take stock of the actions undertaken. This report, now in its second edition, was drawn up after analysing the responses to a questionnaire sent to the 40 signatories of the Charter at the end of 2022.

Ivan Balarsard,  
president of the Gircor

## The signatories (at 31/12/2022)



## The supporters





# > Further details



## The questionnaire

Following last year's feedback, the questionnaire used as a basis for this report was thoroughly revised with the help of the signatories. The use of a fully integrated solution (SphinxOnline) for designing the questionnaire, collecting the data and processing the results has made the process much smoother.



## Timetable

The questionnaire was sent to signatories at the end of November 2022. Data collection took place until mid-February 2023.

**97,5%**

This is the response rate to the 2022 questionnaire.

Only one signatory was unable to respond this year due to an exceptionally tense situation workforce situation.

32 respondents in 2021  
39 in 2022



## Heterogeneity of signatories

As will be illustrated by the results on page 5, the Charter signatories have a wide variety of profiles. This heterogeneity is a strength because it allows us to take into account the full variety of the French animal research landscape. However, it also makes it difficult to interpret the figures, which are difficult to weight. Each respondent has the same weight in the answers, whatever their profile.

Similarly, because of this diversity and the complete overhaul of the questionnaire, it does not seem appropriate to compare the results in figures from one year to the next.



Cows (*Bos taurus*)  
©INRAE

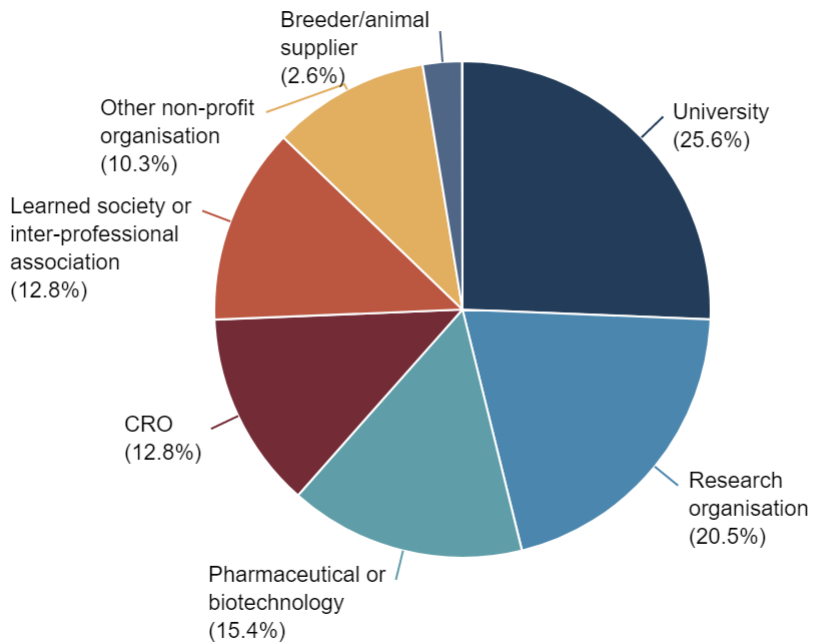


Golden Hamster (*Mesocricetus auratus*) - ©Gircor



Mouse (*Mus musculus*)  
©Gircor

# > Signatories



Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) - ©Gircor

## Numbers of employees in France



	N	%
Public	20	51.3%
Private	16	41.0%
Private not-for-profit	3	7.7%

	N	%
Conducts research directly on animals	30	76.9%
Breeds animals for research	20	51.3%
Indirectly carries out research on animals (calling an external service provider)	12	30.8%

The signatories of the Transparency Charter reflect the diversity of the French research landscape: from institutions with more than 30,000 employees to more modest structures; with local, national or international activities; with more or less activity dedicated to animal research; with a more or less advanced culture of transparency; with local implementation not always uniform... This diversity of Charter signatories is a real strength.



# > The staff

## How does your organisation communicate with the...

### ...staff who work directly with animals ?

	N	%
Generic actions for all staff	23	59.0%
Actions adapted to each trade	16	41.0%
Specific actions towards new staff	26	66.7%
Internal communications (internal newspaper, internal social network, newsletter, etc.)	19	48.7%
Presentations/training on the use of animals	25	64.1%

### ...staff who work indirectly with animals ?

	N	%
Generic actions for all staff	14	35.9%
Actions adapted to each trade	2	5.1%
Specific actions towards new staff	10	25.6%
Internal communications (internal newspaper, internal social network, newsletter, etc.)	16	41.0%
Presentations/training on the use of animals	14	35.9%
Presentations/training on ethics and the 3Rs	12	30.8%

### ...external service providers and people who come to work in the animal research facilities (transport, cleaning, security...)?

	N	%
Presentations/training on the use of animals	9	23.1%
Presentations/training on ethics and the 3Rs	7	17.9%
The possibility of visiting animal facilities	14	35.9%

For the majority of respondents, it is essential to raise awareness and/or train employees on subjects such as ethics, the use of animals for scientific purposes, regulations, compassion fatigue, alternative methods, transparency and communication.

These awareness-raising and training initiatives can be integrated into the induction process for new arrivals or be the subject of more or less regular meetings. Information can also be conveyed via a newsletter, a newspaper or an internal social network.

Employees in direct contact with animals are obviously the first to benefit from these initiatives, but so are others. Some organisations offer non-specialists the opportunity to visit facilities to gain a better understanding of working with animals. One respondent has set up the "live my life" initiative, which allows employees to discover the jobs of other colleagues for a day. In this way, staff who do not work with animals on a daily basis can visit facilities and learn about working with animals". These awareness-raising and training initiatives vary from one organisation to another. They may be the result of local initiatives, with no broader application.

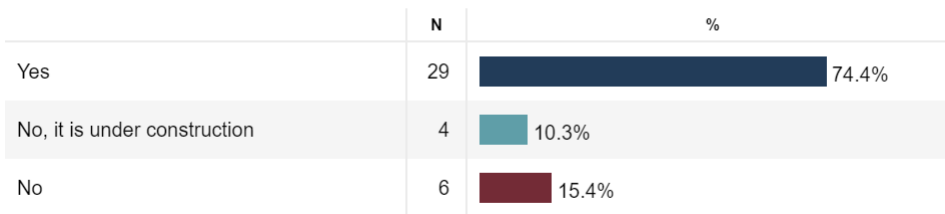
In addition, several respondents stressed the importance of including service providers and staff from outside the company, such as maintenance personnel and safety teams. For example, one signatory mentioned the organisation of "training for our transporters' drivers in animal welfare during transport".

Transfer of animals in a changing hood by a zootechnician ©Gircor

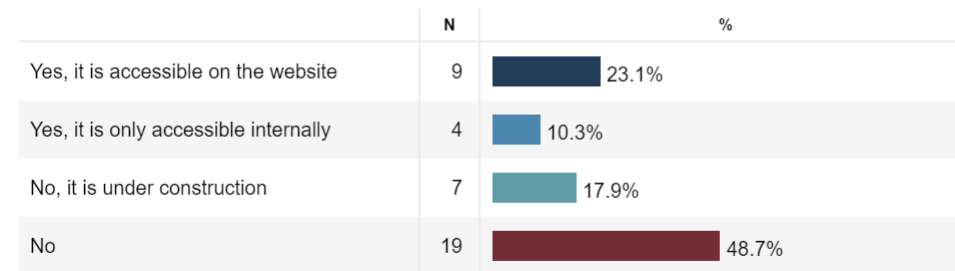


# > Internet

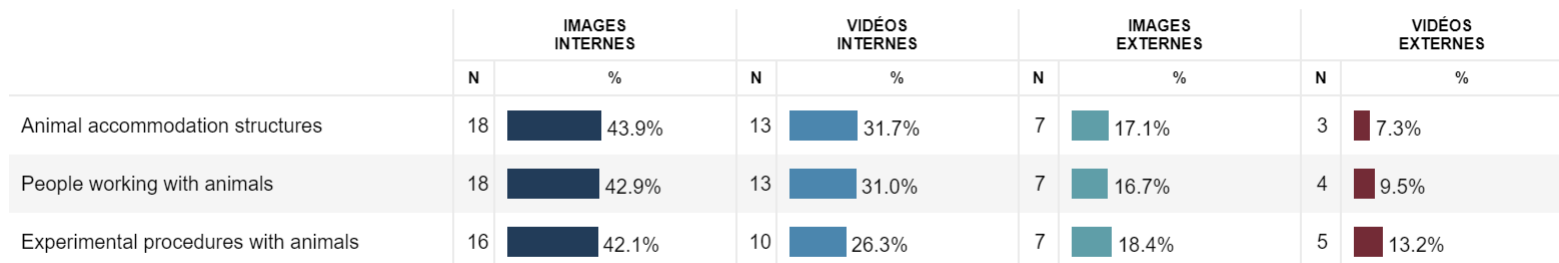
## Does your organisation have a web page addressing to the use of animals?



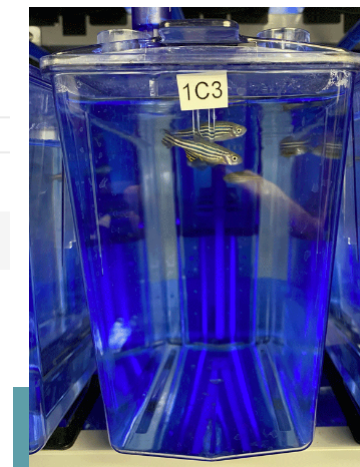
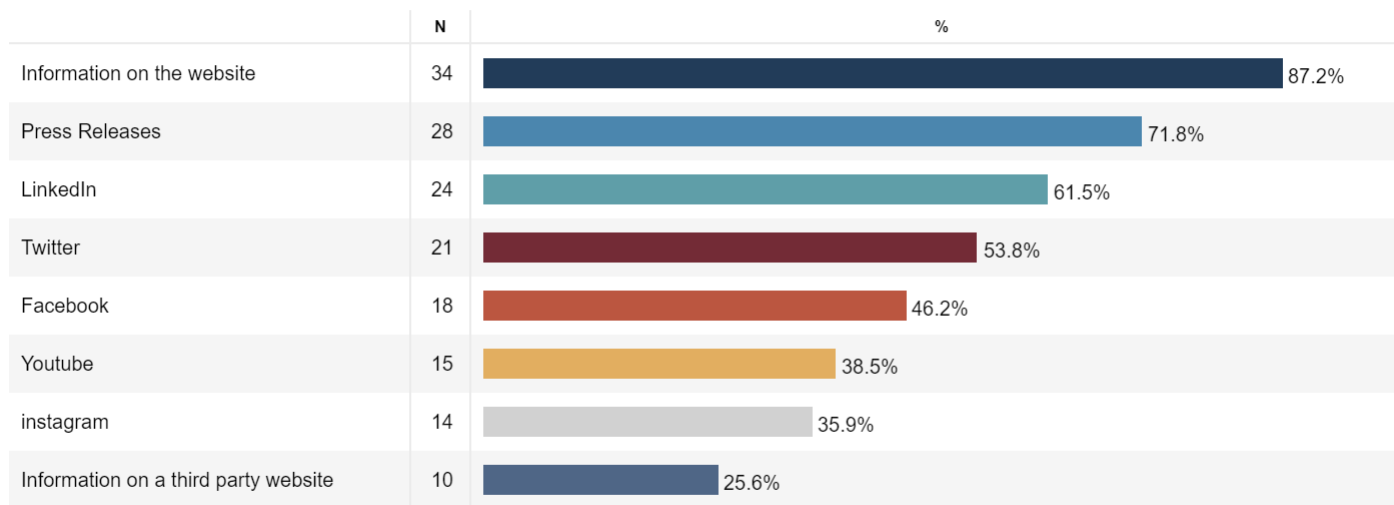
## Does your organisation have an internal charter or an institutional policy on the use of animals?



## What kind of images or videos does your organisation use for its communication?



## What are your organisation's communication channels towards the general public and the media?



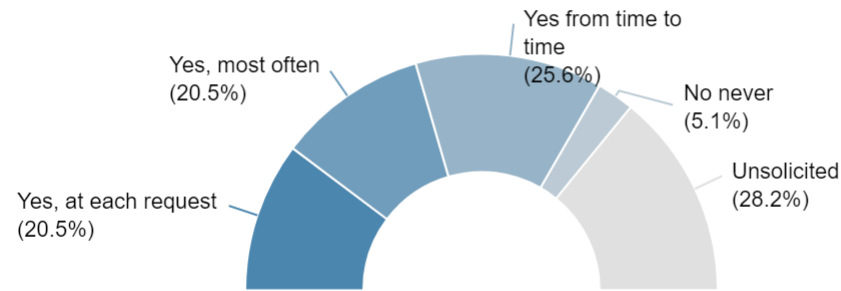
Home to zebrafish (Danio rerio) - ©Gircor

The signatories have honoured their commitment to set up a web page presenting their use of animals: whereas only 40% had one last year, almost three quarters now have one.

By favouring their website and press releases, the respondents clearly show that it is the channels that are best mastered that are most widely used. So it comes as no surprise that a professional network like LinkedIn is in 3rd place.

# > Medias

## Does your organisation agree to communicate with the media on the use of animals?



## With which media is your organisation most comfortable?

	N	%
Written press	29	74.4%
Internet	18	46.2%
Social networks	16	41.0%
National media	14	35.9%
Radio	13	33.3%
Local media	13	33.3%
television	10	25.6%
International media	6	15.4%

Most respondents say they are willing to respond to requests from journalists, in particular because they have signed up to the Transparency Charter or for educational purposes. They want to "avoid leaving a request unanswered", but they are very "vigilant about the nature of the requests". They are concerned about "manifestly biased requests" or requests where the conditions do not, a priori, allow for "balanced development".

Some public and private research organisations emphasised that their transparency policy pre-existed their adherence to the Transparency Charter and that they are often the most willing to communicate. This demonstrates a prior commitment to communication on the use of animals in scientific research. In contrast, private organisations may be a little more hesitant in their interactions with the media.

In general, the use of animals is mentioned in publications of research that has used them, without any specific communication on the use of animals.

Because of their limited activity in the field of animal research, some organisations are very little in demand and communicate little on this issue. Smaller organisations that do not have staff trained in communication can rely on organisations such as Gircor to help them communicate.

Finally, some organisations emphasise that they respond "to all requests, whether from the media or the public".



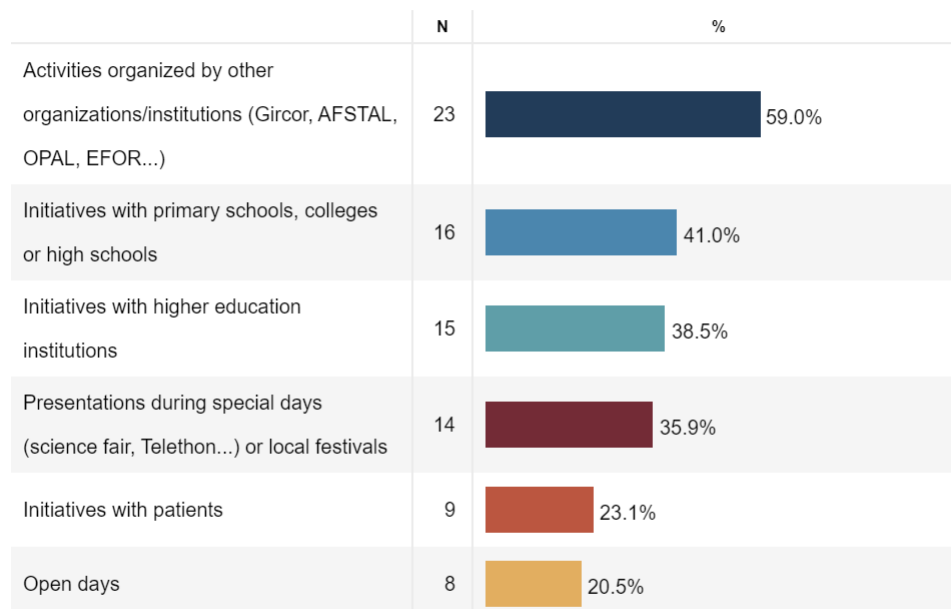
Chimeric mouse (Mus musculus) - ©Gircor



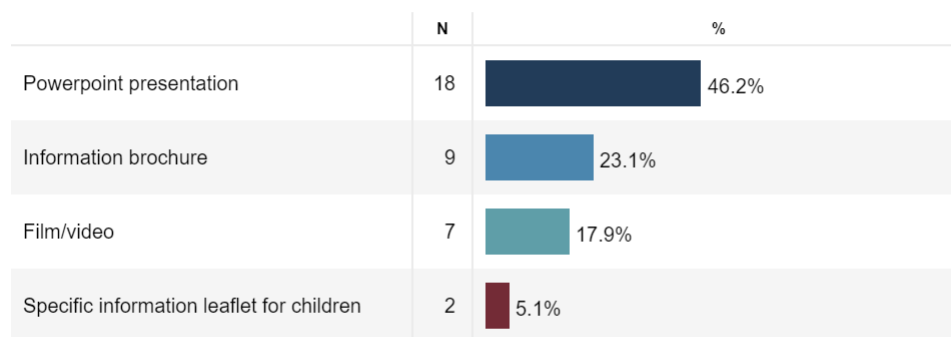
# Events



## What popular science events involving the use of animals has your organisation taken part in?



## During these events, what kind of media are made available to the public by your organisation ?



A large proportion of respondents organise outreach activities through other organisations (Gircor, AFSTAL, etc.) or take part in events such as the Fête de la science or other science days. These often include conferences for the general public and open days to explain the use of animals in research.

Educational outreach activities are also carried out in primary and secondary schools. One respondent said that it had set up "a dialogue between secondary school pupils and researchers to present the careers of researchers, the scientific approach and methods, including specifically the importance of choosing an experimental model". "A presentation of different models (drosophila, nematode, yeast)". When welcoming students, "they are presented with the challenges of research, the legal and ethical framework, animal welfare and the relevance of models". Several respondents have also organised information events for life and earth sciences teachers. The initiatives also include taking on student trainees or work-study students. The importance of talking directly to patients about the scientific advances made possible by the use of animals also appears to be essential.

Presentations are often made using media such as powerpoint presentations, information leaflets or videos.

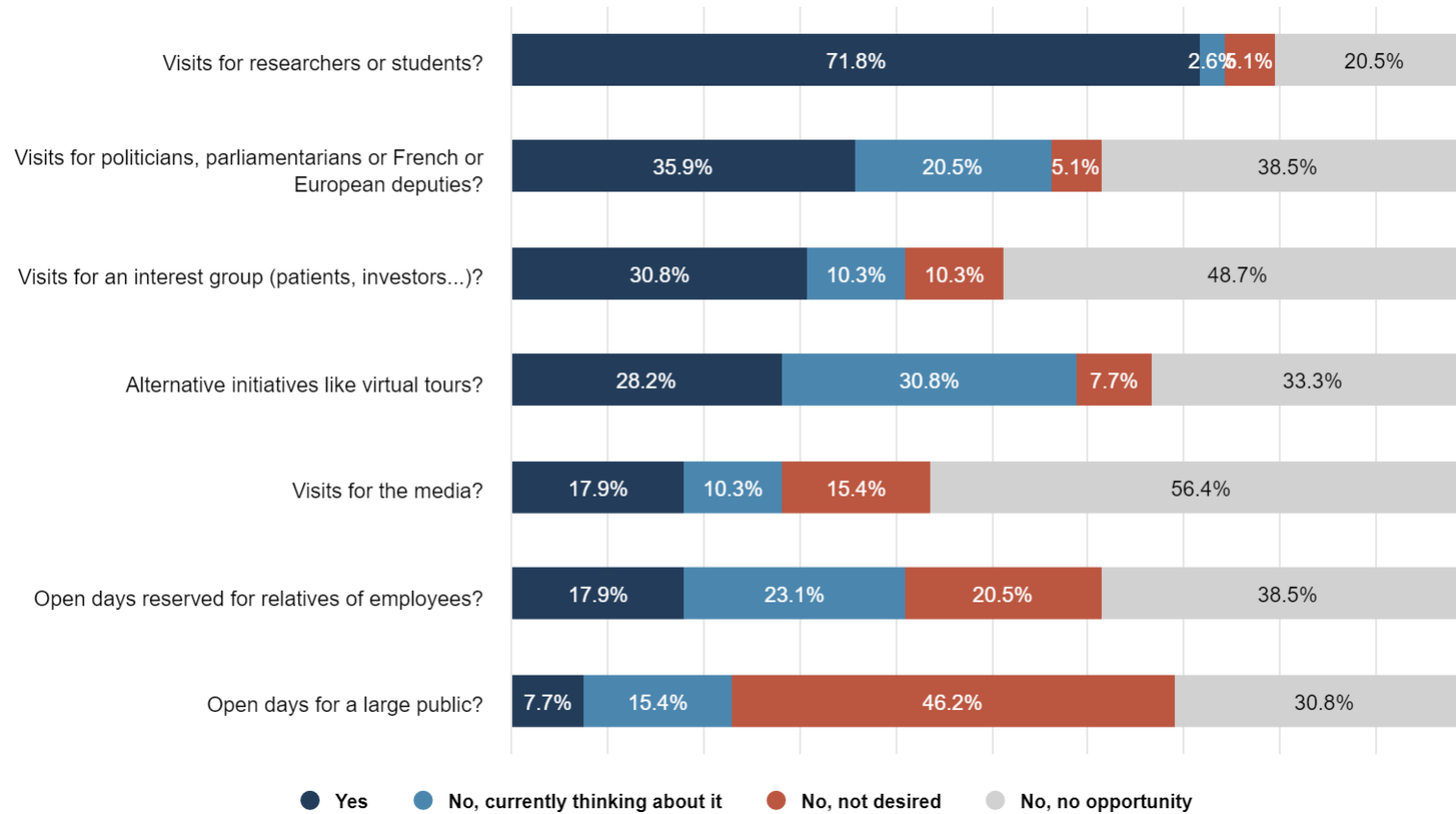
These information campaigns can be organised at a local level without any overall coordination at the level of the organisation. Conversely, when the respondent organisation is international in scope, the actions organised are sometimes orchestrated directly by the parent company.

Accommodation for a group of marmosets (*Callithrix jacchus*) - ©Gircor





## What animal facility tours has your organisation organised?



As last year, researchers and students were the main beneficiaries of the visits organised.

A few respondents reported difficulties in organising visits to their facilities for security or co-supervision reasons, as on-site filming requested by journalists at short notice rarely coincided with administrative deadlines. Nearly 75% said they would be willing to organise visits through Gircor on terms that have yet to be defined.

Virtual visits may be proposed as an alternative.

Prior to the visits, most of the organisations offer a prior briefing on legislation, ethics and the need to use animals as a complement to alternative methods.

Public research bodies are more likely to open their doors for visits than other players such as those in the pharmaceutical or biotechnology industries. Smaller organisations are much less popular and often do not have enough staff to organise visits.

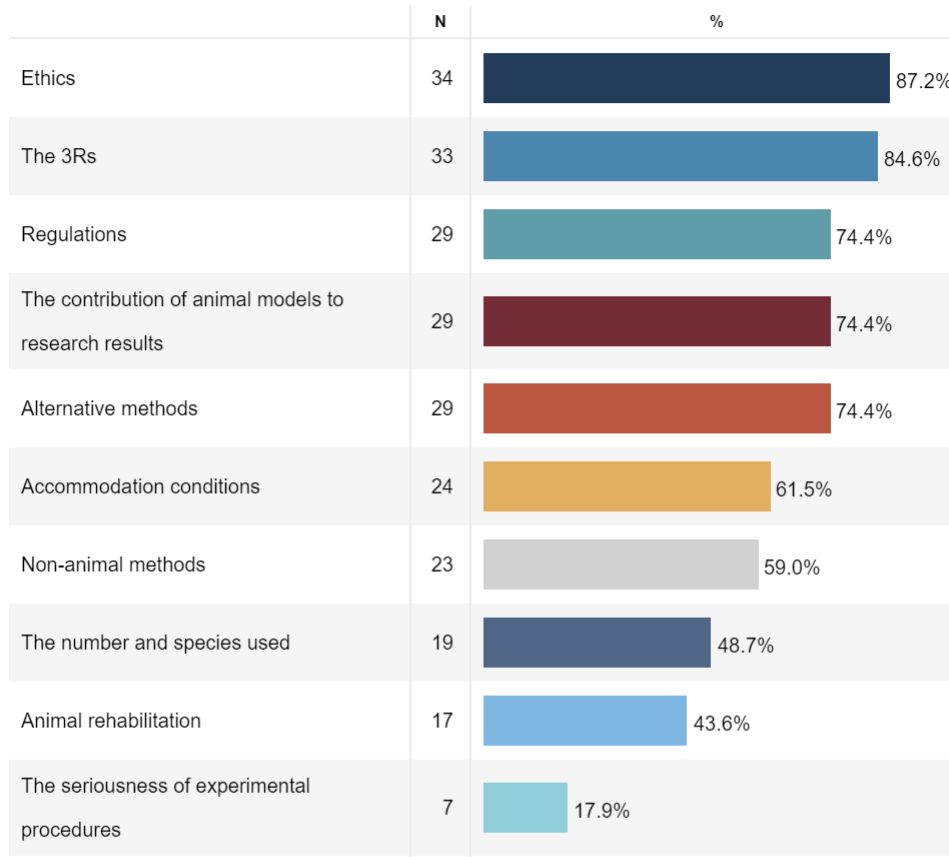


Cédric Villani, then President of the OPECST (Office parlementaire d'évaluation des choix scientifiques et technologiques), visiting the Mouse Clinical Institute and the University of Strasbourg (February) - ©Gircor



# > Topics covered

## What themes are covered by your organisation's communications, regardless of the channel used (internet, events...)?



For the respondents, the main aim of the themes developed by the communication is to raise public awareness of good practice in animal research by highlighting ethics, the 3Rs and current regulations. As one signatory put it, "as animals are essential to our business, ethics and animal welfare are an integral part of our fundamentals and many of our teams' projects are based on them".

In addition, it seems crucial to stress the importance of using animal models, explaining how their contribution is essential to research results and complementary to alternative, animal-free methods.



Young marmoset (*Callithrix jacchus*) hanging on a net in an accommodation room - ©Gircor

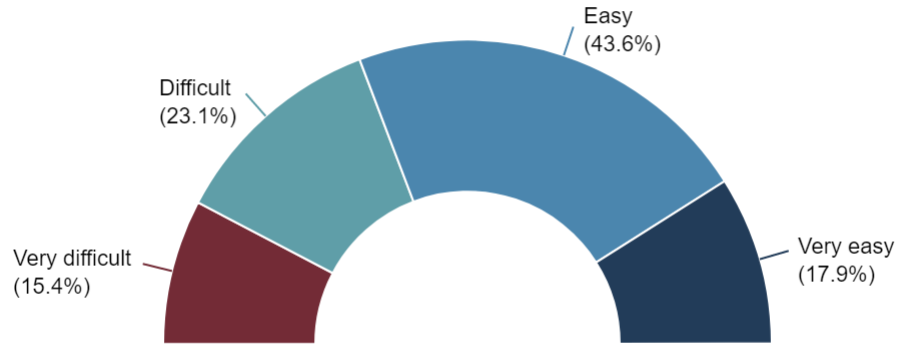


Mini-pigs (*Sus domesticus*)  
©Gircor



# > Conclusion

## How was the implementation of transparency within your organisation ?



## What does your organisation expect from the Transparency Charter?

	N	%
Allow the general public to understand the benefits of using animals	36	92.3%
Improving the image of research in France	34	87.2%
Have less pressure from activists	17	43.6%
Raise staff awareness of the 3Rs	12	30.8%
Improving the working conditions of research teams	9	23.1%
Have less pressure from the authorities	7	17.9%

## What were the main difficulties in implementing the commitments of the Transparency Charter?

	N	%
Fear of exposure to detractors	26	66.7%
Fear of misinterpretations	24	61.5%
The time to devote to it	23	59.0%
Public distrust of research	14	35.9%
Fear of leaking sensitive information	9	23.1%
The obstacles exerted by certain services	5	12.8%
L'adhésion du personnel non impliqué dans la recherche animale	2	5.1%
Membership of scientific personnel working directly with animals	2	5.1%
Management buy-in	2	5.1%
Membership of scientific personnel not working directly with animals	0	0.0%

Long-tailed macaque (*Macaca fascicularis*) receiving a reward  
©Gircor

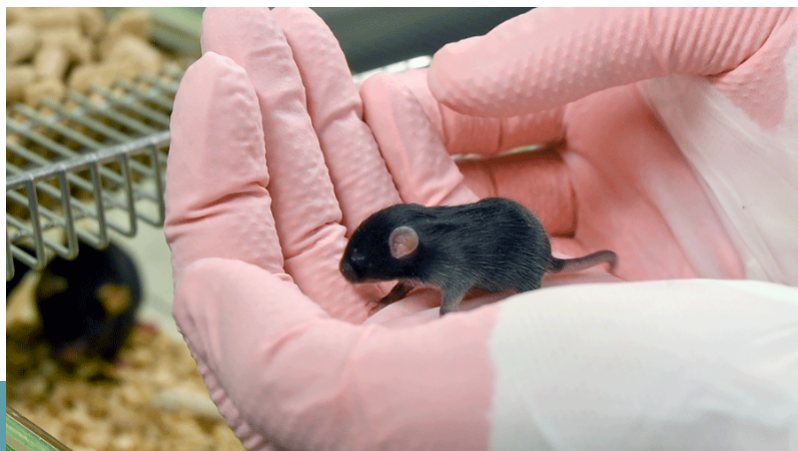


# > Conclusion

As was the case last year, the main objectives of the respondents through the Transparency Charter are to explain to the general public the need to use animals in research and consequently to improve the image of research, in particular by showing "the improvement in research conditions in recent years" and "the integration of alternative methods". The use of animals for scientific purposes "must no longer be a taboo subject". The general public needs to be shown that "the use of animals in research is subject to strict regulations that take account of animal welfare and suffering". It is essential to engage in dialogue and show the advances made possible by animal research so that the use of animals is better understood and accepted by the general public.

The drive for transparency in the use of animals in research is actively supported by management and teams, who are fully committed to this initiative. However, implementing the openness advocated by the Charter takes time and often requires dedicated staff. Several respondents mentioned their difficulties in clearly presenting their actions on their websites and their concerns about the exposure of their sites and their employees. Compassion fatigue was mentioned several times. Even though public research organisations seem to be the most inclined to communicate, it should be emphasised that this is not always the result of an overall policy but sometimes the result of local initiatives, as the policy of transparency is not necessarily sufficiently well known or uniformly applied in all units. It should be noted that there does not appear to be any correlation between the species used within an organisation and any fears it may have about communicating.

**Despite these challenges, the commitment to transparency remains strong.**



10-days-old mouse (mus musculus) - ©Gircor

The continuation and development of actions undertaken in 2022 remain essential for the majority of respondents. Improving what already exists and opening up are the priorities for 2023. The Internet remains a major area for development in 2023: educational reminders of the regulatory context and the 3Rs principle, setting up virtual tours, drafting frequently asked questions, etc.

Some plan to draw up internal charters to provide an even better framework for the use of animals in their scientific projects, while others plan to improve communication with staff who do not work directly with animals (administrative staff, for example) or sub-contractors (cleaning or care staff) and help them to communicate more effectively about their work, etc. Virtual tours and open days are also planned to give the public a better insight into scientific research involving animals.

Although there is still much to be done and it is clear that the momentum generated last year has borne fruit and is continuing, Gircor is calling on its signatories to redouble their efforts. Gircor will be setting up working groups to develop common tools to facilitate the implementation of transparency.

**Transparency is essential if we are to increase public confidence in ethical and responsible science.**



Beagle  
(Canis lupus familiaris)  
©Gircor

# ► Examples of transparency initiatives

For easy reference, examples of transparency initiatives implemented by Charter signatories are directly accessible on the Gircor website: [www.gircor.fr/charte-de-transparence-2022](http://www.gircor.fr/charte-de-transparence-2022)



**Do you have any questions?  
Would you like to find out more?  
Would you like to get involved?**

Please do not hesitate to contact us:  
[contact@gircor.fr](mailto:contact@gircor.fr)

# > The Gircor

The Gircor is a not-for-profit organisation that brings together different actors working in research and education, from both the public or the private sector, who use animals for scientific purposes.

The past decade has seen the rise of very promising advances in alternative methods to animal testing. Nevertheless, the use of animals remains essential to advance research, ensure the development and safety of drugs for humans and animals, or to preserve the environment and improve animal welfare.

The use of animals in research is governed by strict European and national regulations that require high animal protection standards that factor in the 3Rs (Replace, Reduce, Refine).

Gircor's missions and commitments

- 1. To respond to questions that the public might have** on the use of animals and alternative methods in research, their stakes and their necessity
- 2. Contribute to improving practices** in particular through the application of the 3Rs, the development of alternative methods and a culture of care
- 3. To promote transparency** of organisations using animals for scientific or regulatory purposes



Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)  
- ©Gircor

## Gircor in the media in 2022

- Indirect contribution to the Que Choisir article "ça bouge dans les labos" (May)
- Interview in Ouest France "Why do we continue to use animals for scientific research" (25 August)
- Quote in Hospimédia "Transparency on research using animals is moving forward" (29 August)
- Interview for the National Geographic website "Air France abandons primate transport: why scientists are worried" (1 August)
- Interview in La Semaine Vétérinaire "Primates still play an essential role in research" (13 September)
- Interview in Libération "Pénurie de singes : les labos font la grimace" (7 September)
- Invitation to the "La science CQFD" programme on France Culture on the subject of "Laboratory animals: no rats, no results" (7 September)
- Indirect participation in the programme "La transition du jour" on the shortage of non-human primates (10 September)
- Interview in Science & Vie "Faut-il mettre un terme à l'expérimentation animale?"
- Interview in Le Libé des animaux (10 and 11 November)

## Some of Gircor's communication initiatives in 2022

- Co-organisation of Cédric Villani's visit to two pet shops in Strasbourg (February)
- Interview "Animals and organoids: models that complement rather than oppose each other" (April)
- Interview "How zebrafish contribute to our knowledge of autism disorders" (April)
- Decoding the ECI "For cruelty-free cosmetics" (September)
- Translation of an article "Zebrafish at the heart of regenerative therapy" (July)
- Interview "Towards an evolution of the 3Rs rule" (October)
- Interview "Organ-on-a-chip: an experimental model the size of a domino" (October)
- Fact Checking of the Libé des animaux (December)



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Comprendre la recherche animale  
et ses alternatives



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