

Bridging the gap: a support desk to connect NAMs experts to stakeholders

Birgit Goversen, PhD

Project leader 3Rs Centre Utrecht, Animal Welfare Body Utrecht, Utrecht University, the Netherlands

Animal-free innovations, or New Approach Methodologies (NAMs), hold tremendous potential for real-life applications, such as drug development and personalized medicine. While technical advances in the field continue their alignment with human physiology, the field's ability to reduce or replace experimental animal use remains relatively underappreciated.

A key challenge lies in translating the highly specialized knowledge of NAM researchers to other organizations. Stakeholders that are not active in the same line of research themselves, often face difficulty assessing such expertise. An exploratory study by the 3Rs Centre Utrecht (3RCU) identified a critical demand for accessible expertise in NAMs. Especially stakeholders such as animal welfare bodies and animal experiment (ethics) committees are in need of such expertise.

To address this need, the 3RCU investigates how to connect NAMs experts with stakeholders seeking advice on specific questions. For this we are researching the feasibility of a support desk with a database of NAMs experts serving as a basis. Questions might be related, but not limited to, technical information on the performance, or the ability of NAMs to reduce or replace the use of experimental animals for certain research questions. By fostering a collaborative environment, the support desk aims to connect experts with stakeholders in need of guidance, creating pathways for impactful engagement.

This initiative is supported by the Dutch government program "Innovation without the use of animals" and in collaboration with the European consortium COST Action IMP₃ROVE. It represents a unique opportunity for NAM researchers to amplify their influence by bridging the gap between research and practical application.