



*Final draft*  
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## **EPAA Action Programme 2026-2030**

The European Partnership for Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA) is a unique collaboration<sup>1</sup> between the European Commission, European Agencies and eight Industry sectors to accelerate the replacement, reduction and refinement (3Rs) of regulatory animal testing.

This is the fifth Action Programme of the EPAA since its foundation in 2005. Over the past 20 years there has been considerable progress made in the field of 3R and alternatives to animal testing approaches. In this context, EPAA established and secured a trusted environment for exploring innovative approaches and modernizing regulatory requirements through use of better and more predictive science (e.g. New approach Methods (NAMs), animal-free approaches). The [Commission's roadmap towards phasing out animal testing for safety assessment of chemicals](#), which tackles 15 EU regulatory instruments<sup>2</sup> provides the opportunity to raise the EPAA vision to the next level: the transition of EU regulatory frameworks to address safe and sustainable innovation without animal testing.

For this purpose, the EPAA has identified the following 3 strategic goals:

1. Bridging the research to regulatory use gap
2. Building confidence in non-animal methods
3. Transitioning to a new global regulatory paradigm.

To achieve these goals, EPAA can count on the Partners Forum for further exploiting the cross-sectoral knowledge and expertise of all partners. The Mirror Group is an advisory body made up of expert citizen representatives that was established in support to the EPAA Steering Committee.

The EPAA will establish regulatory “sandboxes” as collaborative pilots, bringing together policymakers, regulators, industry, and civil society to test and validate new safety assessment approaches. These sandboxes will serve as innovation hubs, generating real-world evidence to

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<sup>1</sup> In 2025, EPAA partners include 5 Directorates-General of the European Commission, 3 European Agencies (ECHA, EFSA, EMA), 39 companies, and 9 industry federations – representing 8 industry sectors (Animal Health, Chemicals, Cosmetics, detergents, Food & drink, fragrances, Pharmaceuticals, Plant protection) from the chemical, pharmaceutical, cosmetics, detergents, crop protection, animal health and fragrances sectors and their European Trade Associations.

<sup>2</sup> Scope of the roadmap : 1) Chemicals registered under the REACH Regulation, 2) Biocides, 3) Pesticides, 4) Food improvement agents (food additives, food enzymes and food flavourings), 5) Chemicals used in food contact materials, 6) Feed additives, 7) Human medicinal products, 8) Veterinary medicinal products and MRLs for active substances in veterinary medicinal products for food-producing animals, 9) Medical devices, 10) Chemicals used in materials/products in contact with drinking water, 11) Chemicals covered by the CAD and CMRD, 12) Chemicals used in human nutrition, 13) Detergents, 14) Classification, labelling and packaging of chemicals, 15) Water and Waste legislation (identification of priority substances)

support regulatory acceptance of non-animal methods and inform the evolution of EU and global regulatory frameworks.

Projects supported by EPAA will be prioritized by the Steering Committee according to:

- their relevance to EU policy objectives, sectorial and horizontal legislation (e.g. actions from the Commission's roadmap to phase out animal testing for safety assessment of chemicals);
- the ability to address one or more of the EPAA strategic goals, with a preference to sandbox projects demonstrating scalability and transferability across sectors and regulatory frameworks;
- whether they have a tangible impact on moving towards non-animal approaches and/or animal welfare, and avoid duplication with other existing initiatives in the space;
- regulatory testing areas where high numbers of animals are used and/or where animal use results in severe suffering;
- evidence of commitment from both Industry and Commission partners;
- availability of resources.

Regular reviews will be carried out in order to adapt to the evolving regulatory environment and outputs from third parties' activities. Projects may be adapted or adjourned to keep priorities in line with partners' needs.

### **.1. Bridging the research to regulatory gap**

Regulatory testing must evolve to keep pace with scientific developments. Research actions and test method developments today however often fail to deliver complete NAM toolboxes that are ready for regulatory use.

EPAA is offering a platform to develop a common understanding of current state of the science applications of NAMs, help identify regulatory needs and prioritize validation of regulatory relevant animal-free test methods and approaches.

In the upcoming years, EPAA Partners Forum activities will be selected to address these objectives and strengthen ties with the research community.

Key research partners are the European Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals ([PARC](#)), EU Commission's Horizon Europe projects focusing on Animal-free Safety assessment of chemicals ([ASPIS-cluster](#)) such as [Risk-Hunt3R](#) project, and research programs from partnering industry associations (i.e. cleaning & maintenance products/AISE, industrial chemicals/CEFIC, crop protection/CropLife Europe, food & drink/FoodDrinkEurope, cosmetics/CosmeticsEurope, fragrances/IFRA, flavorings/IOFI, human pharmaceuticals/EFPIA, veterinary pharmaceuticals/AnimalhealthEurope).

EPAA will communicate scientific opportunities, limitations, and regulatory relevance of research developments in a clear and accessible way to policymakers, regulators, and stakeholders. This will ensure research outcomes are more easily integrated into regulatory strategies and support a shared understanding of future validation needs. Communication tools such as webinars, flash reports, and joint publications will be used to translate scientific insights for broader regulatory and public audiences.

### **.2. Building confidence in use of non-animal methods**

Regulatory acceptance is a stage beyond validation. It allows to demonstrate that NAM toolboxes are protective and implementable in regulatory context.

EPAA is offering space to regulatory bodies (i.e. EU Commission, EU Agencies, member states) and industry partners to exchange on learnings from using and evaluating NAM toolboxes in regulatory context. They will discuss progress and barriers in applying new tools to hazard and safety assessments of differing levels of complexity and in different regulatory contexts.

EPAA User Forum activities will increase engagement and commitment to development and sharing of case studies of mutual interest. Projects should help to progressing the uptake of NAM toolboxes from simple to progressively more complex application cases.

To strengthen trust and understanding, EPAA will prioritise transparent communication on NAM success stories, limitations, and implementation challenges. Through publications, media engagement, storytelling and social media campaigns, EPAA will explain the societal and regulatory value of using NAMs and promote confidence in these alternatives. Tailor-made communication will also target Member State authorities to encourage consistent and informed regulatory decision-making across the EU.

Through the Mirror Group and dedicated events, EPAA will ensure citizens' and NGOs' views are considered and communicated back to decision-makers, strengthening democratic legitimacy and social acceptance of non-animal methods.

EPAA will also continue celebrating and promoting excellence in the field of 3Rs through its awards (Science Prize and Refinement prize) and Student grants, showcasing role models who contribute to scientific and regulatory progress.

### **.3. Transitioning to a new global regulatory paradigm**

The EPAA member companies operate at global level, hence a coordinated evolution of global regulatory safety frameworks must be achieved to support sustainable innovation and phase-out of animal testing from regulatory safety testing in Europe.

As a matter of fact, regulatory acceptance of NAMs today varies globally and across sectors, resulting in conflicting regulatory requirements.

EPAA aims to address these issues in promoting collaboration with European and international governmental entities to address regulatory barriers and limitations of use of NAMs. Projects should help to understand chemical evaluation practices across the globe, ideally establish interactions with [APCRA](#), the international governmental collaboration for “Accelerating the pace of chemical risk assessment”, the OECD Guidelines for the Testing of Chemicals or the ICH (International Council for Harmonisation), and provide space for EPAA to co-shape a transition pathway of European regulatory safety frameworks that considers the pace of changes across regions.

Communication will be essential to promote global convergence and awareness of Europe's leadership in NAMs. EPAA will participate in and co-organise high-level international events and create joint communications with like-minded initiatives. EPAA will share updates and thought leadership via global platforms and networks, demonstrating the EU's role in setting the pace for a humane and innovation-friendly global regulatory future.