European Commission

EURL ECVAM Search Guide: The promotion of global standards for searching Three Rs information

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Rationale

The Search Guide (SG) of the EU Reference Laboratory for Alternatives to Animal Testing (EURL ECVAM) serves a fundamental requirement, namely that any scientist who intends to undertake research or testing that may involve the use of animals is well-informed about the current status of the proposed field of investigation including all relevant opportunities to replace, reduce or refine (Three Rs) the animal use. In particular, to satisfy a legal and ethical imperative that animals should only be used in a study if all alternatives have been considered and judged to be inadequate for clear reasons. An obligatory ethical review process ensuring the application of the Three Rs principles Europe-wide was introduced by Directive 63/2010/EU.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Information resources and **structured information retrieval practices** that are systematic, comprehensive and transparent are required to minimise animal use and maximise scientific outputs.
- **Helping untrained database** users to find high quality information on alternative methods on the World Wide Web, and to document their processes and findings, is a fundamental step in preparing, conducting and reviewing any proposal for **biomedical research and regulatory testing** involving animal use.

Outreach

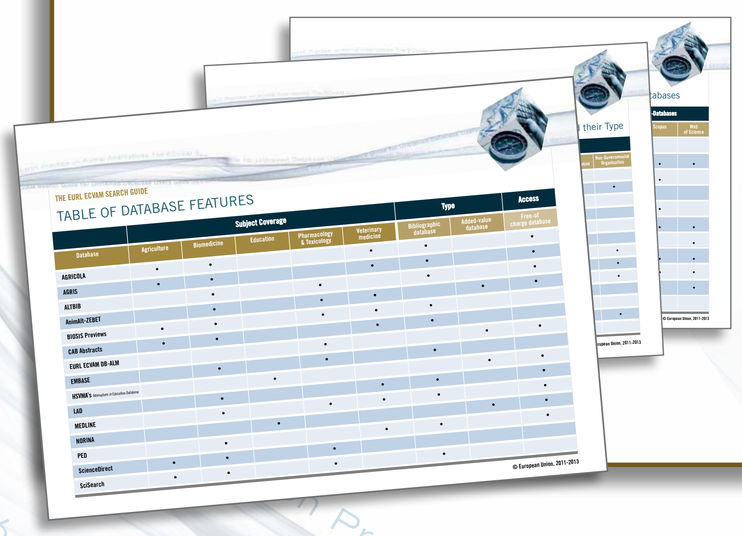
The first edition the SG, published by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre in 2012, was amongst the most commonly downloaded publications from the European Union's bookshop – at one point it was the 4th most frequent download. Encouraged by the success reached a fully revised second edition was made available in 2013.
After its first publication the impact of the SG included:

- adoption by EU Member States implementing provisions of the EU Directive 2010/63/EU
- use of the SG within laboratory animal science training courses for research and testing in Europe, Asia and South America, as well as at licensee training courses set up to fulfil Articles 23 and 24 of Directive 2010/63/EU
- use of the SG to produce a Korean training course and Guidance on Three Rs searches
- use by the Israeli authorities implementing national guidelines on the Three Rs principle

Content

The Guide provides proven, contemporary, good practice data retrieval approaches and procedures for efficiently finding scientific information supporting the Three Rs concept, such as:

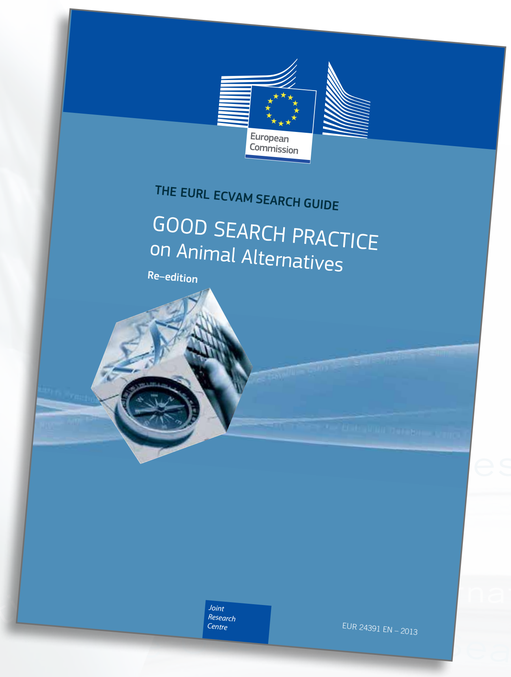
- **"Seven golden steps"** prepared as a sound strategy and handy check list to undertake searches in a structured way and to document the search procedure.
- **Suggested search terms relevant to the Three Rs** with their definitions, occurrences in selected databases and classification.
  Search terms have often different meanings depending on the context. The SG explains how to unequivocally select and use them by specifying the right context appropriate for the scientific objectives of a research project applying the Three Rs principle.



- **Examples of search procedures** for research purposes and regulatory testing showing how to quickly find the most relevant information.
- **Relevant information resources** *as handy summary tables or detailed descriptions* covering high-quality, selected added-value and literature databases, database hosts, organisations and their services, open access resources and web search engines.
- **Thesauri** containing specific Three Rs terms, used for indexing database contents

Access

Printed copies or an electronic version of the handbook can be obtained free of charge from the Bookshop of the European Union at the address: **http://bookshop.europa.eu**
An Internet based application is under development.



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