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RE-Place: centralizing information on alternative methods to animal testing to promote knowledge sharing

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Over the last years, many valuable *in chemico*, *in silico* and *in vitro* methods have been developed as alternatives to animal testing. Unfortunately, expertise on these alternative methods is scattered and communication on the topic between experts from different domains is often limited. In order to enhance the use of alternative methods to animal testing, knowledge sharing needs to be facilitated between the different parties involved (e.g. scientists, regulators, industry, ethical committees, animal welfare bodies and the general public).

In 2017, the RE-Place project was initiated by the Flemish and Brussels government with the aim to centralize the existing knowledge and increase its accessibility. The project, coordinated by Sciensano and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), consists of 3 phases: (1) an exploratory survey to identify the experts that are currently using alternative methods to animal testing, (2) the set-up of an online tool (available via www.RE-Place.be) to collect details on alternative methods, and (3) the compilation of an easy to use database, integrating all the acquired information. The RE-Place project is performed in close collaboration with the members of the RE-Place steering committee, which consists of experts from academia, industry and government institutions, all with extensive know-how in the field of alternative methods to animal testing. Additionally, the European Union Reference Laboratory for alternatives to animal testing (EURL-ECVAM) is also involved in the RE-Place project.

Since the online tool is publicly accessible, experts from different fields will be able to connect with peers and engage in new collaborations. Centralization of the information will also allow to identify the gaps in the field of alternative methods to animal testing. Importantly, in a later stage, the RE-Place database can be further extended to a broader platform, stimulating the development of new techniques, methods and strategies and supporting education and training.