

EU funded Preparatory Action Grant – Promoting alternatives to animal testing through accessible and harmonised education and training

Grant nr: 09.200200.A092004/2021/864077/SUB/ENV.B.2

Period: January 2022 – December 2024

Objectives

The objective of the project is to facilitate the process of mutual recognition of, and access to quality education and training in laboratory animal science. The project will build on the deliverables of the first EU funded project run by ETPLAS during 2019 and 2020.

The action has 6 activities each with its specific objective:

1. Expansion of training assessment criteria for functions B and C as defined in the Directive.
2. Expansion of the question database for theoretical core and functions A, B and C specific modules.
3. Development of formal training assessment tools for course providers on the ETPLAS web platform.
4. Extension of Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS) database for further eModules (with attention also to those being developed under a separate service contract under the same EP Preparatory Action) to support harmonised assessment of practical skills and thus raising standards for the care and humane use of animals.
5. Development of a Union wide continuing professional development (CPD) framework for the field of laboratory animal science (LAS) to facilitate harmonised approach to maintenance of competence as required by the Directive.
6. Further development of ETPLAS platform to allow incorporation of educational tools in relation to the Three Rs and non-animal approaches for all levels (from primary, to secondary schools, to universities and early career scientists) and ensuring an intuitive user experience to search and access to relevant material and tools for trainees, course providers and authorities.

Each of the activities will be delivered through a Working Group.

Main activities per Working Group

1. Expansion of training assessment criteria for functions B and C as defined in the Directive

Principles and tools to develop assessment criteria for learning outcomes will be produced. These will be built from what is already available within the E&T Framework document (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/lab_animals/pdf/guidance/education_training/en.pdf) and further expanded if felt necessary.

A working group (WG) of experts in education and training and LAS will be tasked to develop guidance on principles and tools needed. That guidance document will then be freely made available through the ETPLAS website (<https://www.etplas.eu>) to key stakeholders, training providers, course approval/accreditation bodies, MS authorities and ultimately the entire user community. This action builds on already existing work.

2. Expansion of the question database for theoretical core and functions A, B and C specific modules

New questions for knowledge-based assessment of theoretical core modules and for Function B and C specific modules will be drafted and reviewed, based on the expanded assessment criteria developed under the first activity. At the same time the question database for theoretical core and function A specific modules, one of the deliverables of the pilot project, will be further developed and expanded. The same WG as the one under the first activity will be tasked to make an inventory of the sets of questions that are currently in use with

www.etplas.eu

running courses in Member States. They will evaluate, select good quality questions, develop others from concepts provided, merge, and complement with other questions to provide each module with a different set of questions. That inventory, assembled in a database, will thus contain quality-assessed selected questions that can be used to build the corpus of questions. The ETPLAS questions database will be at the core of ETPLAS online training assessment service which will be developed in activity 3 of this application.

3. Development of formal training assessment tools for course providers on the ETPLAS web platform

ETPLAS database of assessment questions is the core of the ETPLAS training assessment service. The training assessment service will be operated by ETPLAS as a fully online platform within the ETPLAS web environment (figure 1). A Working Group (WG) of E&T and IT experts will be formed to design and create the ETPLAS training assessment module to be incorporated and made available through the ETPLAS website. The composition of this WG may well show (partial) overlap with the composition of the WG for activity 6 of this proposal.

The ETPLAS training assessment service is a paid for service available to training providers.

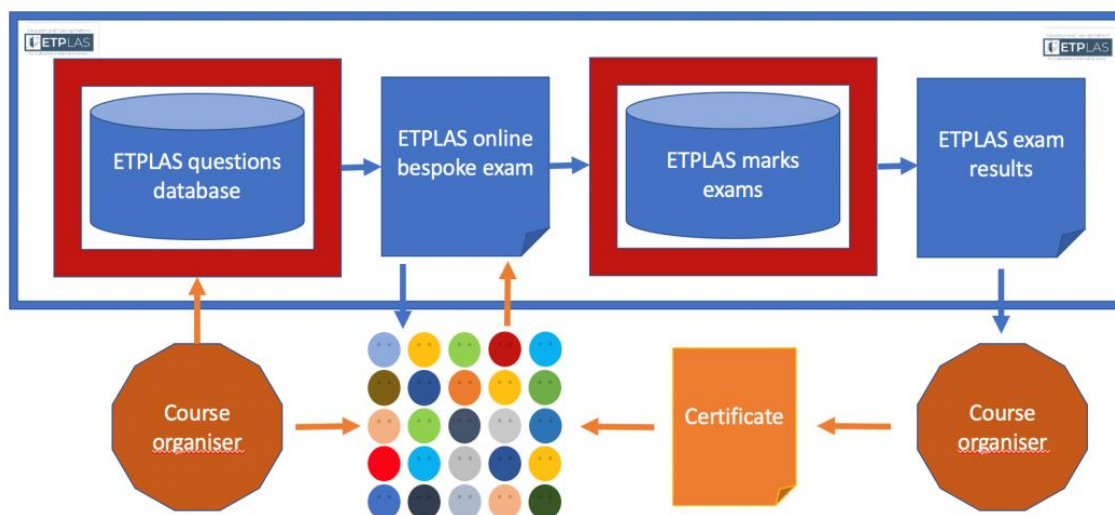


Figure 1: ETPLAS training assessment service. Within the blue box the ETPLAS online platform, outside the blue box activity flow at the course organiser's location and interactions with the ETPLAS training assessment service.

Training providers will order an exam from ETPLAS for their course based on the modules taught. ETPLAS will build an exam from its questions database that will meet all the Learning Outcomes of that course (series of modules). ETPLAS will make the exam available online to the students while the training provider is responsible for the proctoring / invigilating. ETPLAS will mark the exam and share the exam results with the training provider. The training provider will be responsible for issuing the certificates and maintaining appropriate records. The exam results per question will be analysed to determine the discriminating properties of the question and the performance of the question versus the test as a whole (Rit- and Rir-values). Such to improve the quality of the database of assessment questions.

ETPLAS training assessment service will enable training providers to assess the extent to which students have met the Learning Outcomes in a quality controlled, structured, consistent, independent, and harmonised way. This way ETPLAS, together with the key stakeholders, will establish a common standard for examination, and thus training, facilitating the harmonisation objective of quality education and training tools in LAS in Europe and facilitating mutual recognition. Course providers will be able to concentrate on course delivery to achieve the learning outcomes without the additional burden of assessment and marking.

4. Extension of Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS) database for further eModules (with attention also to those being developed under a separate service contract under the same EP Preparatory Action) to

Preparatory action - 'Promoting alternatives to animal testing through accessible and harmonised education and training.'

www.etplas.eu



support harmonised assessment of practical skills and thus raising standards for the care and humane use of animals

A database of assessment of Direct Observation of Procedural Skills (DOPS) for common tasks, undertaken in the work environment by functions/ roles covered by eModules, will be developed under a separate service contract. A WG of experts will be tasked to build the content of this database, based on what has already been developed/is available in the field.

Since DOPS may be relevant to different target groups for different reasons, it will be analysed whether (and/or which) DOPS should be made available freely or through a restricted access (or a combination thereof) to ensure that the system provides continuity for future expansion whilst being affordable for those who require DOPS for skills assessment outside of the formal training setup.

Sharing these assessment criteria on the ETPLAS website will provide a consistent standard for evaluating the learning of practical skills. Skills can then be assessed after an appropriate period of practising the technique under supervision at the trainee's own work environment.

5. Development of a Union wide continuing professional development (CPD) framework for the field of laboratory animal science (LAS) to facilitate harmonised approach to maintenance of competence as required by the Directive

A WG of experts will be tasked to draft a CPD framework for LAS. Priority shall be given to the design of a CPD framework for each of functions A and B. Expansion to other function C and some other stakeholders e.g. inspector, may be possible within this action-grant period. Collaboration with other LAS organisations (FELASA, EFAT, CLAST) will be sought. This activity builds on ETPLAS 'Recommendations for records of CPD' (https://etplas.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ETPLAS_CPD_Guidelines_February_2019_with-Annex.pdf).

6. Further development of ETPLAS platform to allow incorporation of educational tools in relation to the Three Rs and non-animal approaches for all levels (from primary, to secondary schools, to universities and early career scientists) and ensuring an intuitive user experience to search and access to relevant material and tools for trainees, course providers and authorities.

A WG of LAS, E&T and IT experts will be formed to expand on the existing ETPLAS platform. An IT web-design and support partner will be contracted to deliver on this activity and other activities of this action-grant proposal. The composition of this WG may well show (partial) overlap with the composition of the WG for action 3 of this proposal.