

## **NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS USED FOR SCIENTIFIC PURPOSES: GUIDANCE ON THE ROLE OF THE INFORMATION OFFICER (IO)**

### Background

Directive 2010/63/EU as implemented by S.I. No. 543 of 2012 and amended by S.I. No. 553 of 2018 requires, in Regulation 45A, that each authorised breeder/supplier/user establishment must have an Information Officer (IO).

This guidance outlines the role and responsibilities of the IO and gives suggestions how these may be implemented in practice.

### Information Officer (IO)

What is an IO?

The Information Officer (IO) is responsible for ensuring that those dealing with animals in the establishment have access to information they need about the species held there and procedures being performed. This individual should have good communication and networking skills.

IO role and responsibilities:

The IO must put in place systems to ensure that up-to-date information relevant to the needs of those dealing with animals is readily available. The information may be provided verbally, or in hard copy or electronic format.

This should include information relating to:

- guidance on the Directive 2010/63/EU, S.I. No. 543 of 2012 and S.I. No. 553 of 2018, and local rules and information;
- biology of the species used at the establishment;
- provision of appropriate animal care and husbandry;
- animal welfare and the 3Rs;
- relevant guiding principles for good practice e.g. reports and other publications produced by organisations such as those listed in the 'Resources' Section below;
- new scientific initiatives, technical advances and good practice relevant to types of work and species at the establishment; and
- sources of further information on any of these topics.

The IO should establish and maintain a network within and outside the establishment to gather relevant information and to be able to target its dissemination to appropriate individuals.

It is recognised that the time and resource required to deliver on the role is dependent on the size of the establishment and that in a particularly large establishment it may be difficult for a single person to be familiar with all relevant developments and knowledge. In this case, the IO can and should seek support from other experts e.g. in the establishment's Animal Welfare Body, or from setting up a network of appropriate contacts within the establishment.

The IO should:

- be familiar with the main provisions of Directive 2010/63/EU, S.I. No. 543 of 2012 and S.I. No. 553 of 2018;
- be familiar with the species used and the types of research performed in the establishment;
- proactively search for and disseminate relevant up-to-date information, including information on implementing the 3Rs;
- be actively involved with, and provide advice to, the AWB at their establishment, in particular relating to the gathering and dissemination of information;
- maintain contacts for information sharing (e.g. with the HPRA and specialist groups and bodies such as those listed in the 'Resources' Section below);
- maintain local contacts based, for example, on function, role and research interests in order to be able to direct information proactively and towards relevant individuals;
- assist project authorisation holders to secure information relevant to their projects; and
- provide guidance on where and how to search for relevant information.

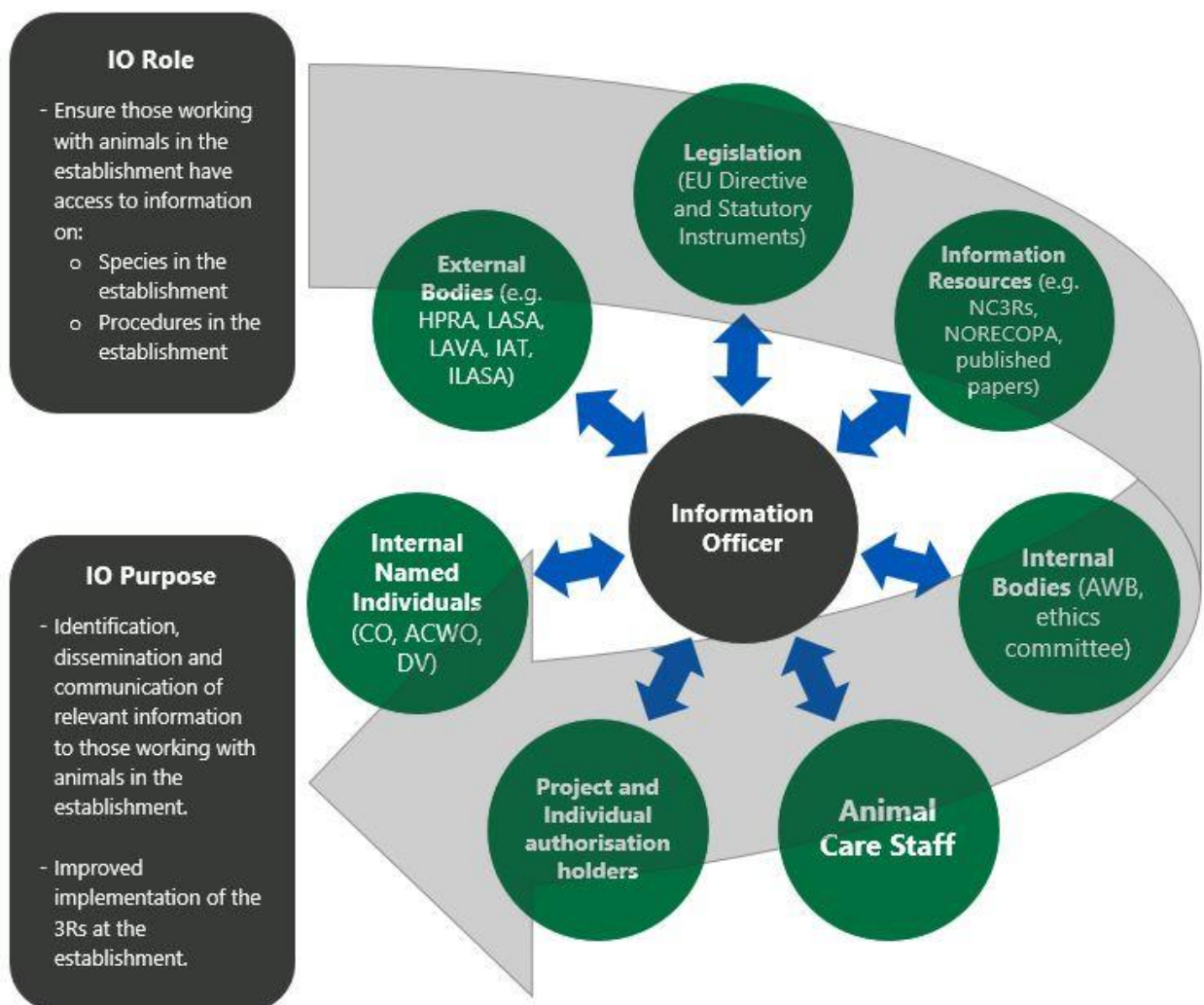


Fig. 1. Graphical depiction of the Information Officer (IO) Role and Purpose.

## Training - Information Officers (IOs)

The IO should have a good understanding of the legal and ethical aspects of the use of animals for scientific purposes and be familiar with the concept, principles and potential applications of the 3Rs.

The IO should know where to find current information on the 3Rs and be proactive in finding and disseminating information relating to the 3Rs that is relevant to work at their establishment, whilst avoiding "information overload".

The IO should have expertise in sourcing, retrieving and storing relevant information. The person in the role should be aware of different search tools and methods of search or be able to identify someone who has these skills. Good communication skills are essential.

It is necessary to have a good understanding of the local structure for management and responsibilities relating to animal use at their establishment to assist in forming networks and deciding how and to whom to distribute information.

The IO should have access to the 'Regulatory Updates' circulated regularly by the HPRA to establishment Compliance Officers, and others performing functions under Directive 2010/63/EU, S.I. No. 543 of 2012 and S.I. No. 553 of 2018, and should ensure that these 'Regulatory Updates' are widely disseminated throughout the establishment.

## Continued Professional Development - Information Officers (IOs)

Please refer to the IO training document (accompanying).

## Resources

- [Directive 2010/63/EU](#)
- [S.I. No. 543 of 2012](#)
- [S.I. No. 553 of 2018](#)
  
- [National Centre for the Replacement, Refinement and Reduction of Animals in Research \(NC3Rs\) website](#)
- [Federation of European Laboratory Animal Science Associations \(FELASA\) website](#)
- [Irish Laboratory Animal Science Association \(ILASA\) website](#)
- [Laboratory Animals Science Association \(LASA\) website](#)
- [Norway's 3R Centre and National Consensus Platform for the Replacement, Reduction and Refinement of Animal Experiments \(NORECOPA\) website](#)
- [ARRIVE Guidelines](#)
- [The Experimental Design Assistant](#)
- [3Rs Reduction website](#)
- [Humane Endpoints in Laboratory Animal Experimentation](#)
- [Laboratory Animals Veterinary Association \(LAVA\) website](#)
- [Institute of Animal Technology \(IAT\) website](#)
- [Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals \(RSPCA\) website – research animals section](#)
- [Education and Training Platform for Laboratory Animal Science \(ETPLAS\)](#)
- [EU Reference Laboratory for Alternatives to Animal Testing](#)