

I ASPIS Open Symposium: Advancing Animal-Free Chemical Safety Assessment

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[The ASPIS cluster](#), a groundbreaking collaboration of three EU-funded research projects, successfully concluded its annual Open Symposium. The event, held in Copenhagen on September 11-12, showcased significant strides in developing and implementing New Approach Methodologies (NAMs) for chemical safety assessment and fostered collaboration among researchers, regulators, and industry stakeholders. ASPIS, a joint effort by the three scientific consortia [ONTOX](#) (led by Vrije Universiteit Brussels), [PrecisionTox](#) (led by the University of Birmingham) and [RISK-HUNT3R](#) (led by Leiden University), is at the forefront of revolutionizing chemical safety testing through the development of the [ASPIS-initiated alternative Safety Profiling Algorithm \(ASPA\)](#), a well-guided Next Generation Risk Assessment (NGRA) workflow. The cluster assembles 70 scientific organisations and 300 leading European scientists who harness the power of diverse scientific disciplines, including omics, artificial intelligence (AI), and in vitro/in silico methodologies, to deliver faster, more accurate, and affordable alternatives to traditional animal testing. During the meeting, the chairmanship of the ASPIS cluster was passed from [John Colbourne](#), coordinator of PrecisionTox, to [Mathieu Vinken](#), the ONTOX coordinator. This transition marks a new phase for ASPIS, with ONTOX leading the cluster's mission to advance sustainable, animal-free, and reliable chemical risk assessment. A key highlight of the symposium was the presentation of groundbreaking advancements in NAM development. The three consortia shared their latest research, highlighting advancements in non-animal toxicology and predictive safety assessments, and showcasing the potential of these innovative tools to streamline safety assessments and reduce reliance on animal models. Notably, ASPA, presented by Dr. Mirjam Luijten (RIVM in association with RISK-HUNT3R) offers a promising approach for streamlining safety profiling. This aligns with the cluster's goal to operationalize NGRA by developing a well-guided workflow for chemical safety assessment (ASPA) and providing guidance on data generation and interpretation. Beyond the technical advancements, the symposium underscored the importance of collaboration and knowledge sharing. The ASPIS working groups dedicated to specific areas such as chemical selection, omics, and exposure assessment, fostered valuable discussions and identified synergies. One of the most significant outcomes of the symposium was the progress made towards integrating NAMs into the NGRA framework. The collaborative efforts of ASPIS and the Partnership for the Assessment of Risks from Chemicals ([P-A-R-C](#)) have established a robust foundation for a more sustainable and efficient approach to chemical safety assessment. Future collaborations between ASPIS and P-A-R-C will focus on synergies in communication and other working groups. They aim to develop a central metadata registry platform and combine the results of various working groups, leading to the successful integration of NAMs into the broader chemical safety assessment landscape. By cooperating, the two groups seek to maximize their scientific output and to create sustainable change in the regulatory landscape of the EU. The symposium demonstrated the growing momentum behind the adoption of NAMs. It highlighted the potential of these innovative approaches to modernize chemical safety assessment. This scientific work can be expected to make an impact in the discussion regarding REACH revision and support the EU Commission roadmap for phasing out animal testing in chemical safety assessments.

