

Statement supporting European Directive 2010/63/EU (“Directive”) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes

The European Parliament and Commission must oppose the ‘Stop Vivisection’ Citizens’ Initiative that is seeking to repeal the Directive and ban animal research. The Directive is vital to ensure that necessary research involving animals can continue whilst requiring enhanced animal welfare standards.

Summary: The use of animals in research has facilitated major breakthroughs in medicine which have transformed human and animal health. We support research using animals where alternative methods are not available, where the potential benefits to health are compelling, and where acceptable ethical and welfare standards can be met. The Directive has enhanced animal welfare standards and introduced the concepts of refinement, replacement and reduction (‘3Rs’) across the EU, while ensuring Europe remains a world leader in biomedical research. The ‘Stop Vivisection’ Citizens’ Initiative must be opposed by the European Parliament and the Commission - repealing the Directive would represent a major step backwards both for animal welfare in the EU and for Europe’s leading role in advancing human and animal health.

Research using animals has enabled major advances in the understanding of biology and has contributed to the development of nearly every type of treatment used in medical and veterinary practice today. Research on animals continues to be necessary to understand human and animal health and disease, and to develop and improve treatments for patient benefit across the world.

Animals may be used in research under the Directive where the potential medical, veterinary and scientific benefits are compelling and there is no viable alternative method. The use of animals for testing cosmetic products was banned across the EU in 2009 and the importation and sale of cosmetics that have been tested on animals from outside the EU was completely banned in 2013.

For research using animals to be both ethical and scientifically rigorous, it must meet high welfare standards and the implementation of the Directive is key in achieving these standards consistently across the EU. Shaped by consultation with animal welfare groups, scientists and animal technologists, the Directive importantly embeds into EU legislation the requirement to consider the 3Rs when using animals in research. The 3Rs are:

- **Replacement** – methods which avoid or replace the use of animals;
- **Reduction** - methods which minimise the number of animals used per experiment;
- **Refinement** – methods which minimise any suffering and improve animal welfare.

Developments for alternative methods to the use of animals in research, such as use of human cell models and computer modelling, continue to progress and the biosciences sector must continue to drive these forward. However, alternative methods are not able to fully replace the use of animals at this time. For many diseases, including complex conditions such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes, which affect multiple organs, we must understand how the whole organism interacts, which means that research using whole animals continues to be essential.

We call on the European Parliament and Commission to reaffirm their commitment to the Directive. Any roll back from this would both undermine animal welfare and compromise high-quality research using animals. Such research is critical to advancing human and animal health in the EU and globally -and to maintaining Europe’s leading role in that endeavour.

Signatories to the statement



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