
Poster: revision of the directive 86/609/EEC & national reference laboratories

Towards a European science without animal experiments

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The revision of the Directive 86/609/EEC is a key opportunity for the EU to become a world-leader in animal replacement techniques and thereby reflect the wishes of its citizens to spare animals from suffering.

We see the replacement of animal experiments as one of three key themes to be addressed through the revision of the Directive, along with the improved protection of animals and increased transparency, accountability and enforcement.

In order to replace animals in science and develop non-animal techniques, the EU and Member States should have a responsibility to commission, fund and conduct research to replace all scientific uses of animals, in basic medical research as well as in regulatory testing. A clear focus of training provision in the use of Three Rs approaches is essential for all scientists. Three Rs information should be made available through open databases, and databases of negative and unpublished animal studies should be established to prevent duplication.

At the EU level, our vision is to have an over-arching EU Centre of Excellence for Three Rs Research, to co-ordinate and set a strategy for Member States bodies, charitable institutions and industry replacement activity. Along with state-of-the-art laboratory facilities and policy expertise, the centre would also play a key role in disseminating information between national centres and promoting replacement worldwide. Within the new centre, ECVAM should have an expanded role to conduct validation studies, provide training, and promote the acceptance and use of non-animal regulatory tests.

At the Member State level, national centres should exist to interact with the EU centre as well as working flexibly with charities and companies, with funding assistance from national research programmes. With the provision of leadership, co-ordination, training and multi-disciplinary strategies and expertise for animal replacement, the centres would develop a driving force for change at the national level and raise the profile of replacement initiatives in academic and industrial research circles. Ideally, these centres would have the capacity to conduct in-house research and commission key projects to overcome current barriers in animal replacement. A key to the progression of non-animal research is that national centres should be given funding for researchers to develop, pre-validate and validate non-animal replacements for research and regulatory tests.

We see the establishment of EU and national centres within a research and development framework as essential in achieving an EU-wide strategy to replace all animal experiments, to benefit people and animals.

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