

Revision of EU Directive 86/609 on the protection of laboratory animals:

Good science and animal welfare go hand in hand - an open letter to MEPs

EFPIA, the voice of the pharmaceutical industry in Europe, acknowledges and supports the need for the review of Directive 86/609 to reflect technological and scientific advances in animal welfare.

We believe the Commission text and a number of European Parliament amendments will considerably improve welfare of laboratory animals and therefore the quality of scientific outcomes. These include a greater emphasis on the 'three R's' of Reduction, Refinement and Replacement of animal testing, mandatory ethical review, a significant improvement in standards of animal welfare across Europe and a greater consistency of the regulatory environment in Member States.

The debate to date suggests that the European Parliament wishes to strike an appropriate balance between animal welfare and research needs and avoid provisions that present unworkable administrative burdens offering no tangible gain in animal welfare. If this balance is not achieved, the scientific need to undertake this kind of research will not be removed, but the processes may be driven out of Europe and away from its scrutiny.

EFPIA therefore calls upon MEPs to adopt a proportionate and pragmatic approach to this legislation to promote sound research, while addressing improvements in animal welfare.

Animal studies are a small but fundamental part of biomedical research in Europe. They help develop fundamental biological knowledge and deliver modern vaccines, treatments and new cures for patients for many conditions such as cancers, Parkinson's, Alzheimer's and infectious diseases. Virtually every medical achievement for more than a century has depended directly or indirectly on research involving animals.

The complete replacement of animals in medical research remains a long-term objective, however due to scientific limitations it is only possible in few areas. Therefore such activities will remain a key component of the study of diseases and patient safety. Replacement, refinement and reduction measures have already brought tangible welfare benefits while the scientific community strives for further improvements.

Therefore, EFPIA calls upon the European Parliament to act in the best interest of patients and the welfare of laboratory animals. This means that any amendments adopted should not adversely impact bioscience research or medical and scientific progress, nor should they drive animal research away from the high standards that already exist within Europe.

Brian AGER

Director General

European Federation of Pharmaceutical industries and Associations