



Media Release

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EU blasted by campaigners over lab animal cruelty – crucial meeting on 12 October

The BUAV has today condemned the EU for ignoring public opinion after a leaked document shows that the Council of Ministers wants researchers to have the right to cause suffering to animals in laboratories which is not only severe but which is also long-lasting. Such a move would result in untold cruelty and suffering to thousands of animals across Europe. Only recently a YouGov poll in the UK, Germany, France, Italy, Sweden and the Czech Republic showed that a resounding 84% believe that experiments causing severe pain or suffering – i.e. whether or not long-lasting - should be prohibited.

The leaked document (*“Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes”*) from the EU Presidency has been sent to the Working Party of Veterinary Experts to be discussed at its meeting next week, 12th October. The document also gives examples of shocking experiments that researchers want to be allowed to continue to carry out on animals. They include: poisoning animals to death; submitting animals to repeated electric shocks from which they cannot escape (in order to induce ‘learned helplessness’); restraining animals to such an extent that they develop stomach ulcers or heart failure; forcing animals to swim until they give up in exhaustion; and giving animals a lethal dose of radiation or chemotherapy.

The animal research industry community acknowledges that these experiments cause severe suffering but claim, absurdly, that the suffering is not long-lasting and would therefore not even need special permission.

The same YouGov poll showed very large majorities wishing to see bans on the use of primates, dogs and cats in experiments causing suffering, a ban on all experiments which are not for life-threatening or serious human conditions; and maximum openness, with only information which is confidential or would identify individuals or establishments withheld. Again, EU politicians seem determined to do the exact opposite.

BUAV’s Chief Executive, Michelle Thew said: *“We are appalled to learn of the proposals that the Council has made. This is a major step backwards for animal welfare. It’s high time European politicians started listening to the public rather than the self-interested pleading of the multi-billion pound animal research and supply industry.”*

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Notes:

1. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 7139 adults and took place in the UK France, Germany, Italy, Sweden and the Czech Republic. Fieldwork was undertaken between 24th February - 4th March 2009. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of the population sizes of the countries surveyed.
 - **81%** of people agree or strongly agree the new law should **prohibit all experiments causing pain or suffering to primates**
 - **79%** of people agree or strongly agree the new law should **prohibit all experiments on animals which do not relate to serious or life-threatening human conditions**
 - **84%** of people agree or strongly agree the new law should **prohibit all experiments causing severe pain or suffering to any animal**
 - **80%** of people agree or strongly agree **all information about animal experiments should be publicly available**, except information which is confidential and information which would identify researchers or where they work
 - **73%** of people **disagree or strongly disagree** that the new law should **permit experiments causing pain or suffering to cats**
 - **77%** of people **disagree or strongly disagree** that the new law should **permit experiments causing pain or suffering**
2. The document (Article 15(2)) would allow suffering which is both severe and long-lasting where there are 'exceptional and scientifically justifiable needs', a restriction which is likely to prove meaningless in practice. The experiments summarised above are listed in Annex IX (under the 'severe' category) – they would not need to fall within the Article 15(2) exception
3. The document is available on request.
4. The original proposal from the European Commission banned suffering which was both severe and prolonged. The European Parliament removed that protection in its first reading. It did require there to be an upper limit on suffering but the examples given above show that this would be meaningless – no one has been able to suggest what would be banned. The Parliament will get a further chance to consider the issue once the Council has finalised its position.