



## Media Release

For immediate release  
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### **European ombudsman asked to investigate ‘deeply flawed and biased’ report about monkeys in research as the European Parliament considers animal experimentation law**

The European Ombudsman has today been asked to investigate a complaint that a report by the European Commission into experiments on non-human primates is scientifically flawed and biased. The charge is made by the EU-wide **European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE)**, which has submitted a 26-page complaint.

The submission of this complaint coincides with the plenary vote that took place in the EU Parliament on Tuesday 5 May concerning revision of EU Directive 86/609 that governs animal experimentation. The trade and use of primates in research within the EU is one of the controversial issues to be voted on.

In May 2008, the Commission asked one of its standing scientific committees, the Scientific Committee on Health and Scientific Risks (SCHER), to conduct an inquiry into whether primate research works and the alternatives to it. The inquiry was in part a response to a written declaration signed by no fewer than 433 MEPs in 2007 calling on the Commission to bring forward proposals to replace primate use.

In fact, the Commission’s proposals, based on SCHER’s report which strongly backed primate use and played down the role and potential of alternatives, contain nothing to phase out primate use. A further change by a key committee of the European Parliament would allow primate use for just about any purpose. The full Parliament will vote on this and other aspects of animal experiments on 5th May. The ECEAE’s main complaints are:

- Neither SCHER nor the working group it set up had the necessary expertise in primate research nor in alternative techniques. Most of the working group members were animal researchers (but not primate researchers). Only one member had (limited) expertise in alternatives to primate use. Contrary to its own procedures, the Commission refused even to disclose who was on the working group until after SCHER produced its report.
- SCHER simply *assumed* that primate research works without analyzing the evidence. The Commission agrees that this was a key part of its function
- SCHER ignored huge amounts of peer-reviewed evidence submitted by the ECEAE and numerous other animal protection and patient safety organisations casting serious doubt on whether primate research works. This covers such important areas as AIDS, strokes,

malaria and Parkinson's disease. For example: not one of the 85 or more candidate AIDS vaccines tested successfully on primates has worked in patients; over 1,000 potential neuroprotective stroke treatments have been tested in animal models but none of the 150 which have progressed to human trials has proved successful.

- Similarly, SCHER dealt dismissively and cursorily with the substantial amount of evidence submitted about the existing and potential application of alternatives, including neuroimaging and computer modeling.

**Michelle Thew, chief executive of the ECEAE** said:

*'A recent opinion poll by YouGov in the UK, France, Germany, Sweden, Italy and the Czech Republic showed that 81% of people are opposed to experiments on primates causing pain or suffering. This issue is enormously important not only for animal welfare but also for human health. It is truly unforgivable that the EU should come up with such a one-sided and unscientific report, from a working group packed with inexperienced animal researchers. We are asking the ombudsman to order the Commission to set up a proper scientific inquiry as a matter of urgency.'*

**ENDS**

**For further information contact the BUAV Media Office on 44(0) 20 7619 6978 or out of hours on +44 (0)7850 510 955 or visit our Web site: [www.eceae.org](http://www.eceae.org)**

**Notes**

1. The ombudsman deals with the maladministration by EU institutions. It is maladministration to set up an inexperienced body, heavily biased to one side of the argument, and for that body then to produce an unbalanced and unscientific report, ignoring huge swathes of evidence supplied to it
2. All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 7139 adults. 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.
3. ECEAE Member Organisations: ADDA (Spain), Animal (Portugal), Animal Friends Croatia (Croatia), Animal Rights Sweden (Sweden), Animalia (Finland), BUAV (UK), Deutscher Tierschutzbund (Germany), Dyreveralliansen (Norway), EDEV (Netherlands), Forsøgsdyrenes Værn (Denmark), GAIA (Belgium), Irish Anti-Vivisection Society (Ireland), LAV (Italy), One Voice (France), People for Animal Rights (Germany), Svoboda zvírat (Czech Republic), SSPA (Switzerland), Vier Pfoten (Austria)