



Media Release

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European ombudsman launches inquiry into ‘deeply flawed and biased’ Commission report about monkeys in research

The European Ombudsman has launched an investigation into a report by the European Commission on experiments on non-human primates (NHP). This follows a 26-page complaint submitted on 9th October 2009 by the EU-wide **European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE)**. The coalition contends that the Commission’s report is deeply scientifically flawed and biased in favour of NHP research.

The trade and use of primates in research within the EU is one of the controversial issues that is being considered in the revision of EU Directive 86/609 on the protection of animals used in experiments. The revision has reached its final stages; the Council of Ministers will soon adopt its position

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, contained nothing to phase out primate use. Current proposals would allow primate use for just about any purpose. In a letter to the ECEAE dated 28th January 2010, the European Ombudsman states that he has asked the Commission to answer the following allegations made by the ECEAE:

- The Commission failed to ensure that the working group established by SCHER to issue the opinion had sufficient expertise in the area of non-human primate (NHP) research.
- The Commission failed to ensure that SCHER took due account of evidence supplied by interest groups about the efficacy of NHP research and alternatives to it.

In its complaint, the ECEAE argues that 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. And, worst of all, the Commission argues that scientists attached to alternatives groups are not fit to serve on its working groups, whereas animal researchers are.

The ECEAE also contends that 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 commented:

'The ECEAE welcomes this inquiry launched by the European Ombudsman. It is truly unforgivable that the European Commission should come up with such a one-sided and unscientific report, from a working group packed with inexpert animal researchers. We are disappointed, however, as to how long the ombudsman process has taken and the fact that it is now out of sync with the Directive timetable. If our allegations are substantiated, as they should be, it may be too late to have any impact on the Directive. This is unacceptable and we urge the Ombudsman to complete the inquiry as a matter of urgency'.

ENDS

For further information and copies of the correspondence contact the BUAV Media Office on 44(0) 207 700 4888 or out of hours on + 44 (0)7850 510 955 or visit our Web site: www.eceae.org

Notes

1. ECEAE Member Organisations: [ADDA \(Spain\)](#), [Animal \(Portugal\)](#), [Animal Friends Croatia \(Croatia\)](#), [Animal Rights Sweden \(Sweden\)](#), [Animalia \(Finland\)](#), [BUAV \(UK\)](#), [Deutscher Tierschutzbund \(Germany\)](#), [Dyrevernalliansen \(Norway\)](#), [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 \(Austria\)](#)