

## Healthcare industry BW

### Improved protection of animals used in scientific experiments

**The European Commission today presented a proposal that aims to strengthen the protection of animals still used in scientific procedures in line with the European Union's Protocol on Animal Welfare, ensure a level playing field throughout the EU for industry and enhance the quality of research conducted in the EU. The new provisions will also contribute to minimising as far as possible the number of animals used in experiments.**

European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "It is absolutely important to steer away from testing on animals. Scientific research must focus on finding alternative methods to animal testing, but where alternatives are not available the situation of animals still used in experiments must be improved".

The objective of the Commission's proposal is to strengthen the EU legislation in force on the protection of animals used for experimental purposes, notably by requiring ethical evaluations to be carried out before projects using animals are authorised and by laying down minimum requirements on housing and animal care.

The proposed directive includes within its scope animals used in basic research, education and training. It covers all live non-human vertebrate animals plus certain other species likely to experience pain. The use of non-human primates is subject to restrictions, and the proposal also introduces a ban on the use of great apes – chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas and orangutans – in scientific procedures. Only when survival of the species itself is at stake, or in the case of an unexpected outbreak of a life-threatening or debilitating disease in human beings, can a Member State exceptionally be granted permission for their use.

#### The "Three Rs" principle of replacing, reducing, and refining animal testing

At present it is not possible to ban outright the use of animals for safety testing or biomedical research. The proposed revision thus seeks to ensure that animals are used only where no other means are available. Their use must be fully justifiable and the expected benefits must outweigh the harm caused to the animals. The proposal would also ensure that animals receive suitable care and treatment such as appropriately sized cages and an environment adapted to each species. These provisions would be continually monitored.

The proposed revision would also require projects involving animals to be authorised by a competent authority before they can go ahead. Organisations wishing to breed, supply or use animals would be obliged to seek authorisation for their activities and for the personnel working with the animals.

The "Three Rs" principle of replacing, reducing, and refining animal testing is firmly anchored in the Commission's proposal. The Commission believes strongly in the need to find alternative methods to testing on animals. Where this is not possible the number of animals used must be reduced or the testing methods refined so as to cause less harm to the animals.

Some 12 million animals are used in experiments throughout the Union each year.

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