

On the new European Directive on vivisection: update

The time schedule of the EU Animals Directive 86/609/EEC concerning «the protection of animals used for scientific purposes» (on which see <HR_DIR>) has it that on September 8 the second reading will take place at the European Parliament. «If passed by the second reading in September, the Directive will be formally “adopted” by all European member states towards the end of 2010» (<AMRC>). The text of the Directive which has been approved at first reading on May 5, 2009, and on June 3, 2010 has been adopted by the Council of the European Union, is in <DIR>.

The Directive says (item (6), p. 4):

New scientific knowledge is available in respect of factors influencing animal welfare as well as the capacity of animals to sense and express pain, suffering, distress and lasting harm. It is therefore necessary to improve the welfare of animals used in scientific procedures by raising the minimum standards for their protection in line with the latest scientific developments.

It is preposterous, not to say (also) hypocritical, to pretend taking into account «new scientific knowledge» as regards animal welfare while dismissing the huge amount of new and old scientific knowledge concerning the intrinsic lack of scientific value of this obsolete and dangerous method. It is all too clear that the European Parliament and the European Commission are trying to please those lobbying to perpetuate vivisection and who do not care that vivisection does not work scientifically – indeed this a virtue from their standpoint.

The Directive also says that (item (7), p. 5):

Attitudes towards animals also depend on national perceptions, and there is a demand in certain Member States to maintain more extensive animal-welfare rules than those agreed upon at the level of the Union. In the interests of the animals, and provided it does not affect the functioning of the internal market, it is appropriate to allow the Member States certain flexibility to maintain national rules aimed at more extensive protection of animals in so far as they are compatible with the Treaty.

So the Member States will be allowed to keep the old regulations, insofar as this will «not affect the functioning of the internal market» – they will not be allowed to enforce new, stricter regulations. Notice, also, that the European Commission admits that there are already «certain Member States» whose rules, as regards animal welfare, are «more extensive» than the rules contained in the new directive. In other words, the EC is conceding that the Directive is not an improvement as compared to all EU Member States – not even as regards animal welfare.

The Directive adds (item (10), p. 6):

While it is desirable to replace the use of live animals in procedures by other methods not entailing the use of live animals, the use of live animals continues to be necessary to protect human and animal health and the environment. However, this Directive represents an important step towards achieving the final goal of full replacement of procedures on live

animals for scientific and educational purposes as soon as it is scientifically possible to do so.

This is where the pretence of revising the existing regulation in view of «new scientific knowledge» crumbles. The use of live animals is NOT necessary to protect «human and animal health and the environment», it only serves the purpose of masking threats to human health and to the environment. The eminent surgeon and pharmacologist Henry J. Bigelow wrote about 150 years ago:

There will come a time when the world will look back to modern vivisection in the name of science as they now do the burning at the stake in the name of religion.

For many scientists this time has come already. But the European Commission clearly despises their opinion, the opinion of the majority of the European citizens – and the Precautionary Principle.

A petition against the EU Directive can be signed here:

<http://www.leal.it/campagna-bruxelles/petizione-online/>

References

<AMRC> http://www.amrc.org.uk/animals-in-medical-research_revision-of-eu-animals-directive_timeline

<DIR> <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/10/st06/st06106-re01.en10.pdf>

<HR_DIR> MAMONE-CAPRIA M. 2009: “On the new European Directive on vivisection: a dangerous and cruel pseudoscience enforced against the will of the European citizens”
http://www.hansruesch.net/articoli/euro_dir.pdf

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