



FRAME response to EU "Stop Vivisection" initiative discussion

"Need to start a much more constructive dialogue between scientists and non-scientists."

The discussion this week of the "Stop Vivisection" initiative has highlighted several extremely important issues. Firstly, the high priority that needs to be given to replacement of animal experiments with scientifically valid alternatives. Secondly, the limited relevance to human disease processes of many animal studies. Thirdly, the poor understanding across much of society of why animal experiments are undertaken currently and the bad consequences that would ensue were these to be banned in Europe. And finally, the chasm of misunderstanding between the scientists who undertake animal experiments and those who believe they are inappropriate and unnecessary.

Our vision in FRAME is of a world where animal experiments are not required because scientifically valid non-animal methods can be used in their place. When FRAME was founded in 1969, this was a bold and long term goal. Since then, we and others have worked hard to develop and validate suitable non-animal methods, and to ensure they are used by the scientific community. Very substantial progress has been made, as reflected in the current ban on animal safety testing of cosmetics in Europe.

But it is unrealistic to assert that all animal procedures are now unnecessary and that they can be replaced by suitable non-animal methods. In particular, it is widely accepted within the scientific community that non-animal methods are not yet suitable for determining the safety in humans of new candidate pharmaceuticals, prior to their entry into clinical trials. New drugs are needed urgently to treat many diseases and this must remain a top priority. Procedures on animals also continue to provide valuable new insights into disease processes in humans and in animals. Let us also not overlook the need to deliver new veterinary medicines (e.g. by providing vaccines for bovine foot and mouth disease) as well as human medicines.

Instead, we believe that a more logical focus of attention is on ensuring that new non-animal methods are produced that can progressively eliminate the need for animal procedures. This will require further research, which in turn will require funding from governmental and non-governmental sources. Pressure needs to be exerted to ensure that the necessary funding is provided and the necessary new approaches are developed and utilised in a timely manner.

We also need to start a much more constructive dialogue between scientists and non-scientists, which enable everyone to share a common understanding of the challenges we face and the best ways to meet them.

- FRAME Director Dr Gerry Kenna

Note: The European Parliament discussed the future of animal experiments in response to a 1.2 million signature petition calling for existing laws to be scrapped. The petition was organised by the Italian-based Stop Vivisection citizens' initiative. It pointed out to the Parliament that new, alternative methods were subject to strict validation controls, even though existing animal models have never had to meet similar standards, and called for changes to bring about a move towards swifter implementation of alternative methods.

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FRAME is the Fund for the Replacement of Animals in Medical Experiments.

It promotes the replacement of laboratory animals with non-animal methods, through better science.

Its ultimate aim is the elimination of the need to use laboratory animals in any kind of scientific or medical procedures.