

BRIEFING



Seventh Framework Programme 2007 – 2013

January 2006

‘Research, technological, development and demonstration activities’ Building the European research area of knowledge for growth

Key Issues for Animal Welfare

In April 2005 the commission published a proposal (COM(2005)0119) for the 7th Framework Programme for Research to run from 2007 to 2013. This will replace the 6th Programme. The 7th Programme will focus on competitiveness and employment within the European Union. The proposed Framework Programme consists of four programmes: ‘Cooperation’, which is divided into nine themes (health; food, agriculture and biotechnology; nanoscience; energy; environment; transport; socio-economic sciences and humanities; and security and space), ‘Ideas’, ‘People’, and ‘Capacities’. Under ‘Cooperation’ there are two references to alternative tests methods, under Themes 1 (‘Health’) and 6 (‘Environments’).

Eurogroup for Animal Welfare supports the objectives of the proposed 7th Framework Programme. However, the Commission proposal does not fully address vital concerns relating to animal welfare. Research activities supported by this Framework Programme should respect and take into account animal welfare considerations in compliance with the legal obligation of and the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals to the Amsterdam Treaty. This requires the Community and the Member States to pay full regard to the welfare requirements of animals in formulating and implementing policies, including research policy. Research for the development and validation of alternatives to animal testing should be promoted and enhanced in order to reduce the use of animals in research and testing focusing on the 3Rs, with a view ultimately to replace animal use; and research for the animal welfare in food production.

Research for the development and validation of alternative testing strategies, in particular non-animal testing methods

The promotion of non-animal testing should be an important part of the Seventh Framework Programme. However, the Commission proposal does not include a strategy for the development of alternative test methods. In accordance with the requirements in the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals and the Sixth Community Environment Action Programme, a significant increase in funding and resources is necessary to speed up the development, validation and acceptance of alternative testing strategies, in particular non-animal testing methods, in a number of the Themes in the proposed Programme on Cooperation of the 7th Framework Programme, e.g. ‘Health’; ‘Environment’; and ‘People’.

The objective to promote and enhance the development of non-animal methods and alternative testing strategies should therefore be specifically included. In particular, in view of the

requirements of Council Directive 76/768/EEC on cosmetic products, as amended, the objective of the proposed EU chemicals Regulation to promote non-animal testing and in view of the serious public concern of animal testing in European society about the use of animals in testing and research.

Animal welfare and implementation of the 3Rs (Reduce, Refine and Replace)

It is important the 3Rs be integrated and taken into account in the design and implementation of all research projects in accordance with ethical reviews and the requirements in the Protocol on the Protection and Welfare of Animals and Articles 5 and 23 of Council Directive 86/609/EEC.

Replacement of the use of non-human primates

The European Commission and Council have repeatedly stated their commitment to reduce and replace the use of non-human primates in research, such as in the Preamble to Council Decision 1999/575/EC on the European Convention for the protection of animals used in research. This should therefore be reflected in the types and selection of projects funded under the Framework Programme. With the serious public concern in Europe about animal testing, it is not appropriate for the EU to fund the development of *in vivo* methods where the use of non-human primates are concerned.

Welfare and health of animals in food production, in particular in relation to housing, husbandry, breeding, transport and slaughter

To ensure safer, healthier and higher quality food, and to address public concerns about animal welfare and the origins of their food, substantial investments in research is necessary to both investigate the effects of production systems on animal welfare and ways to improve animal welfare in food production (Theme 2: 'Food, Agriculture and Biotechnology'). To date vast sums have been spent on research and development to improve animal production, however, R&D on animal welfare friendly/sustainable production has been miniscule by comparison, but that research funding which has been available has shown that the returns can be very high. Technical research should focus on the fields of ethology, socio-economics of different methods of production, Health/welfare links, and technical research should be coupled to initiatives to develop technologies, techniques and principles for higher welfare production. Furthermore, policy research should focus on methods of delivering higher welfare through policies relating to education, public concerned, and the market for animal welfare, legislation and institutional strengthening.

Education and training

It is necessary to support not only animal welfare in research and the development and validation of alternative test methods, but also to support and enable their use by researchers across the EU. This is in compliance with Directive 86/609 and Action 34 of the Science and Society Action Plan: 'Protecting animals in research: Networks of animal welfare committees will be fostered and training of young scientists on animal welfare issues will be promoted to support the implementation of European legislation on the protection of animals in research'.