



Meeting Report

Promoting 3Rs in Finland

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The Finnish National Consensus Platform for Alternatives (Fin-copa) organized its annual seminar in Helsinki on May 21, 2018 at the Finnish Ministry of the Interior. This year the seminar focused on current activities in promoting the 3Rs in Finland with four invited speakers. The seminar venue was provided by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry with the possibility for remote attendance via Skype.

The seminar started with a recent update on the Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes (2010/63/EU) by **Tiina Pullola**, (Senior Veterinary Officer, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Finland). She addressed the latest changes in annex III regarding the accommodation of animals and in annex IV regarding the methods of killing animals. Accommodation requirements are now extended to cephalopods and zebrafish. Questions whether the requirements should be extended also to trout were raised. Accepted methods in the process of killing animals were revised so that the EU member states, with a permit of exception, can use other methods than the ones listed in the directive if the method is considered as humane as the existing ones. There are differences between the member states, for example regarding how killing of fetuses is performed. In Finland, however, no permits of exception are allowed. Also, the article 54 on reporting was revised to accelerate and specify the reporting of statistical information on the use of animals in procedures, to collect summaries into a common EU database, and to include retrospective assessment of the procedures in the summary. In addition, the EU has launched a pilot funding of €1 million for alternatives to animal testing with the focus on education and training.

Prof. **Hanna-Marja Voipio** (Director of Laboratory Animal Centre, University of Oulu, Finland) introduced the educational and training requirements for animal users carrying out projects and procedures based on Directive 2010/63/EU. The directive aims at authorized and harmonized education of animal users in different EU member states. Prof. Voipio emphasized the different roles and competences of animal users in addition to the need for regular updates of knowledge and skills. In Finland, the education and training of animal users is species-specific and courses are adapted to cover also animal species used more rarely including farm animals and wild animals. In practical training, the emphasis is on handling of the animal only, and the procedures are trained after the course as needed.

Prof. **Outi Vainio** (Professor of Veterinary Pharmacology, University of Helsinki, Finland) addressed the latest activities of the Council on the Protection of Animals used for Scientific and Ed-

ucational Purposes. The council is an independent advisory board based on the Finnish Act on the Protection of Animals Used for Scientific or Educational Purposes. The main mission of the council is to follow and promote the implementation of the 3Rs in Finland. In 2015, the council conducted a survey concerning the utilization of the 3R principles in research. Approximately 10% of researchers working in Finland answered the survey. It was found that the majority of researchers are well aware of the 3R principles and the methods promoting the principles and consider it important to apply these principles to improve animal welfare. However, the researchers reported a need for further education, e.g., in the use of cell and tissue models, animal models and statistical methods. The council has also given recommendations for rehoming of animals used in projects. As their latest achievement, the council established a 3R consortium in Finland.

In the last presentation Prof. **Tuula Heinonen** (Head of the Finnish Centre for Alternative Methods, University of Tampere, Finland) introduced the recently founded 3R consortium. The consortium, supported by the Finnish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, is coordinated by the Finnish Centre for Alternative Methods and comprises representatives from academia and the pharmaceutical industry. The 3R consortium aims to act as the national focal point of the 3Rs in Finland collaborating with universities, institutions and industry performing animal experiments and developing non-animal methods and approaches. The consortium aims to help promising Finnish research groups to bring their methods towards validation and international use. As a response to a need for further education of Finnish researchers, the consortium will also focus on the education and training of the 3Rs. Several courses including *In vitro* models, Ethical principles of research using animals, *In silico* training, and New technologies for animal studies and species selection are organized in 2018. Finally, Prof. Heinonen introduced other 3R centers in Europe.

The seminar provided an informative overview of the current 3R activities in Finland. The seminar aims to reach a wide audience and to maintain an active discussion on the 3Rs between different stakeholders. It can be concluded that there is an active promotion of the 3Rs in Finland and a strong interest to contribute and co-operate beyond our borders.

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