News

EU: 1 million signatures for Stop Vivisection initiative confirmed

On April 23, the Stop Vivisection initiative published on its website that national authorities of EU member states confirmed to them that more than 1 million valid signatures for the European Citizens' Initiative Stop Vivisection were collected by November 1, 2013. This means that Stop Vivisection will be the first European Citizens' Initiative discussed and analyzed by the new European Parliament and European Commission.

In September 2014, the official hearing of the initiative's representatives André Menache and Gianni Tamino will be held in Brussels at the European Parliament. This will be followed in October by an official reply of the European Commission that will explain in which way it will act to comply with the initiative's requests.

The petition states: "*We urge the European Commission to abrogate directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes and to present a new proposal that does away with animal experimentation and instead makes compulsory the use – in biomedical and toxicological research – of data directly relevant for the human species*."

The European citizens' initiative allows one million EU citizens to participate directly in the development of EU policies, by calling on the European Commission to make a legislative proposal.

Adapted from http://www.stopvivisection.eu/en

EU: ECHA reports progress in the use of alternatives to animal testing

According to ECHA's tri-annual report about the use of alternatives to animal testing, released on June 2, 2014, registrants have widely used alternative methods to generate information required by REACH to ensure the safe use of chemicals. Most registrants conform with the data sharing obligations and industry has increasingly used *in vitro* methods, built categories and predicted substance properties by read-across.

ECHA's second report to the European Commission on the use of alternative methods under REACH shows an increase in the use of these methods. The report's analysis is based on over 38,000 registration dossiers submitted for the 2010 and 2013 registration deadlines.

According to the report, most registrants do conform with the data sharing obligation under REACH to fulfil the information requirements and to avoid unnecessary animal testing. Registrants also built categories and predicted substance properties using read-across approaches in up to 75% of analyzed dossiers for at least one endpoint. Read-across or category approach has been particularly used for higher-tier endpoints where alternative, non-animal test methods are not yet available.

In addition, registrants started to take up *in vitro* methods for skin and eye irritation, using cells, tissues or organs. The total number of *in vitro* studies submitted for skin and eye irritation has tripled since 2011: almost 20% of analyzed dossiers contained them for these endpoints.

So far, ECHA's database contains information on 7,939 new experimental studies for those endpoints which may involve vertebrate animal testing. Out of these, 4,887 are tests on vertebrate animals and 3,052 are *in vitro* tests.

During the analysis, ECHA found that 293 tests were conducted on vertebrate animals without a prior submission and approval of a proposal for testing, as required by REACH. Registrants have the obligation to include higher tier studies even if they were conducted for e.g. other regulations and therefore ECHA's decision requesting the study may not have been required. ECHA is further analyzing the cases to establish the possible reasons. ECHA will inform Member State Authorities on the final results of this further analysis so they can take the next steps they consider to be appropriate.

Testing on vertebrate animals is only allowed as a last resort under REACH and ECHA's objective is to promote non-animal testing methods and other alternatives. Every three years, ECHA reports to the Commission on how the alternative methods have been used to generate information on intrinsic properties of chemical substances and for the risk assessment. The next report is due in 2017.

ECHA will use the results of the report to promote the use of alternative methods in support of registrants aiming for the 2018 registration deadline.

Adapted from ECHA press release
ECHA/PR/14/10

EU: EURL ECVAM launches CheLIST database

A key requirement for the development, characterization and eventual validation of alternative (non-animal) methods for use in biomedical research and regulatory safety assessment is the availability of suitable reference or benchmark chemicals for which reliable structural, physicochemical and biological property data are available. Such chemicals may possess for example a specific mode-of-action or be representative of a class of chemicals associated with a particular commercial or regulatory

sector. Having the right set of reference chemicals allows rigorous and systematic evaluation of a method's performance which is necessary to understand its strengths and limitations, build confidence in the information it provides, and to indicate where and how it can be most successfully applied.

However the type of information needed to select reference chemicals is typically scattered across a plethora of heterogeneous databases, project websites and peer-reviewed literature. This severely hampers the progress in advancing alternative methods such as *in vitro* assays and computational biology models used for predictive toxicology or pharmacology. Moreover, many valuable highly-curated lists of reference chemicals already exist and could be exploited for other projects and purposes but unfortunately this is frequently hindered due to lack of awareness or lack of easy access.

To tackle this issue, the EU Reference Laboratory for alternatives to animal testing (EURL ECVAM) of the European Commission's Joint Research Center has released the "Chemical Lists Information System" (CheLIST) at http://chelist.jrc.ec.europa.eu/ that provides a means of identifying whether a chemical (or chemical group) has been tested in a major EU or international research project and also (to a limited extent for now) whether the chemical appears on a specific regulatory inventory. Information is provided on chemical identifiers (e.g. name, CAS number) and chemical structure, and the database can be searched according to these types of information. The various datasets and inventories can also be compared in order to identify overlaps in chemical membership and to generate customized lists. All lists can be downloaded and the references provided for each list allow traceability back to the source.

http://ihcp.jrc.ec.europa.eu/
May 14, 2014

GER: 2015 Felix Wankel Animal-Welfare-Research-Award announced

The Felix Wankel Animal-Welfare-Research-Award is usually given every two years by the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the Ludwig-Maximilians-University Munich for outstanding experimental and innovative scientific papers aiming at or resulting in the replacement or reduction of animal testing, the general fostering of the idea of animal protection, ensuring the health and the appropriate housing of laboratory animals, pets and livestock, or supporting core research for the purpose of enhancing animal protection.

The Award is endowed with up to 30,000 Euros. The award may be divided among several prize winners. Utilization of the prize money is not subject to any conditions. Nominations may be made by scientists as well as members of scientific institutions, expert societies, authorities, etc., or representatives of the scientific media. The nominees can be persons or groups involved in research in Germany or abroad. The papers should be recent, contain the results of original research and must be available in print. Papers which have already received an animal protection award will normally not be considered. Self-nomination is not permitted.

Deadline: September 30, 2014
More information:
http://www.felix-wankel-forschungspreis.de

INDIA: A giant step forward to replace the use of dogs in experiments

The Committee for the Purpose of Control and Supervision of Experiments on Animals (CPCSEA), which regulates the use of animals in experiments in India, has urged the Drug Controller General, Dr G. N. Singh, to examine the country's use of dogs in regulatory testing and consider switching to humane alternative approaches instead.

The move came after Dr Shiranee Pereira Tettamanti, Member CPCSEA and Co-Founder of People for Animals (Chennai), placed a proposal before the committee in 2013 to consider a ban on the use of dogs in research and made a presentation to the committee on the ethical and legal need to protect "man's best friend" from testing. This was followed by a presentation by Michelle Thew, Chief Executive of the BUAV and Cruelty Free International, on the results of a ground-breaking scientific analysis carried out by the BUAV, in conjunction with FRAME, which shows that using dogs in experiments to predict toxic responses in humans is not scientifically justifiable (Bailey et al. (2013). An analysis of the use of dogs in predicting human toxicology and drug safety. *ATLA 41*, 335-350)

In the letter to Dr Singh, the CPSCSEA acknowledges the paper and states, "*It appears that the dog test provides essentially no additional confidence in the outcome for humans, but is at great ethical and financial cost. … The CPSCEA urges DCGI (Drug Controller General of India) to look into the matter and consider the use of other alternatives*."

People for Animals India, the BUAV and Cruelty Free International have been working with the CPCSEA on the issue for close to a year. This decision is not just a milestone for the welfare of animals in laboratories, where dogs have been recognised as companion animals, but a milestone wherein a nation has recognized the need to promote humane science. In urging the Drug Controller General of India to back these scientific findings and the recommendations of the CPCSEA, it is hoped that India leads the world by becoming the first country to end the use of dogs in regulatory testing and hence usher in a new era in toxicity testing.

Shiranee Pereira
Member, CPCSEA, Govt. of India

SUI: News from ALTEX

ALTEX proudly announces the winner of the ALTEX Award 2014: "In *vitro* metabolism and bioavailability tests for endocrine active substances: What is needed next for regulatory purposes" by Miriam N. Jacobs, Susan C. Laws, Kate Willett, Pat Schmieder, Jenny Odum and Toine F. Bovee (ALTEX 3/13, http://dx.doi.org/10.14573/altex.2013.3.331). The prize of €2,000, sponsored by the Doerenkamp Zbinden Foundation, will be awarded to Miriam Jacobs at WC9 in Prague this August. Editorial board members and ALTEX staff voted on full articles published in 2013; articles including members of the Board of ALTEX were excluded.

The composition of the ALTEX editorial board has recently been revised to include new areas that have been contributing to the 3Rs in ALTEX in recent years. ALTEX thanks the outgoing board members for their many years of service on the ALTEX editorial board, reviewing articles and voting on the ALTEX Prize. The new editorial board is listed in the Imprint.

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UK: DHT awards summer studentships, announces conference

The Dr Hadwen Trust (DHT), the UK's leading non-animal medical research charity will award seven Summer Studentships to early career scientists in 2014. The recipients of the awards will gain laboratory experience in developing techniques that will help replace the use of animals in research, and aims to embed the use and development of animal replacement methodologies into the minds of the next generation of research scientists. The projects cover animal-replacement research into Parkinson's disease, liver cancer, muscle diseases, diabetes, tuberculosis, the blood-brain barrier and schizophrenia, see http://bit.ly/1np4Dh1.

The Summer Studentships form part of the DHT's strategy to focus on education in 2014. The conference "Animal Replacement Science 2014: Improving relevance to human disease – challenges, innovations and applications" will be organised by the DHT and will take place on November 27 in London. Sponsors of the event include the Lush Prize.

Over the last 5 years the Dr Hadwen Trust has funded over £2.25 million worth of animal replacement research projects across the UK at student, PhD and post-doctoral level.

DHT press release
June 20, 2014

UK: Nominations for 2014 LUSH Prize sought

Now in its third year, The Lush Prize supports animal-free testing by awarding money prizes totaling £250,000.

Nominations and entries are invited in the five prize categories:

– Lobbying
– Public Awareness
– Science
– Training
– Young Researcher Award

Nominations must be submitted by the closing date of July 24, 2014. Individuals can nominate projects they like, or organizations can nominate themselves. Nominations are accepted from anywhere in the world, for projects which have taken place anywhere in the world.

More information: http://www.lushprize.org/

USA: Beagle Freedom Law passed in Minnesota

On May 20, 2014, Minnesota became the first state in the U.S. and first political body in the world to mandate that laboratory dogs and cats be offered for public adoption through a rescue organization if they are healthy at the end of the experiment.

The Beagle Freedom Law is part of the Omnibus Supplemental Budget Bill, authored by Sen. Scott Dibble, DFL-Minneapolis, and Rep. John Lesch, DFL-St. Paul.

According to the Los Angeles-based Beagle Freedom Project, which sponsored the legislation, nearly 65,000 dogs across the country are used to test cosmetics, pharmaceuticals and household products and nearly 96 percent of the dogs are beagles, one of the top five most popular family dog breeds in America.

A similar measure is currently before the Appropriations Committee in California.

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