



Brussels, 3rd October 2018

Statement on the use of animals for research in neuroscience

The undersigned organisations view with concern the press release regarding the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals' meeting of 13 September 2018 on the use of animals for research in neuroscience.

The value of animal-based research for wide-reaching scientific and medical advances, including in neuroscience, cannot be overstated. Indeed, animal research, including research with non-human primates, is the basis for many medical breakthroughs that have extended our life expectancy and led to important advances in the treatment of disease.

For example, improved understanding of the circuitry underlying Parkinson's Disease stemming from animal-based biomedical research has led to the development of the deep-brain stimulation technique presently used in the treatment of Parkinson's disease. This medical breakthrough has helped thousands of Parkinson's patients and would not have been developed had it not been for research on the physiology of a key brain structure called the basal ganglia in non-human primates. Similarly, by using non-invasive neuroimaging methods with human volunteers, we now know that grid cell activity (a particular type of brain cell) is compromised in young adults at risk of Alzheimer's. Such studies were only made possible by earlier work in rats that first identified grid cells and led to the 2014 Nobel Prize for a team of researchers in the UK and Norway.

In the press release, it is stated, "Animal testing is inherently uncertain and is a misleading indicator for human trials." While there is an element of uncertainty in drug-related R&D, the use of animals in neuroscience research - at all stages of the value chain, from fundamental to applied research - has undoubtedly contributed to our ever-improving understanding of the human brain and important advances in the treatment of neurological diseases. Currently, no other alternatives exist whereby the physiology and connectivity underlying behaviour in health and disease can be studied other than the study of the actual brain. There is no evidence to support the claim that knowledge generated by such studies in animals and humans is in any way misleading; moreover the European Commission has recognised in a recent review¹ the value of non-human primates for research.

The European legislative framework aims to ensure the highest standards of animal welfare whilst still enabling critical biomedical progress. Indeed, Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes requires that every experiment use the lowest possible numbers of animals that can be scientifically justified, minimise the impact on animals, and be carried out using animal-free, alternative methods whenever this is scientifically possible.

Science, technology and research practices are evolving every day. In our quest for better quality research, the biomedical sector is developing new and improved research methods, both animal and non-animal. However, at the current time, suitable alternatives to all animal models do not exist, a fact which was recognised in the 2017 SCHEER opinion² on the need for non-human primates in biomedical research, production and testing of products and devices, which noted, for example, that "data from an injured human brain should be carefully interpreted and cannot replace *in vivo* controlled studies in animals."

Therefore, while we recognise the importance of supporting research efforts to identify alternative models, it is equally important that support and funding for necessary animal-based

¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52017DC0631&from=EN>

² https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/scientific_committees/scheer/docs/scheer_o_004.pdf

scientific research be maintained, to avoid hindering medical research and biological innovation in order to address the unmet medical needs of European citizens. Indeed, any deviation of funding for animal-based research such as those proposed by the Intergroup risks endangering further scientific advances to the detriment of patients suffering from devastating brain diseases.

The undersigned call upon the Intergroup on the Welfare and Conservation of Animals to recognise the continued valuable contribution of animal-based research to significant developments in our understanding of the brain and our treatment of neurological diseases. We ask that the Intergroup engage with representatives of the scientific community, including the undersigned stakeholders, in order to ensure balanced discussions taking into account the essential contribution provided by animal-based scientific research at all levels for the benefit of European citizens.

Signatories to the statement



European Animal
Research Association



Federation of
European
Neuroscience
Societies



Royal Society of
Biology



Tierversuche verstehen
Eine Informationsinitiative der Wissenschaft





European Animal Research Association

The European Animal Research Association (EARA) is an organisation that communicates and advocates in Europe on biomedical research using animals and provides accurate, evidence-based information. It also takes responsibility for the sustainability in the global transport of animals for medical research. It has more than 70 partner organisations, including private and public research bodies, universities, regional and national biomedical associations and suppliers, across 15 countries.

European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations

The European Federation of Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) represents the pharmaceutical industry operating in Europe. Through its direct membership of 36 national associations and 40 leading pharmaceutical companies, EFPIA is the voice on the EU scene of 1,900 companies committed to researching, developing and bringing to patients new medicines that will improve health and the quality of life around the world.

Federation of European Neuroscience Societies

The Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS), an organisation representing over 22,000 scientists in 33 European countries, strongly advocates the responsible use of animals in biomedical research. Through its Committee on Animals in Research, FENS supports the development of resources on animals in research and promotes public education in matters related to the use of animals in neuroscience.

Groupe Interprofessionnel de Réflexion et de Communication sur la Recherche

The Groupe Interprofessionnel de Réflexion et de Communication sur la Recherche (GIRCOR) brings together the biological or medical research institutions and companies in France as a non-profit organization. GIRCOR addresses the need for clear and transparent information to the public and gives everyone the opportunity to know the place animal research has in scientific and medical progress.

Royal Society of Biology

The Royal Society of Biology is a single unified voice for biology: advising Government and influencing policy; advancing education and professional development; supporting our members, and engaging and encouraging public interest in the life sciences. The Society represents a diverse membership of individuals, learned societies and other organisations.

Tierversuche verstehen

“Tierversuche verstehen” is an information initiative coordinated by the Alliance of Science Organisations in Germany. It was launched in 2016 to comprehensively and transparently inform the public about all aspects of experimental methods using animals in a fact-based manner and to foster dialogue between science and the public. Tierversuche verstehen offers insight into the necessity of responsible animal research. Responsible research comprises acknowledging animal welfare as well as the significance of scientific insight for human lives.