

FENS statement supporting European Directive 2010/63/EU (“Directive”) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes

The European Parliament and Commission must oppose the ‘Stop Vivisection’ Citizens’ Initiative that is seeking to repeal the Directive and ban animal research. The Directive is vital to ensure that necessary research involving animals can continue whilst requiring enhanced animal welfare standards.

FENS promotes and advocates for the responsible use of animals for neuroscience and biomedical research. FENS is supportive of the research using animals where alternative methods are not available, where the potential benefits to health are compelling, and where acceptable ethical and welfare standards can be met.

“Knowledge generated by neuroscience research using experimental animals, besides providing fundamental knowledge about brain function has also led to important advances in the understanding and treatment of diseases that affect the nervous system”, states Monica Di Luca, FENS President.

In this respect, FENS stresses the importance of the 3Rs (refinement, reduction and replacement), which provide a comprehensive set of guiding principles for many areas of animal research, and encourage both improvements in animal welfare and the use of complementary and alternative procedures, where appropriate. FENS also supports the principle of harm benefit analysis for each prospective project involving animals in research, including purpose-bred non-human primates, and the adoption of standards of animal welfare to the highest level compatible with the scientific objectives of the project.

Neuroscience relies on animal models to understand complex brain processes that would otherwise be impossible to decode. The decision to use an animal model, which species of animal to use and which procedures to employ, are only taken after balancing the likely scientific gains, particularly for human and animal welfare.

For this reason, FENS, together with other relevant organisations in the research field, calls on the European Parliament and Commission to reaffirm their commitment to the Directive. Any roll back from this would both undermine animal welfare and compromise high-quality research using animals.

FENS also encourages that the scientific community engages the public by explaining the benefits of research on animals where no alternative exists and when the best practices are used.