

Consensus Statement on Animal Experimentation from The Federation of European Physiological Societies.

Call to action

- 1. Cosmetic testing on animals has been banned entirely since 2013 and therefore the objectives of the European citizens' initiative "Save Cruelty Free Cosmetics" have been met. FEPS and its member organisations support the implementation of this continued ban on cosmetic testing.**
- 2. Call on the EU Commission to continue to reiterate the effective and appropriate regulation of the uses of animals in research through EU Directive 2010/63/EU 'on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes.**
- 3. The Industry, Research and Energy Committee of the EU Parliament should undertake an inquiry into scientific innovation, discovery and leadership in Europe and barriers to the development of new, safer, more effective treatments.**

Background

The European citizens' initiative "For the protection of cosmetic products without animal cruelty and a Europe without animal testing" ("Save Cruelty Free Cosmetics") aims to enforce an overall ban on research involving animals in Europe under the pretext of a ban on animal testing in the field of cosmetics development.

These experiments have already been banned in EU member states since 2004, with further tightening in 2009 and 2013 and FEPS and its members support this ban and its continued implementation.

In Europe, no cosmetic-specific substances that are tested on animals may be marketed.

The Federation of European Physiological Societies (FEPS) and its member organisations are concerned that this initiative is intended only as a pretense for a wider ban on the use of animals in *all* research by 2024.

Physiology and the Federation of European Physiological Societies

The Federation of European Physiological Societies (FEPS) was founded in 1991 to promote and foster the exchange and diffusion of ideas and information between physiologists across Europe through its 35 member societies.

What is physiology?

Physiology is the science of life. It aims to understand the mechanisms of living things, from the basis of cell function at the ionic and molecular level to the integrated behaviour of the whole body and the influence of the external environment. Research in physiology helps us to understand how the body works in health and how it responds and adapts to the challenges of everyday life; it also helps us to determine what goes wrong in disease, facilitating the development of new treatments and guidelines for maintaining human and animal health.

Physiology is an experimental science. Research in physiology advances our understanding of the detailed mechanisms that control and regulate the behaviour of living things. We continue to learn more about fundamental processes, such as the control of heart rate or the sense of vision, through comprehensive exploration of the multiple processes involved. Some of these experiments can only currently be undertaken using animals in research.

Physiology and the use of animals in research

The membership of FEPS's member societies from every country in Europe are engaged in many different areas of research into cell, tissue, organ and system function (and malfunction), using a variety of experimental approaches.

In line with our commitment to the 3R of replacement, reducing and refining the use of animals in research, physiologists use *in vitro* (outside the living body and in an artificial environment) experimental approaches wherever possible, for example to examine events within individual cells. For the study of body systems, research involving animals plays a fundamental part in the life sciences.

What would be the impact of a general ban on the use of animals in scientific research?

Despite the ongoing development of alternatives, there will be no full replacement for the animal experiments that are currently necessary in the foreseeable future. This includes life science and medical research such as research into cancer therapies, new vaccines and the research and approval of new antibiotics.

As noted by the European Brain Council, there are a number of complex organs, such as the brain, where existing alternative methods are not yet sufficiently developed to allow addressing the complexity of this system. Animal research is therefore the only way of testing new treatments to ensure their effectiveness and safety ahead of human trials.

How does the EU currently regulate the use of animals in research and the phasing out of the use of animals in research?

The existing legal requirements for carrying out animal experiments already provide for an extremely strict assessment of the benefits and harm for the animals, as well as whether the use of animals is needed in any research project.

Animal experiments may only be carried out on detailed application and after official approval by researchers with appropriate proven knowledge. They are subject to constant monitoring by animal welfare officers, veterinary authorities, and local governments.

EU Directive 2010/63/EU has already specified extensive animal protection measures such as the 3R principle (Replacement, Reduction, Refinement), which applies and has been implemented in all EU member states. All our member organisations are committed to the replacement of animals in research where possible, the reduction of the number of animals used in research and the refinement of procedures to minimize the pain and stress experienced by the animal and maintain the highest welfare standards.

The ECI calls for a fixed deadline for phasing out animal experiments in the EU. This is most arbitrary and unrealistic: The EU directive in force already includes the gradual reduction of animal experiments as soon as this is scientifically possible. It is not possible to politically dictate what can be scientifically possible by a certain point in time.

Signatory organisations



Federation of European Physiological Societies (FEPS)

The Physiological Society

The German Physiological Society

The Austrian Physiological Society

The Spanish Physiological Society

The **Portuguese Physiological Society**

The Italian Physiological Society

The Scandinavian Physiological Society

The French Physiological Society

The Slovenian Physiological Society