Declaration on the use of primates in scientific experiments

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The European Parliament adopted a written declaration urging the EU to use the revision process of Directive 86/609/EC as an opportunity to make ending the use of apes and wild-caught monkeys in scientific experiments an urgent priority. It also wanted to establish a timetable for replacing the use of all primates in scientific experiments with alternatives.

More than 10 000 primates are used in experiments every year in EU laboratories. Parliament pointed out that more than 80% of respondents to the Commission's 2006 public consultation on the use of animals in experiments considered the use of primates to be unacceptable. It noted that almost all primate species share more than 90% of their DNA with humans and that it is acknowledged that primate species have a capacity to suffer greatly in captivity. 26% of primate species are in danger of extinction and primates caught in the wild continue to be used in laboratories. Furthermore, it may be difficult to protect primates from threats such as human consumption if it is perceived that these species are used freely by Western academic institutions for experimentation. Advanced technology and techniques now provide alternative methods that are proving to be more efficient and reliable than experiments on primates, such as functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), microdosing, computer modelling or tissue and cell culture. Parliament also pointed out that despite genetic similarities, there are important differences between humans and other primates, and experiments on primates cannot match the precision of human-based research.