Protection of animals: European Convention on vertebrates used for experimental purposes

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The Committee adopted the report of Mr. David BOWE (UK, PES) on the amended proposal for a Council Decision on the conclusion, on behalf of the Community, of the European Convention for the protection of vertebrate animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes. This convention was signed in 1986 and entered into force in 1991, but has not yet been ratified by the Community. The Convention requires annual communication of statistical data. But the EU Directive covering this area requires only communication of these data in every three year. The Commission proposes that the EU asks for a derogation as regards the annual communications of statistical data. But a derogation is possible according to Article 34 of the Convention. As some Member States are not able to provide statistical data every year, there is now an informal agreement to report every two year. Rapporteur BOWE is of the opinion that this informal agreement should be formalised and saw his amendments to this aim adopted this morning. After a transition period of 6 years (=3 reporting periods), however, the Member States should be obliged to report annually. By then, they have had enough time to adopt the necessary national legislation. Mr. BOWE said this morning that in the first report on 1991 almost 12 millions of animals were used for experimental purposes, among which 55% were mice, 27% rat, 5% birds, 4% guinea pigs, 4% fish and 0,07% primates. He added that Belgium and Luxembourg did not provide the requested information and that the presented figures might underestimate the total number of used animals as not all laboratories in the Member states reported well their number of used animals due to the fact that it was the first time that data were collected. The rapporteur was quite pleased with the outcome of the vote. "I think we have reached a good agreement. The Committee has adopted my amendments, for instance on the reduction of animal use in experimentation of 50% by the year 2000, on the use of primates for testing and experimental use which leads to the catch of a multifold of primates in wilderness due to enormous losses during catching and transport and on the enormous suffering the use of primates for testing en experimental use implies. We do have ethical grounds to reduce these tests with all possible means".