Cosmetics: development, validation and legal acceptance of alternative methods to animal experiments. 1996 report

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The EU should press for a change to world trade guidelines in order to accommodate environmental concerns and animal welfare, the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Protection Committee urged. The committee adopted unanimously a motion for a resolution drafted by Mrs Dagmar ROTH-BEHRENDT (PES, D) on the Commission's recently published report for 1996 which deals with the development of alternatives to animal experiments in the field of cosmetics. "With regard to GATT/WTO, the EU should formulate a definitive position without further delay and test GATT guidelines to the limit," the draft states. "In parallel, it should press for a positive change to GATT guidelines in order to reconcile trade and valid environmental and animal welfare concerns." The problem is that some countries insist that cosmetics be tested on animals before they can be sold. The EU is a major exporter of cosmetics. Nevertheless, the draft resolution, adopted as part of a non-legislative report on the subject drafted by Mrs Roth-Behrendt, calls on the European Commission to bring forward a proposal to ban animal testing of cosmetic products and ingredients by 1 January 1998, as laid down in earlier EU legislation. Parliament has previously taken the view that the production of new cosmetics should not cause animals to suffer. The draft resolution is a direct challenge to the Council of Ministers, which has accepted a Commission proposal to postpone the date of implementation of a ban until 1 June 2000 to allow further time for the development of alternatives. The committee believes that not enough research is being done to find alternatives. Accordingly, there is a call for the Community's fifth research framework programme to be amended to research outside the Commission into alternatives.