The Directive 86/609/EEC on protection of animals used for experimental purposes

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Jill EVANS (Greens/EFA, UK) on the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes. It pointed out that Directive 86/609/EEC on this subject had not been satisfactorily implemented in all Member States and that differing standards still applied with regard to, say, the authorising, monitoring and review of experimental projects. The committee believed that a review of the directive was needed and in particular that its scope needed to be aligned to the scope of the Council of Europe Convention which also covers animals used for education and training purposes. It therefore called on the Commission to present a proposal to amend the directive before the end of 2003. Among its recommendations, the committee said that Member States should be obliged to set up an ethical review procedure as part of the authorisation system for approving animal experiments. Certain ethically unacceptable purposes for animal experiments should be banned, including: the development and testing of weapons including chemical agents on animals; the development and testing of cosmetics including cosmetics ingredients; and the use of wild-caught primates. The report also said that licensing procedures should be made stricter. To obtain a licence to perform experiments on animals, the applicant must be able to prove that the experiments will be of benefit to animals or humans and that the desired outcome can only be achieved using live animals. Moreover, there was a need to set limits to the level of stress to which the animals may be subjected and ensure that experiments were not authorised if they exceeded those limits. The committee also wanted experiments on endangered species to be prohibited, transgenic animals to be included in the directive and the practice of allowing non-human primates to be used for experimentation to be reviewed. Finally, the report called for a central EU inspectorate to be established, with the power to conduct spot checks and revoke licences, and for a central database for approved experiments on animals to be set up.