European Parliament
2019-2024

Plenary sitting

B9-0428/2021

8.9.2021

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on plans and actions to accelerate the transition to innovation without the use of animals in research, regulatory testing and education
(2021/2784(RSP))

Tilly Metz, Caroline Roose, Francisco Guerreiro, Martin Häusling, Sylwia Spurek, Thomas Waitz, Sarah Wiener
on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

B9-0428/2021

European Parliament resolution on plans and actions to accelerate the transition to innovation without the use of animals in research, regulatory testing and education (2021/2784(RSP))

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Articles 13 and 114 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU),

– having regard to Directive 2010/63/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 September 2010 on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes[1],

– having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 December 2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH),

– having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1107/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 21 October 2009 concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market and repealing Council Directives 79/117/EEC and 91/414/EEC[2],

– having regard to Regulation (EU) No 528/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 22 May 2012 concerning the making available on the market and use of biocidal products[3],

– having regard to Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on cosmetic products[4],

– having regard to the Council conclusions of 15 March 2021 entitled ‘Sustainable Chemicals Strategy of the Union: Time to Deliver’ (6941/21),

– having regard to the Commission report of 5 February 2020 on the statistics on the use of animals for scientific purposes in the Member States of the European Union in 2015-2017 (COM(2020)0016),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 30 September 2020 on a new ERA for Research and Innovation (COM(2020)0628),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 25 November 2020 on a Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe (COM(2020)0761),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 11 December 2019 entitled ‘The

[1] OJ L 276, 20.10.2010, p. 33.
[2] OJ L 309, 24.11.2009, p. 1.
[3] OJ L 167, 27.6.2012, p. 1.
[4] OJ L 342, 22.12.2009, p. 59.

European Green Deal' (COM(2019)0640),

– having regard to the Commission communication of 27 May 2020 entitled 'Europe's moment: Repair and Prepare for the Next Generation' (COM(2020)0456),

– having regard to 'Towards Sustainability': the European Community Programme of policy and action in relation to the environment and sustainable development (better known as The Fifth EC Environmental Action Programme) of 1993,

– having regard to its resolution of 10 July 2020 on the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability[5],

– having regard to Special Eurobarometer 340 on Science and Technology,

– having regard to the second interim report on the online consultation on the Future of Europe and to the key conclusions from the citizens' dialogues and citizens' consultations,

– having regard to the Commission communication of 3 June 2015 on the European Citizens' Initiative 'Stop Vivisection' (C(2015)3773),

– having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas Directive 2010/63/EU on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes sets out, as the final goal, the 'full replacement of procedures on live animals [...] as soon as it is scientifically possible to do so' and underlines that the use of animals for such purposes should only be considered where a non-animal method is unavailable;

B. whereas data released by the Commission shows that there has been no marked reduction in the overall number of animals used for scientific purposes over the past 11 years; whereas, furthermore, Commission data released in February 2020 shows only a very modest decline in the number of animals used for the first time, from 9.59 million in 2015 to 9.39 million in 2017, and this decline is not consistent year on year;

C. whereas in 2017, the use of animals for scientific purposes was reported 9.58 million times; whereas the main purpose was research (69 %), followed by regulatory use to satisfy legislative requirements (23 %) and routine production (5 %); whereas among the testing for regulatory purposes, the majority involved medical products for humans (61 %), followed by veterinary medicinal products (15 %) and industrial chemicals (11 %)[1];

D. whereas animals continue to be used in cases where validated alternatives are already available, and in some such cases, the use of animals has even increased;

[5] Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0201.
[1] Report from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council: 2019 report on the statistics on the use of animals for scientific purposes in the Member States of the European Union in 2015-2017, p. 16 (COM(2020)0016).
https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52020DC0016&from=EN

E. whereas the toolbox of non-animal models has grown and shows the potential to enhance our understanding of diseases and accelerate the discovery of effective treatments; whereas this toolbox includes, for example, new organ-on-chip technology, sophisticated computer simulations, 3-D cultures of human cells and other modern models and technologies;

F. whereas the Commission's Joint Research Centre has produced a series of reports listing and describing advanced non-animal models in seven disease areas, with a view to accelerating the development of these technologies;

G. whereas the EU's official position is to strongly encourage non-animal methods, but bureaucratic hurdles stifle their acceptance, their use is not properly enforced, and funding for their development remains inadequate, resulting in an unacceptably slow transition to the use of non-animal methods, which is unbefitting of the EU's ambition;

H. whereas EU citizens have consistently supported an end to the use of animals for scientific purposes, and whereas a shift to modern, human-relevant, non-animal science in the areas of research, regulatory testing and education will be crucial to respond to this public concern;

I. whereas within the Commission, the Directorates-General for Environment (DG ENV), for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE), for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW), for Research and Innovation (DG RTD) and the Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) all have responsibilities for different areas of animal research and testing, and yet there is no formal coordination mechanism to ensure active and coherent efforts to replace the use of animals;

J. whereas the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) and the European Medicines Agency (EMA) have put in place strategies to actively reduce and replace animal tests, but the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) does not have a reduction and replacement strategy; whereas EFSA aims to base a large majority of its requests for additional data on alternative methodologies by 2027; whereas ECHA asserts that immediate targeted investment is required in order to develop effective non-animal predictive toxicology methods and directly support regulatory objectives; whereas there is a need to hasten the take-up of existing alternatives to support the implementation of the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability; whereas increased cooperation and exchange between EFSA, EMA and ECHA on animal-free methods could lead to harmonised ambition and progress in terms of reduction and replacement goals;

K. whereas a growing body of scientific literature critically assesses the validity, reliability and predictive value of animal experimentation for human outcomes and for understanding human physiology; whereas this is one factor in the high failure rates of medications in therapeutic development;

L. whereas the phasing-out of animal testing for cosmetics in the EU, with clear deadlines as set out in the Cosmetics Regulation, has driven innovation in EU companies at the level of global trade and has enjoyed public support; whereas, however, the Cosmetics Regulation does not cover protection of workers or the environment, meaning animal testing continues for ingredients exclusively used in cosmetics with regard to those aspects; whereas these inconsistencies compromise the original political intention of

that regulation, i.e. a ban on animal testing for cosmetic ingredients;

M. whereas the replacement of animal tests by advanced non-animal methods will be crucial to achieving the Commission's ambitious health and environmental goals set out in NextGenerationEU and the European Green Deal, including the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability;

1. Highlights that the replacement of animal testing by more reliable alternative testing methods and strategies is imperative not only for animal welfare but also for the sake of better protection of human health;

2. Calls on the Commission to establish an inter-service taskforce to draw up an EU-wide action plan to drive an active and coordinated phasing-out of the use of animals for scientific purposes; calls for this taskforce to include Member States and relevant stakeholders, including those within the Commission, in particular DG ENV, DG JRC, DG SANTE, DG GROW, DG CONNECT and DG RTD, and the agencies ECHA, EMA and EFSA; calls for the action plan to be developed by the end of 2022, and for it to include regular reporting to the European Parliament and revision at appropriate intervals, according to the progress made;

3. Emphasises its support for Directive 2010/63/EU and its progress made, in particular its standards for housing and care and strict reporting requirements on the number and severity of the procedures, but stresses that, given the slow progress, the directive should be bolstered by a replace and reduce action plan with concrete targets;

4. Underlines that this action plan should include ambitious yet achievable objectives accompanied by indicators, as is accepted in other EU policy areas, and should use the ALURES statistical EU database as a point of reference; calls for clear targets to be set under the overarching reduction and replacement goal;

5. Emphasises that the action plan should contain concrete and coordinated actions that will lead to absolute reductions in the number of animals used for scientific purposes, to be maintained over the long term;

6. Stresses that the plan should include, *inter alia*, proposals for better implementation and enforcement of existing requirements; recalls that Article 13 of REACH requires that the test method requirements be updated as soon as non-animal methods become available; calls on the Commission to fully implement its commitment to the grouping of substances and the use of generic risk assessments as important means to better protect human health and reduce animal testing; urges the Commission to set reduction objectives through a more proactive implementation of existing regulations that deal with the safety of chemicals, and other products, in consultation with relevant agencies, in particular ECHA and EFSA, and to support the reduction objectives by using a fully connected and interoperable EU chemical safety database;

7. Highlights that the action plan should include mechanisms to ensure preferential and adequate funding and the use of non-animal methods across all EU research and innovation initiatives; highlights the relevance of the Horizon Europe cancer mission and the European Partnership for Chemicals Risk Assessment in this regard;

8. Stresses that ongoing efforts towards better coordination of Member States' research and innovation policies, as well as the implementation of Horizon Europe itself, are opportunities to reduce animal testing across the EU more quickly, and in particular within actions supported by EU funding; emphasises that the ongoing deepening of the European Research Area should include a phasing-out of the use of animals as a long-term priority action, in particular in the implementation of its Strategic Objective 1 (Prioritising Investments and Reforms) and 3 (Translating R&I results into the economy);

9. Urges the Commission to work together with Member States to include a series of actions to educate, train and retrain researchers, technicians and safety assessment experts in using advanced non-animal models, and to raise awareness of validated non-animal models among those involved in evaluating project proposals and attributing funding;

10. Stresses that the action plan must be coherent with the Commission's ambition for zero-pollution for a toxic-free environment, including for air, water and soil, as well as protecting the health and well-being of citizens from environment-related risks and impacts;

11. Calls on the Commission to promote animal-free methods in international forums and to encourage the development and implementation of non-animal methods globally;

12. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council and the Commission.