

WRITTEN QUESTION P-5135/07
by Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE)
to the Commission

Subject: European Partnership on Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA):
companies' cooperation with European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM)

On 7 November 2005 the Commission, together with a number of industry associations, launched the European Partnership on Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA). At the launch event, the EPAA signalled its intention to provide assistance to the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM) in order to increase the rate at which new non-animal test methods (and methods allowing for a reduction in the number of animals used, and/or the degree of suffering they are subjected to) could be scientifically validated.

For many years prior to EPAA's launch, ECVAM had made it clear that a major barrier to increasing the rate of validation of new tests was its limited access to existing data and reference chemicals for use in studies. When this issue was raised with companies in possession of data and suitable chemicals, over many years, they said they needed time to draw up the necessary legal agreements to transfer data. When EPAA was launched it seemed that finally companies were ready to work towards providing data to meet ECVAM's scientific needs. However, progress towards that goal appears to have been slow, and confidence in the EPAA and its member companies is thus declining.

Given that the EPAA plans to showcase its activities on 5 November at its 2007 Annual Conference, will the Commission please answer the following - submitted under Rule 110(4) of the EP's Rules of Procedure - within the three weeks allocated for priority questions, in time for the answer to be scrutinised in advance of the Conference?

1. As of 8 October 2007, how many EPAA companies (including member companies and companies represented by associations) have entered into agreements with the Commission allowing ECVAM to access test data and substances for use during the conduct of validation studies?
2. As of 8 October 2007, how many EPAA companies (including member companies and companies represented by associations) have actually supplied test data and substances to ECVAM for use during validation studies?
3. As of 8 October 2007, how many test results have been supplied by EPAA companies (including member companies and companies represented by associations) to ECVAM?
4. As of 8 October 2007, how many substances have been supplied by EPAA companies (including member companies and companies represented by associations) to ECVAM? If progress to date has been unsatisfactory, will the Commission give an indication as to when ECVAM might expect to receive this practical assistance from companies interested in reducing animal suffering?

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Answer given by Mr Verheugen
on behalf of the Commission
(6.11.2007)

The Commission has initiated the European Partnership on Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA) as one important tool to contribute to the rapid development and validation of alternative test methods to replace, reduce and refine animal testing. This partnership between industry and the Commission, which was launched in November 2005 as the Honourable Member points out, has already made significant and encouraging progress even if major challenges still lie ahead. The Commission and EPAA companies have identified 25 priority methods currently under validation, out of 34 suggested by the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods (ECVAM). EPAA

companies agreed to identify and communicate to ECVAM data and substances available to them, following an agreed procedure which will have to ensure in particular confidentiality. Based on this procedure, EPAA companies have made an inventory of available data and substances, and identified contact persons in each company. This information was forwarded to ECVAM in June 2007, and ECVAM is currently in the process of contacting industry. As a consequence of these contacts, first bilateral agreements between EPAA companies and ECVAM are expected soon. Some data have already been communicated and substances provided by EPAA companies to ECVAM in the context of previous collaboration projects on validation.