

E-1958/06EN

Answer given by Mr Potocnik
on behalf of the Commission
(15.6.2006)

Within the action in support of research infrastructure in the specific programme on Structuring the European Research Area, itself part of the Sixth Framework Programme for Community R&D, 2002-2006 (FP6), the proposed laboratory on South Parks Road, Oxford, England, is not a recipient of EU funding, neither for the building nor for the maintenance of the laboratory.

The University of Oxford is an active participant in the Framework Programme but the Commission has no information about the intended proposals for EU-funded research projects by the proposed laboratory. In any case, the Commission recalls that under the Framework Programme an ethical review systematically complements the scientific evaluation for proposals dealing with sensitive issues such as research using animals. Every proposal is considered on a case by case basis by a panel of independent experts in ethics. The ethical review ensures, among other things, that the validity, usefulness and relevance of specific types of research involving animals are ascertained in each individual case and that the principles of the 3Rs (reduction, refining and replacement of animal methods) are fully applied. The 3Rs approach has, as its final goal, a full replacement of animal testing but, in cases where replacement is not yet possible, it aims at refining the methods with a view to decreasing pain, suffering and distress caused to the animals and reducing the numbers of animals needed to provide the same level of information. Furthermore, participants in research projects must seek the approval of the relevant national authorities prior to starting the research activities.

The Commission is fully aware of the concerns raised by the use of animals for experimental and other scientific purposes. All animal experiments in the EU must comply with the provisions of Directive 86/609/EEC¹ on the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes, transposed into national legislation in November 1989 and currently under revision. At present, the alternative methods, validated by the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Testing Methods (ECVAM) of the Directorate-General for Joint Research Centre (DG JRC) cannot replace all use of animals in safety testing and research². The revision of Directive 86/609/EEC will be taking into account cultural and institutional changes of the past decades. It will also be looking further into the aspects of 3Rs.

Moreover, the Commission has established with major companies and trade federations in the area of chemicals, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, crop protection and cosmetics a European Partnership on Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing. The Partnership has in the meantime adopted its Action Programme, intended to launch steps to implement and promote the 3Rs' Declaration, and will report on progress in a Conference scheduled for December 2006.

¹ Council Directive 86/609/EEC of 24 November 1986 on the approximation of laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States regarding the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes, OJ L 358, 18.12.1986

² A. P. Worth, M. Balls (ed.), *Alternative (Non-animal) Methods for Chemicals Testing: Current status and Future Prospects – A report prepared by ECVAM and the ECVAM Working Group on chemicals*. ATLA 30, Supplement 1, July 2002