

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**3 June 2015**

**Loud and clear:**  
**“Directive 2010/63/EU is an indispensable tool”**  
*LERU applauds the EC’s response to the ECI “Stop Vivisection”*

As LERU and many other organisations have steadily argued in the past few months, the use of animals for scientific purposes is still needed and the European Directive on the protection of those animals is one of the most advanced pieces of legislation in the world with regard to animal welfare. Today, this has been confirmed by the European Commission (EC).

LERU very much welcomes today's response by the European Commission to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) “Stop Vivisection”. The EC has clearly stated that “Directive 2010/63/EU is an indispensable tool at the EU level to protect animals” and that it will not be abolished. Also no new legislation will be proposed by the EC.

“The complete replacement of animal studies is currently not possible”, the EC goes on, although it agrees on the ultimate objective of phasing out animal testing, as is actually stipulated in the EU Directive. As LERU has repeatedly argued, that moment has not yet come and research using animals is still needed. Therefore the highest standards of animal welfare must be adopted while human and animal health are protected. The Directive has been an essential step forward in modernising and harmonising animal welfare standards within the EU. It firmly anchors the so-called 3R principles (reduce, refine, replace) and makes the use of alternative methods mandatory if available.

However, there is no room for complacency. The EC acknowledges that further R&D efforts to research, validate and implement alternatives need to be undertaken. Having at its very core the advancement of knowledge and the promotion of research, LERU strongly endorses this call for furthering research on alternative methods. Therefore, LERU welcomes the actions announced by the EC: accelerating progress in the 3Rs through knowledge sharing; validating and implementing new alternative approaches; enforcing compliance with the 3R principles and aligning relevant sector legislation; and engaging in a dialogue with the scientific community.

LERU also reiterates that the Member States share the responsibility of fully and correctly implementing the Directive. As indicated in its response to the ECI, the full implementation of the Directive is “paramount to increasing the welfare of animals still used today”. Whether the EU makes good use of the high level standards put forward by this Directive will depend on the willingness of the Member States to abide by them. As such, LERU stresses the importance of the EC’s follow-up through the infringement procedures.

Although LERU very much regrets the fact that the debate on such an important issue as animal research has been propelled by the flawed arguments put forward by Stop Vivisection, the ECI has evidenced an issue of great salience: the current misconceptions that surround animal research. European citizens deserve sound arguments in order to adopt an informed opinion about animal research. Research using animals should be better explained to citizens. That is

why LERU has already expressed its support to the UK Concordat on Openness and will be actively involved in furthering the debate on animal research in the future.

This ECI has also revealed some of the serious pitfalls that the ECI Regulation currently presents. The democratic deficit that is so often attributed to the EU will not be solved by abusing the instruments of participatory democracy within the EU to the point of harming its core values. During the upcoming review of the ECI Regulation, LERU will do its utmost to make sure that this instrument remains within the limits of key EU values, such as the importance of research for human and animal health, and the principles that guide its functioning, such as the principle of legal certainty or attributed competences.

As stated by LERU Secretary-General, Prof Kurt Deketelaere: “Today is an important day for the EU. With its response to the ECI, the EC has reaffirmed its commitment to raising animal welfare standards within the EU and to lead by example on the international stage. This forward-looking Directive represents a major step by the EU to advance excellent science and high-quality research.”

### **Related articles**

[EC’s press release](#) on the ECI “Stop Vivisection”

[EC’s communication](#) on the ECI “Stop Vivisection”

LERU press release: [One step forward, two steps back?](#) (28 May 2015)

LERU press release: [Beware of your dreams, for they may come true...](#) (6 May 2015)

LERU press release: [STOP the European Citizens’ Initiative on Vivisection](#) (4 March 2015)

[Statement supporting European Directive 2010/63/EU \(“Directive”\) on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes](#)

[UK Concordat on Openness on Animal Research](#)

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### **About LERU**

The League of European Research Universities (LERU) is an association of twenty-one leading research-intensive universities that share the values of high-quality teaching within an environment of internationally competitive research.

Founded in 2002, LERU advocates education through an awareness of the frontiers of human understanding; the creation of new knowledge through basic research, which is the ultimate source of innovation in society; and the promotion of research across a broad front in partnership with industry and society at large.

The purpose of the League is to advocate these values, to influence policy in Europe and to develop best practice through mutual exchange of experience. LERU regularly publishes a variety of papers and reports which make high-level policy statements, provide in-depth analyses and make concrete recommendations for policymakers, universities, researchers and other stakeholders.

The LERU universities are:

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