



Press Release

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Milestone animal welfare achievements at the World Congress on the Use of Animals and Alternatives in the Life Sciences, Rome, Italy

At the 7th World Congress on the Use of Animals and Alternatives in the Life Sciences, both the global animal welfare community and the leading scientific community embraced current developments in regulatory risk assessment in North America, Europe and Japan. These developments aim at the strategic implementation of current tools in genomics, computational technologies and high through-put testing systems to assess the safety of chemicals including pharmaceuticals, vaccines, food additives, pesticides and cosmetic products. Within the next decade this approach will result in an unprecedented decrease in the use of experimental animals. It is considered the start of a world wide process in regulatory safety testing which will likely make the use of experimental animals for safety testing totally redundant within 20 years from today.

The 7th World Congress brought together leading scientists from governments, academia and industry as well as experts and representatives of all major animal welfare organisations from more than 40 countries around the globe. The congress was held at the prestigious Cavalieri Hotel in Rome, Italy from 30 August – 3rd September 2009 and was attended by more than 950 experts.

The congress, titled “*Calling on Science*”, covered 3 main themes: ‘Innovative Technologies, Concepts and Approaches’ on Monday, ‘Areas of Animal Use’ on Tuesday and ‘Progress in Life Science Domains’ on Wednesday. Under each theme, scientific progress and future expectations were addressed in more than 250 lectures and more than 400 formal scientific posters that were presented during these 3 days.

Participants agreed that current knowledge of the human genome and the genomes of many animal species have resulted in such a level of scientific progress in the area of gene mapping and expression (genomics) that it will make it possible in the near future to apply these tools, together with current computational technologies (linking and analysing massive data bases) and sophisticated second generation *in vitro* test systems (addressing sub-cellular metabolic processes), to assess the hazards and risks of chemical and microbiological substances without the use of experimental animals.

Congress Co-Chairs

Thomas Hartung
Herman Koeter

Steering Committee

Umberto Agrimi
Clément Gauthier
Coenraad Hendriksen
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Herman Koëter, one of the two Co-Chairs of the congress said: “These technologies, bringing together so much more knowledge of possible adverse effects of substances on biological systems than we were able to detect and understand ever before, will make us consider the use of experimental animals for such purposes as extremely old-fashioned in the foreseeable future.”.

The last day, Thursday 3 September, was dedicated to the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the publication of Russell and Burch’s book on the reduction, refinement and replacement of the use of animals in life sciences. At this occasion the Congress unanimously named **Prof Michael Balls** of FRAME, Nottingham, UK, **Prof Alan Goldberg** of the Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, USA and **Prof Horst Spielmann** of the Free University of Berlin, Germany as the official Patrons of Animal Welfare in the Life Sciences. In handing the recognition awards to the Patrons, the Co-Chairs of the congress said: “Through their personal endeavour these three experts have achieved what for many years was considered impossible, namely to turn the reduction, refinement and replacement of experimental animals from an ethical issue and marginally scientific hobby into mainstream science, involving leading experts in life sciences around the globe.”. Co-Chair Prof Thomas Hartung added: “Your work will not only be remembered in the decades to come, it will be continued at an increasing speed and level: the Johns Hopkins University Center for Alternatives in Animal Testing (CAAT) has already started a trans-Atlantic dialogue of the world’s best experts to implement at national and regional levels such strategies for scientific risk assessment as proposed by a US National Academy of Sciences Committee of international experts.”.



Herman B.W.M. Koëter



Thomas Hartung

Chairs, 7th World Congress

Congress Co-Chairs:

Dr. Thomas Hartung (previously Head of ECVAM of the EC Joint Research Centre) is Director of the Johns Hopkins University’s Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT) and Professor of Evidence Based Toxicology at the same university, Baltimore MD, USA.

Dr. Herman B.W.M.Koëter (previously Scientific Director of the European Food Safety Authority-EFSA) is Managing Director and Executive Secretary of the Management Board of the recently established non-profit risk assessment and risk management organisation ‘Orange House Partnership’, Brussels, Belgium which is aimed at assisting public institutions in developing countries.