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Press statement: ECHA report on the use of alternatives to testing on animals for the REACH regulation

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The Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) regulation is the largest animal testing programme in the world and expected to consume upwards of 50 million animals. However, the regulation is clear that animal tests must be avoided whenever possible, and it includes provisions for data sharing and other mechanisms to avoid animal testing. The PETA International Science Consortium, Ltd. (PISC) is, therefore, extremely disappointed that the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) fails to minimise animal use. ECHA's latest report on "The Use of Alternatives to Testing on Animals for the REACH Regulation" has revealed that approximately 2300 animals had chemicals applied to their sensitive eyes or skin in new skin and eye irritation tests even though nonanimal methods are available. Furthermore, 293 studies were completed without a testing proposal and prior approval from ECHA and, of these, 167 studies were not justified in the dossier. ECHA and Member States must investigate all these cases of possible non-compliance with the last-resort principle and impose appropriate fines and other appropriate sanctions.

While we commend the efforts of many companies to reduce animal testing by using nonanimal methods and non-testing strategies, including read-across and Quantitative structure–activity relationship models, it is scandalous that ECHA has not compelled all companies to conform with the use-of-animals as a last-resort principle, and some companies continue to test on animals when such testing could be avoided. Read-across is a mechanism by which the largest number of animal tests can be avoided for REACH, and we are pleased to see that 75% of dossiers contain read-across arguments or a category approach for at least one endpoint. However, ECHA's narrow interpretation of read-across may be preventing some companies from using this method.

PISC calls upon ECHA and the European Commission to take immediate and decisive action to ensure that animal testing is minimised in reality and not just in words. It is unconscionable that animals are dying as a result of bureaucratic indifference and the failure to update testing guidelines. PISC has [written](#) to the Commission with detailed recommendations on how animal testing can be minimised for the REACH 2018 deadline, which could see thousands of chemicals tested for acute toxicity and skin sensitisation unless immediate action is taken. As merely 7% of new skin sensitisation studies were *in vitro*, it is extremely alarming that ECHA anticipates that guidance on how to use *in vitro* methods for this endpoint will not be available until 2018, by which time

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up to 200,000 animals may have already been used in skin sensitisation tests.

The European Ombudsman is currently considering a [complaint](#) submitted by the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals UK in July 2012, alleging that ECHA is failing to ensure that animal testing is conducted only as a last resort, as stated in the REACH regulation. This complaint is partially supported with evidence from the 2011 report on “The Use of Alternatives to Testing on Animals for the REACH Regulation.”