BASIS OF THE EUROPEAN GUIDELINES: FACTS OR INTUITION?

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INTRODUCTION

In its endeavor to harmonize European legislation since 1961 the Council of Europe has drawn up a number of international conventions in the field of animal welfare.

"The Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes" - Convention number 123 - was opened for signature on the 18th March 1986 (1). At this moment eight Member States and the European Communities have signed it. So, 16 countries have obliged themselves to give effect to the provisions of the Convention by translating them into national legislation.

The Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes is designed primarily to restrict both the number of experiments and the number of animals used (a) by imposing strict conditions on procedures, (b) by exploiting better the results of procedures and (c) by encouraging the development of alternative methods.

The second objective is to benefit the welfare of animals as far as it is compatible with the purpose of the procedure. This second objective has been set out in article 5 with a reference to Appendix A. This Appendix contains a set of guidelines which are aimed to be of help in the implementation of the provisions of the Convention.

On 24 November 1986 an EC Directive was adopted by the Council of Environmental Ministers of the European Communities. This directive includes the same guidelines.

This paper consists of the following parts:

After a short outline of the origin, the content of the guidelines and their status, it will deal with the question whether the guidelines will be able to meet the requirements. Then, information on the implementation of the guidelines in The Netherlands will be given. Finally, some recommendations will be made.

THE EUROPEAN GUIDELINES

Following Recommendation 621 dated 21 January 1971 the Assembly recommended that the Committee of Ministers establish a committee. Its terms of reference should be to draft international legislation including the conditions under which and the scientific grounds on which experiments with live animals could be authorised.

This committee, since 1977 known as the Ad Hoc Committee of Experts for the Protection of Animals (CAHPA) consists of senior civil servants, often assisted by specialists. The CAHPA meetings were attended by observers from some non-member States and from organizations, both governmental (EC) and non-governmental (World Society for the Protection of Animals, Federation of Veterinarians in Europe and other organizations).
It deals with all issues on animal welfare, such as the slaughter of ani-
mals, international transport of animals, pet animals.
CAHPA started its work on the elaboration of the draft convention at its
third meeting (January 1978).
During 10 plenary meetings the draft convention was prepared.

Looking back I will refer to two issues: a. the origin and the content and
b. the status of the guidelines.
a. The origin and content.
CAHPA's negotiations have led to the conclusion that for his own well-be-
ing, man sometimes has to make use of animals, but that he has the moral
obligation to ensure that the animal's health and well-being is protected
as much as possible.
At its fourth meeting (October 1978) CAHPA agreed to take a preliminary
draft presented by Mr. George Vallier, the French representative and then
chairman of CAHPA, as a basis for its further work which had among others
the following wording:
"Every animal to be used in an experiment shall in accordance with its
physiological and ethological needs, be provided with accommodation, an
environment, which permits freedom of movement and food and care
appropriate to its health and well-being".
The draft was considerably improved on proposals of the second chairman
Mr. G.P. Pratt (U.K.) in the meeting of a working group in January 1981 at
Paris.
At the eighth meeting it was proposed to adopt provisions for the accommo-
dation and care of animals. These provisions should be similar to the pro-
visions in the European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for
Farming purposes. The Committee, however, felt it better to supply the con-
vention with detailed recommended standards in an Appendix, which had to be
elaborated. It was agreed that a German "Gutachten" as well as the U.S.
guidelines for the care and use of laboratory animals prepared by the Com-
mittee on care and use of Laboratory Animals would constitute a useful
basis for the elaboration of European standards. The Norwegian delegation
was ready to study this question in more detail. On the fourth of May 1981
our distinguished colleague Dr. Stian Erichsen submitted a draft for Appen-
dix A called: "Recommended Standards for the Accommodation and Care". Dur-
ing two consecutive meetings the draft was elaborated by a working group.
The experts were unanimous in recognising that the text prepared by Dr.
Erichsen, who in the meantime was elected as the third president of CAHPA,
was in accordance with their wishes, especially with regard to the proposed
structure. The experts thought, however, that the document would benefit by
being shortened; indeed this document would very likely be used by persons
having sufficient expertise in the field of accommodation and care of ani-
mals. In addition, it was the intention to mention a bibliographical docu-
mentation in the Appendix, for further detailed information. In CAHPA
drafting Document 81/24 seven different Guides are mentioned, all con-
taining information on the design of animal facilities and the daily prac-
tice in the animal house. I would like to draw your attention to two of
these Guides.
The first one is the publication of the Society for Laboratory Animal
Science titled "Recommendations concerning the Planning, Structure and Con-
struction of Animal Facilities for Institutes Performing Animal Experi-
ments", edited in 1980. These recommendations were translated from the re-
vised third German edition of the so-called "Gutachten" published in 1980
(2). The revisions were the result of both discussion stimulated by earlier