WRITTEN QUESTION E-0286/04
by Caroline Lucas (Verts/ALE) to the Commission
(6 February 2004)

Subject: EU monkey experiments

I was very concerned to see the results of the undercover investigation by the UK Animal Rights Organisation BUAV (British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection) conducted at research facilities in Munster, Germany, owned by Covance GmbH Laboratories. The investigation indicates poor enforcement of Directive 86/609/EEC (1) on the Protection of Animals used for Scientific and other Experimental Purposes. As there are many similar research facilities throughout the EU, the conditions at the Munster laboratory are of particular concern.

Please could the Commission respond to the findings of the BUAV investigation, and in particular say what is being done to prevent further similar breaches of Directive 86/609 taking place in future?

How many contract testing laboratories are currently operating in the EU?

To what extent is the Commission able to monitor conditions for test animals in these facilities?


Answer given by Mrs Wallström on behalf of the Commission
(5 March 2004)

The Commission has been informed about the treatment of non-human primates at the Covance animal research laboratories in Münster (in North Rhine-Westphalia) in Germany.

A subsequent Commission investigation showed that the German authorities have swiftly taken action. According to information from North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW), the Minister of Environment of NRW has instructed the veterinarians in charge to immediately inspect the Covance laboratories. In addition, the German authorities have agreed to start the procedure to cancel Covance’s licence to keep laboratory animals. The public prosecutor has also been involved. Since appropriate action has been taken by the German authorities, the Commission currently sees no need to conduct further investigations in this matter.

Directive 86/609/CEE on the protection of animals used for experimental and other scientific purposes requires user establishments to be registered with the national authority. Article 13 requires Member States to provide statistical data only on the numbers of animals used in experiments. Therefore, the Commission does not possess any statistics on the numbers of contract laboratories in the EU.

According to Directive 86/609/CEE the control of laboratories carrying out animal experiments is the responsibility of the competent national authorities.

WRITTEN QUESTION E-0289/04
by Marco Cappato (NI), Marco Pannella (NI), Maurizio Turco (NI), Emma Bonino (NI), Gianfranco Dell’Alba (NI), Benedetto Della Vedova (NI) and Olivier Dupuis (NI) to the Commission
(6 February 2004)

Subject: Cultural genocide in China

In her intervention during the discussion on the Prets report on cultural diversity on 13 January in Strasbourg, Commissioner Viviane Reding expressed her satisfaction that the EU had ‘won the battle’ at the Unesco General Assembly concerning the creation of an international instrument for the preservation of
cultural diversity, in which the EU initiative relied on support from China. ‘… Moreover, the Chinese are supporting us in Unesco. We spoke about education as well, and all with an immense country like China which relies on Europe to help it preserve its cultural diversity …’. Commissioner Reding also invited Parliament to reflect on the aspects ‘… which might be developed in this future Convention to listen to the concerns of our partners …’

The Communist regime in China has been systematically implementing a policy of cultural genocide against minority peoples like the Tibetans and the Uyghurs for the last half-century, with measures such as forcibly sinicising Uyghur names, abolishing Uyghur language teaching in higher education, destroying the Uyghur cultural heritage in Kashghar and other cities, burning tens of thousands of Uyghur language books, forcibly changing the Uyghur alphabet three times in four decades and discriminating against Uyghur language schools in favour of Chinese schools, to give but a few examples.

How does the Commission intend to ensure that the future Unesco Convention on Cultural Diversity will be an effective tool against such heinous crimes of cultural and political genocide?

Within the framework of enhanced cultural cooperation with China and on the basis of the publicly available information on the matter, does the Commission not consider that a preliminary study should be carried out on the extent and forms of the current cultural genocide in China, in order to ensure that EU cultural cooperation with China will never directly or indirectly give momentum to the cultural alienation and criminal sinicisation of the peoples of China?

Answer given by Mr Patten on behalf of the Commission

(23 March 2004)

The Commission attaches high importance to the situation of human rights throughout the world, including the respect of cultural diversity in countries like China. The associated rights to freedom of expression, association and religion as well as the preservation of the cultural, religious and linguistic identity of the minorities in China, and in particular in Tibet and Xinjiang, figure high on the agenda of the regular EU-China dialogue on human rights and in other high-level contacts with the Chinese authorities.

Negotiations in view of the adoption of a Convention on the protection of the diversity of cultural contents and artistic expressions were launched in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in October 2003 by consensus by a large majority of Unesco members including China, in view of the adoption of the convention at the next Unesco General Conference in autumn 2005. Such a convention is a follow-up to the Unesco Universal Declaration and Action Plan on Cultural Diversity, adopted in November 2001, and will continue to be firmly based on human rights like the latter instruments. The convention will aim to promote cultural diversity in all its forms, including minorities’ rights, while ensuring that no country abuses the argument of the protection of cultural diversity to adopt and enforce policies and actions which are contrary to human rights. The Commission has, therefore, set up an internal working group to ensure a coordinated approach to the negotiation on a Unesco Convention on cultural diversity.

A reinforced EU-China cooperation will naturally take China’s cultural diversity into account and should not be misunderstood as direct or indirect support to any actions that deprive minorities of their unalienable rights.

The bi-annual reports by Heads of Mission in Beijing are an important input for determining the EU’s policy concerning minorities in China. These reports provide a regular update on the situation and suggest options for EU action.