



Dear WC7 participants, dear readers of ALTEX

ALTEX joins the organisers, Herman Koëter and Thomas Hartung, in welcoming you to WC7. This is the second time that ALTEX is compiling the abstract book for a World Congress - after Berlin 2005, now Rome 2009.

This allows us to draw a small comparison to follow which changes have occurred in the research foci and how the numbers of abstracts contributed by individual countries have developed. Of course the quantity of abstracts does not necessarily reflect the quality of the contributions and the reference to a theme in the abstract does not mean that a solution to a problem has been found.

Regarding the research foci: the interest in alternatives for the cosmetics testing has increased further. The number of contributions in this area has in fact almost doubled since Berlin. Although only 12 posters were submitted for the section "cosmetics", the section "skin and eye toxicity", which is closely related to this area, comprises 73 posters. This shows what a strong influence politics can exert on science, for it was the 7th Amendment to the Cosmetics Directive that set off the strong innovative drive in this area. This number of poster contributions is superseded only by the 89 posters in the section "*in vitro* technologies", a sign of the extreme innovative force that is still driving these technologies. The number of contributions to REACH has also doubled. The contributions to "safety testing" and "risk assessment" remain steady, while the contributions to "refinement" and "animal welfare" have diminished considerably. Contributions to ecotoxicology have also receded significantly as have, very surprisingly, those to QSAR methods, despite the plans of the EU to employ these prominently in the safety testing of chemicals.

Regarding the individual countries: three real "full size 3R nations" actively participate or are co-responsible for more than half (53.7%) of all contributions (in Berlin 2005 this figure was 60.0%). These three are the United States (21.7%), Germany (17.0%), and the United Kingdom (15.0%). In Berlin their shares were 21.5% (US), 22.5% (Germany) and 16.0% (UK). Six "middle class 3R" nations follow, i.e. France (10.3%), Japan (8.9%), the Netherlands (7.0%), the European Union (6.2%), Italy (5.4%) and Switzerland (5.1%).

However the unofficial motto of the Olympic Games is also applicable here, "The most important thing is not to win but to take part!" So we greatly appreciate the contributions, which may not be so numerous but are scientifically highly valuable, from Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, China, Columbia, Cuba, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, India, Ireland, Israel, Latvia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Rumania, Russia, Serbia, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, Syria, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela. The world power Russia, like Poland, is only represented by a single poster contribution in Rome (in 1996 there were 10 and 6 contributions respectively). This may not necessarily mean that an interest in developing 3R methods is lacking in these countries. Financial limitations but also the language barrier may be reasons

for staying away from the Congress. The summaries of all ALTEX articles will be translated e.g. into Russian, because it is a simple fact that a large part of unquestionably highly qualified Russian speaking scientists does not publish in English. Here the United States and Russia can repeat what they have demonstrated so well in space research: exchanging scientists, driving collaborative projects forward, improving communication and supporting the humane handling of animals. It should be an important goal of the World Congress to actively integrate a world nation such as Russia in this regard. Comparing the national contribution numbers to an earlier Congress (Utrecht 1996), we could already find the three "3R full size nations" then, i.e. UK (15.0%), US (11.7%) and Germany (11.0%), though all were eclipsed by the host of that Congress, the Netherlands, with 16.0% of contributions. 32 countries contributed in 1996, this number had already increased to 51 in Berlin and remained steady with 50 in Rome (the EU is counted as a separate "country" here; the contributions of ECVAM in Ispra are not attributed to Italy).

In some of the poster abstracts submitted for WC7, especially in some from countries in which no independent efforts have been documented in the 3R area before, a 3R relevance is not immediately obvious. Animal experiments are described without reference to means of reducing these in any way. The Program Review Panel did not oversee these abstracts but came to the decision that participation in WC7 should be enabled for these groups so that they may be introduced to the full scope of the 3R efforts.

The Proceedings of the WC7 shall also be published. This will comprise a written version of all lectures, which requires a certain amount of discipline from the speakers. Only few speakers will arrive in Rome with a finished manuscript. But we must consider that such Proceedings find widespread distribution to universities and use in education. No other medium provides such a good overview of the state of the art in a form that is accessible to students as a collation of manuscripts encompassing the entire area of 3R research. It is thus highly desirable that especially the invited speakers, whose opinions on the developments in their fields are highly valued, contribute their manuscripts to the Proceedings.

The generous sponsorship of the WC7 organisation, CAAT and the DZF has made the provision of the Abstract Book to all ALTEX subscribers possible. Thus persons who are not able to come to Rome can also inform themselves comprehensively of the developments in the 3R field.

The ALTEX Team wished the organisers and all participants of WC7 a successful Congress and a memorable time in Rome. We look forward to seeing you all again at WC8 in Montréal, Canada, on August 21-25, 2011.

With best wishes

Franz P. Gruber