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## Editorial

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### Congress Chairmen's Preface

The 5th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences was a memorable event at which 970 colleagues from 46 countries met on August 21-25, 2005, in Berlin (Germany) to discuss progress in refining, reducing and replacing testing in experimental animals according to the Three Rs Principle of Bill Russel and Rex Burch. The Alternative Congress Trust and the organisers and sponsors were happy to welcome delegations of more than 100 participants from Germany, Japan, the UK and the USA and scientists from countries, who were able to attend for the first time, e.g. Cuba, India, Iran and Eastern Europe, most of whom were supported by funding generously provided by the sponsors.

We are convinced that all of the participants enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere and the stimulating discussions at the Estrel Convention Centre, and also the pleasant summer evenings at different locations in Berlin, the unified and re-established German capital, which provided a perfect setting to refresh memories with old friends and to meet young colleagues from around the world. We were fortunate that two charismatic women accepted our invitation to give the opening speeches, Jane Goodall and Renate Künast. Both of them fascinated the international audience with the power of their arguments that needed no advanced technical support. During Jane Goodall's lecture, everyone in the audience, from students to senior scientists and managers, hung on her lips to catch every word. Renate Künast, the Patron of the congress and German Federal Minister for Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture, stressed the firm commitment of the German government to animal welfare, including experimental animals, and to the Three Rs principle. These were the most memorable moments of the congress. The two Europeans encouraged scientists from all continents to follow their example. Participants representing countries that cannot yet give the Three Rs a high priority due to economic constraints expressed their appreciation to Jane Goodall and Renate Künast for setting high and realistic ethical standards in the life sciences.

The European Union gives the Three Rs concept a very high priority, as demonstrated e.g. in the EU cosmetics directive and in the new EU chemicals policy (REACH). Therefore, the European cosmetics and chemicals industry, international regulatory agencies and animal welfare organisations chose the 5th World Congress in Berlin as a scientific forum to discuss progress in safety testing without animals. Scientists from academia and industry presented advanced molecular and cell culture methods that will in the near future even allow replacement of experiments in transgenic animals.

The Scientific Committee had selected the following 7 themes, "education", "laboratory animal welfare", "moral issues of animals, alternatives and public policy", "information systems and data bases", "safety testing, validation and risk assessment", "mathematical modelling" and "applying new science and technology". In addition to the invited plenary lectures more than 600 abstracts were discussed in workshops and as oral or poster presentations. It is remarkable that 10% of the abstracts were submitted to the session of *in vitro* testing for skin irritation. This shows



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the high priority that scientists in academia and industry give the EU Cosmetics Directive, which calls for a ban of safety testing of cosmetic ingredients in animals in the very near future. We are also pleased that the European Commission, the European chemical and cosmetics industry and international animal welfare organisations used the 5th World Congress in Berlin as their forum to discuss ethical, scientific and political aspects of reducing safety testing in animals according to the Three Rs principle.

The organisers highly appreciate the tradition that the respected international institutions used the 5th World Congress as a venue to award prizes devoted to scientific and ethical aspects of the Three Rs. In fact, more than 15 prizes were awarded at the plenary sessions and during social events of the 5th World Congress in Berlin.

We would not have been able to offer such an attractive program without the substantial support of international sponsors. We were honoured that the congress was held under the patronage of the German Minister of Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture Renate Künast and we are proud that the institutions sponsoring the 5th World Congress include the Federal US Government (NIH) and the UK Home Office as well as major global companies from the pharmaceuticals, chemicals and cosmetics industry and international animal welfare organisations.

We are also indebted to the congress organiser CTW, in particular Thomas Wiese, Martina Falliner-Dieterici and Wencke Wieseke, who supported the local organisers in Berlin during the period of planning and behind the scenes during the conference sessions and the social events in the evening, among which the gala dinner at the greenhouse in the botanical gardens was the most memorable. We are also indebted to the BfR, the Federal Institute for Risk Assessment, where the staff of ZEBET, and in particular the scientific secretary Richard Vogel, worked very hard to provide an attractive setting for the 5th World Congress.

Finally, we appreciate the co-operation with Thomas Hartung, head of ECVAM, the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods in Ispra (Italy), which provided funding to publish the Proceedings of the 5th World Congress on Alternatives and Animal Use in the Life Sciences, and we thank Franz Gruber and the editorial office of ALTEX in Zurich (Switzerland), who did an excellent job and worked long hours to provide you with these proceedings.

Horst Spielmann and Andrew Rowan  
Co-Chairs of the Organising Committee