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Statement of EFIS and the EFIS Vaccine Task Force on the Recommendations of the EURL ECVAM

In the spirit of the objective to reduce, refine, and replace (3Rs) the use of animals in science wherever possible we – the European body representing thousands of immunologists and its Task Force on Vaccines – welcome the advances that have been made in the development of non-animal derived antibodies. We reject, however, the EURL ECVAM report's finding that scientific funding bodies should refuse to fund research that continues to use animal-derived antibodies.

Whilst we recognise that, in line with Directive 2010/63/EU, it is necessary to move to a non-animal alternative whenever feasible, as the report correctly states, it is not yet known whether an immediate shift is possible or practical. It has not yet been concluded whether non-animal derived antibodies are comparable to their animal-derived counterparts, as well as there being cases where animal-derived antibodies are essential to the research being carried out. It has also been recognised by one of the members of the working group who produced the report, that the process for converting to a new way of working, establishing new, full libraries of antigen sequences and the necessary changes for large scale commercial development of antibodies will be a long-term process.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, animal-derived antibodies have been used across Europe by researchers to help further our knowledge of this novel threat to our health. In the midst of this urgent research, it is vital that we retain all research tools at our disposal to ensure we emerge from this virus as safely and swiftly as possible.

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