Dear Dr Schutte and Dr Louhimies,

You say and write that you are organising a scientific conference "in response to Stop Vivisection requests", but the one scheduled on 6/7 December 2016 by no means seems to meet the criteria submitted to the European authorities in the name of 1,173,131 european citizens.

What we had asked for was a serious scientific and public debate that would specifically focus on the validity of the animal model paradigm in current biomedical research (see Stop Vivisection dossier). We called for international scientific experts from both parties - against and in support of animal experiments - comparing data, and presenting solid arguments challenging or defending the current way in which regulatory policies are decided with respect to human health and the environment.

At a time when chronic diseases are on the rise in Europe and elsewhere in the world, there is a need for a paradigm shift in the way we address toxicological and biomedical research.

We want the European Union to be at the forefront of this crucial battle on behalf of civil society, scientific progress and economic prosperity.

We want European citizens to be able to assist in a truly democratic debate with a chance to achieve meaningful results.

We therefore want to attend a Conference with an equal number of speakers for and against, with an equal speaking time for everyone, granting Stop Vivisection the right to choose its own speakers.

Instead, you are proposing a heterogenous list of topics covering animal experiments and the 3Rs in eight sessions to be completed in just a day and a half. A meeting at which participants will have no more than 15 minutes to present their views on questions like«Which methods are effective in achieving human and environmental protection» or «Did animal models contribute to improve human health and are they still of any use today?» or « Strength & limitations of non-animal alternatives in light of research needs » or « Value of revolutionary non-animal approaches like bioinformatics, stem-cell biology, gene therapy »…a vague and disorienting encounter indeed, with very little time for Q&A with the audience, and therefore with not much chance of reaching any useful conclusions.

Moreover:

- People allowed to attend the conference will be selected with unknown criteria among those that have registered;

- Speakers presenting the arguments will be chosen with unknown criteria;

- We are not told how many of the scientists who in our view should attend the conference will be invited, if any;

- The focus of our victorious ECI was to challenge Directive 2010/63/EU, which states that “the use of live animals continues to be necessary to protect human health” which must be addressed ;

- And not even a word, never mind a session, will be devoted to the necessity of making validated alternative methods mandatory by law.

Stop Vivisection promoters and supporters cannot identify themselves with such an inadequate approach to the problem of the validity of animal experiments in the XXI Century. Nor we can comment on details of something whose 3Rs inspiration we reject as a whole.

More courage is needed on your part. We have done our part. It is up to European institutions, now, to fulfill their democratic duty: not to pander to lobbies and old fashioned academic rules but instead to the people and to a fair, proper, worthy vision of medical research for the future.

Sincerely, and on behalf of the Stop Vivisection committee,

Dr Andre Menache

Professor Gianni Tamino