

Italian scientists protest proposed animal law



Hundreds of scientists demonstrated in Rome today against a proposed new law on the protection of animals for scientific purposes, which they fear threatens biomedical research in Italy.

The law — which was approved by Parliament on 31 July and is awaiting government rubber-stamping — is intended to implement a [2010 European Union directive covering research animals](#).

That directive is considered to provide among the strictest regulations in the world. But the Italian law introduces further restrictions [which critics say go beyond the directive's intentions, and may even be illegal](#) under EU rules. It would, for example, stop the use of dogs, cats and non-human primates in Italy for research (except in mandatory drug testing or when directly related to translational medicine), and require anaesthetic for any procedure causing mild pain in animals (such as giving injections).

The rally was organised by [Pro-Test Italia](#), a science lobby group.

Several international scientific societies have publicly lent their moral support. The American Physiological Society, the Federation of American Societies for Experimen-

tal Biology (FASEB) and the Illinois-based International Society for Stem Cell Research (ISSCR) provided statements which also declare their own commitment to responsible and humane use of animals in research. FASEB **wrote**: “We commend Pro-test Italia in championing life-saving animal research and opposing restrictive regulations that will slow scientific progress.”

The ISSCR declared that it was most concerned about a proposed ban on xenotransplantation (in which cells and tissues are transplanted between species) “which would have a profoundly negative impact on the ability of scientists to conduct stem cell research in Italy.”