

The procedure of the petition

- **A promising start.** The petition to the European Parliament (hereinafter called the petition) was submitted on 31 October 2012. A few months after its submission, the petition was *declared admissible* - confirmation that its subject falls within the European Parliament's fields of activity. By April 2013, the *Committee on Petitions* of the Parliament had already asked the European Commission to conduct a preliminary investigation and provide information on the points raised by the petition. The procedure started in record timing. It remained to await the European Commission's reply in order for the Parliament to proceed with the petition examination. The Commission takes on average 4 months to provide the information requested.

- **First obstacle: the answer from the European Commission.** The first obstacle came from the European Commission, which, one year after the request for a preliminary investigation, communicated that it was still postponing provision of the information requested. These are the reasons:

- This was in 2014, and the gathering of signatures was closed supporting another initiative against vivisection, the European Citizens' Initiative *Stop Vivisection* (hereinafter called ECI) addressed to the European Commission.
- The submission of the ECI, expected for the following year, would open a debate on the scientific value of vivisection. The Commission will have to reply to the ECI and, on that occasion, express its assessment of the role played by vivisection in scientific research.
- In the communication between the European Commission and the European Parliament, the Commission stated that it would wait for the submission of the ECI prior to taking any formal position on the matter: hence the Commission will provide a response to the petition concurrently with responding to the ECI *Stop Vivisection*.

The ECI is a Citizen's Initiative addressed to the European Commission, which is called to answer to it. The petition instead is an initiative addressed to the European Parliament. The Parliament must respond to a petition: however, the result must be awaited of preliminary investigations requested from the Commission by Parliament.

Thus, by its decision, the European Commission has kept the petition procedure suspended for around 2 years.

- **Scandal: the answer from the European Parliament.** In June 2015, the European Commission replied to the ECI. After that, as previously stated, the European Commission also replied on the matter of the petition, providing the same response already given to the ECI. A staggering response, especially as it seems to completely ignore the whole debate raised by ECI, to which this response was first addressed. Similarly, as will be seen below, it also seems to ignore all the issues presented in the petition.

Having completed the preliminary investigation, the Parliament finally has the right to proceed in the examination of the petition and to discuss it at a *public meeting of the Committee on Petitions*: a meeting attended by members of the Committee on Petitions, in the presence of the petitioner; where the petitioner presents the petition and where the *parliamentarians, having heard the response of the European Commission, may enter into the merits of the arguments put forward, ask questions of the Commission representative or the signer and evaluate the follow-up to the petition*. Based on the issues raised by a petition, the Parliament may decide to take various actions, including organizing fact-finding missions, launch infringement proceedings or take political initiatives. Finally, after 3 years, the petition is expected to enter into its crucial phase of examination.

The shocking communication from the Parliament instead is that the petition examination is closed! The petition has not even been given the opportunity to be publicly discussed in a meeting of the

Committee. The *Committee on Petitions* decided to close the petition exclusively in the light of the European Commission's reply, which had previously been provided to the ECI, and with which it states it is in full agreement - and archive it without any further examination or follow-up.

We are stunned!

The Parliament can close a petition in the light of the European Commission's reply. The response of the Commission, however, is not only widely contradicted by the historical facts reported in the petition documentation, but does not even deal with the main issues raised by the petition: indeed the request for abolition was articulated in a number of points each of which raises specific concerns about lack of guarantees, hazards to health and environment, social and economic costs and serious legislative contradictions that vivisection involves.

Asking for the abolition of vivisection as a method that has never been scientifically validated, the petition referred to a serious legislative contrast. New test methods replacing an animal method are not accepted as meeting legal requirements for safety or efficacy testing of a chemical or a new medicine, if they have not first been validated: it is necessary to ENSURE that the test method can correctly predict relevant effects of concern and can provide reliable results. Vivisection instead is legally accepted, though this method has never been subjected to a validation process, and has never been shown to meet the legal requirements required for any test method intended to replace it - the validity of the method could not be asserted even despite the long history of routine use of vivisection, which has created instead an irreconcilable conflict within the scientific community over its validity and usefulness. **The petition cited the European Regulation REACH**, which constantly refers to the *variability* of animal data (that is, the lack of reliability - a requirement to consider a method safe). How is it that this regulation allows the use of vivisection for safety testing of chemicals, especially for testing their serious long-term effects? Putting the security of citizens and the environment at risk, and compromising expensive prevention programs. **The petition asks for the abolition of vivisection used as a criterion in the process of validation itself**: new replacement test methods, in order to be validated, must compare their results with the ones already achieved by vivisection - that is, in order to see if they meet the legal requirements, they are compared with a method which has never been proven to have these same requirements. Another disconcerting legislative contrast.

The petition declares that vivisection "is a scandal in terms of health protection", not so much affirming or denying scientific principles, but referring to historical and irrefutable facts, which demonstrate the need to abolish vivisection for the protection of citizens, for the progress of medicine and to safeguard principles and guarantees that the law should ensure. Moreover, the petition documentation brings to light the reality of the experiments which, also through numerous testimonies by doctors and researchers, clearly show not only how doomed to fail they are, but that they constitute **extraordinary financial waste** and economic damage.

Where, in the European Commission's reply, are these issues discussed?

The Commission's reply affirms the value of vivisection for research and the protection of health, without taking into account medical and scientific testimony and data that contradict this affirmation, and without addressing the facts presented. Then, given this premise, the whole report is limited to illustrating the European policy in regulating vivisection, the 3Rs policy, the "welfare" of animals used in the procedures, the stated desire to replace vivisection when new methods become validated. The whole perspective of the petition has been ignored, as well as the citizens' requests.

How can the Parliament close the petition in the light of the European Commission's reply?

Moreover, we are perplexed by the decision not even to give the petition the possibility to be publicly examined in a *meeting of the Committee* – a petition dealing with matters of such importance and urgency, crucial matters within the European Union's policy, and concerning citizens' fundamental rights.

Together to assert our right

The petition was organized only thanks to the collaboration of private citizens. Many people have collaborated for 3 years contributing to the research, the documentation, the collection of signatures

across Europe and the submission of the petition. We ask again for the collaboration and support of everybody so that the Parliament cannot dismiss the petition without even providing a response to the questions raised. This is not acceptable. We must ensure that these questions can be urgently discussed and that citizens' requests can receive a proper response.

Moreover it is no longer acceptable that the demand for abolition be denied. If the protection of human health is a fundamental and unalienable right, then obtaining the abolition of vivisection is a fundamental right! We ask everybody to stand unified in order to assert our rights and to make our rights be respected. We are planning our strategy in order to up the pressure; we will inform you about what actions can be taken. We will not stop until our request is heard: but we know that, in order to win, the support of everyone is absolutely needed.

We thank the petition supporters who have created a Facebook page dedicated to divulging the results of the petition and, above all, to providing information on the next actions that may be taken in order to make our request heard by the European Parliament:

<https://www.facebook.com/Abolizione-della-vivisezione-Ora-133575890404116/>

We invite everyone who wishes to support this campaign to express his/her consensus on that page and to contribute to sharing it!

This initiative has been organized exclusively through the cooperation of volunteer European citizens, and has been made possible by the extraordinary work and the support of the many who have contributed to its accomplishment. But.. in order to guarantee its full success the commitment and the participation of everybody is now really necessary.

To anyone who is willing to support this initiative:

- *We are organizing its circulation through street stations for signature collection and a wide chain of communication by word-of-mouth. We invite everyone to contribute to its maximum diffusion. Particularly if you have friends or relatives living abroad, please pass them the petition in order to divulge it across other EU states.*

- *If you run venues for social gatherings, a commercial activity or events open to the public, if it is possible we invite you to display the petition and the form for signature collection.*

- *The first signatory has financed the organization and the launch of this initiative also with the contribution of numerous European citizens, whose selfless help has made it possible. Around 3.000 brochures have been printed already, but many more must be printed together with other documents in various languages, while the costs of circulation across Italy and Europe have to be covered. Financial funding is urgently needed. In order to collect donations from anyone willing to contribute to printing and circulation costs, the first signatory has open a Credit Card postal account:*

Carta PostPay n. 4023 6005 7830 0586 - account holder: Fornasari Roberta.

Any kind of help, even a minimum one, is vital! With a widespread popular participation it will be possible to gather the financial means necessary to support this initiative. Payment can be made from a post office or on line.

- *We call for artists, music and theatre groups and event organizers to devote an evening to the support of the petition and/or to devolve part of the takings to finance its diffusion.*

For any kind of information you can contact the first signatory, Fornasari Roberta, at:
info@stopvivisezione.net

The petition is organized by the first signatory, Fornasari Roberta, with the cooperation of other European citizens who have actively contributed to its organization, and thanks to the sustainment of the many who have supported it.