

Prize for animal-free antibodies

ECEAE offers 10,000 euros for the development and exemplary use of animal-free antibodies

Up to one million animals are used and killed for the production of antibodies in the EU each year, despite the presence of superior animal-free methods. To raise awareness about their advantages and promote their application, The European Coalition to End Animal Experiments (ECEAE) is announcing a one-of-a-kind prize for the development and exemplary use of animal-free antibodies. [The prize](#), worth 10,000 euros, aims to support the recommendation of the EU Reference Laboratory EURL-ECVAM to no longer use animal-derived antibodies and accelerate the transition from animal-based to animal-free antibody production systems.

Antibodies are proteins produced by the immune system that can recognize and bind to unique molecular patterns (antigens) and aid the neutralization of foreign objects and pathogens. Because of their specific binding properties, antibodies are one of the most ubiquitously used tools in research, diagnostics, therapeutics and regulatory procedures. Although modern and precise animal-free methods for antibody generation, e.g. through phage display, have been available for decades, the vast majority of antibodies for research purposes are still being produced in animals, leading to immense animal suffering and loss of animal lives. For example, for the generation of monoclonal antibodies via the so-called “ascites method” antibody-producing cells are injected in living mice, leading to a tumor-like growth, inflammation and secretion of an antibody-containing fluid in the abdominal cavity (ascites), which is excruciatingly painful for the mice. So-called polyclonal antibodies are often produced in animals like rats, rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, and also large animals such as sheep, goats, donkeys and horses. An estimated approximately 1 million animals are used each year for antibody development and production in the EU alone (1).

In 2020, the EU Reference Laboratory for alternatives to animal testing (EURL ECVAM) published a “Recommendation on non-animal-derived antibodies” stating that „there is a solid body of evidence demonstrating that there are no general or systematic disadvantages of non-animal-derived antibodies with respect to properties such as affinity, stability/shelf life, and specificity.” (2) The recommendation concludes that animals should no longer be used for the development and production of antibodies and EU member states should no longer authorize these procedures.

To raise awareness about the advantages of animal-free antibodies and promote their development and application, **ECEAE** is happy to announce for the first time a unique **Prize for animal-free antibodies**, amounting to **10,000 euros**. Its aim is to highlight the versatility and superiority of animal-free antibodies and encourage their acceptance and use for research and therapeutic purposes. Individual researchers, as well as public and private research institutions and companies from Europe focused on the development or application of animal-free antibodies are welcome to apply. The prize will be awarded at an international event in Brussels, Belgium, in March-April 2022.

ECEAE hopes that this exceptional prize will raise the awareness about the ethical and scientific advantages of animal-free antibodies and encourage more researchers to stop using animals for antibody production.

Further information

[Call for tender >>](#)

References

1. EU Science Hub - European Commission: Better antibodies without using animals. 11.5.2020, <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/science-update/better-antibodies-without-using-animals>
2. Viegas Barroso JF et al. EURL ECVAM recommendation on non-animal-derived antibodies. Publications Office of the European Union, 2020