CONFERENCE REPORT

EuroNICHE 10th Anniversary Conference

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The European Network of Individuals and Campaigns for Humane Education (EuroNICHE) held its 10th conference November 28 through 30 in Hoek van Holland, The Netherlands. EuroNICHE describes itself as "an international network of students, teachers, and other professionals working to build a humane education system and end the harmful use of animals within undergraduate education." The organization had two noteworthy achievements in 1997: It released a book on alternatives in education, From Guinea Pig to Computer Mouse: Alternative Methods for a Humane Education (Zinko, Jukes, & Gericke), and received an award—the Nordic Prize (£5,000)—which was jointly sponsored by the Swedish Fund for Research Without Animal Experiments, the Juliana von Wendt's Fund (Finland), and the Alternatives Fund (Denmark) for efforts to educate and inform people on issues relating to alternatives.

Like the previous 1995 EuroNICHE conference in Bridport, England, this one had an informal atmosphere well suited to the undergraduate-level students drawn to it. Close to 50 people attended and the quality and motivation of participants was high. Of the 27 nations that are in some way represented within EuroNICHE, 14 were represented at this conference.

Sessions included conscientious objection, alternatives, national reports, veterinary medicine, ethics and animal use in education, and future expectations. There was also a separate room where alternatives and resources were on display for

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viewing and using. The conscientious objection workshop featured three students chronicling their campaigns to secure alternatives to exercises harmful to animals. Eight years into her odyssey, German student Anya Fedderson's case has reached the highest federal level in Germany and is getting strong media coverage. Danish student, Morten Larsen, took his case all the way to the European Committee on Human Rights, where it was rejected. Norwegian veterinary student, Siri Martinsen, early into her campaign, finds that the resistance she faces is based not so much on quality education as on ego, fear of precedence, and tradition.

Alternatives demonstrated included computer simulations (DigiDiss series, Sweden; anesthesia of rats, Holland; SimSeries, Germany; Myograph, Germany; Microlabs, Holland), a 3-D model (the development rat for teaching microsurgical skills, Holland), and the PREX database on alternatives (Holland). In a presentation entitled Opportunities in Humane Research, Gill Langley (United Kingdom) reviewed exciting new findings from molecular research, cell and tissue culture, computing, and human volunteers. Other presentations included Ethics, Model Policies, and Strategies for Reform (Barbara Orlans, United States), Animal Minds/Animal Feelings (Jonathan Balcombe, United States), and Positive Experimentation (Morten Larsen, Denmark).

The small size of EuroNICHE and its conference gatherings reflects not a lack of concern among students, but rather, a widespread reluctance to challenge the authority of educational institutions. EuroNICHE seeks to overcome this reluctance through expanded outreach. The organization's new priorities are developing a comprehensive information pack for teachers and students and producing a promotional video. In addition, EuroNICHE will update and enlarge their alternatives book with a second edition and will begin organizing a large conference in spring 2000.

The EuroNICHE webpage, formally launched in 1997, is located at http://www.euroniche.internetworking.de