

Say no to chimpanzee manipulation with artificial DNA!

14000 signatures against patents held by US company Intrexon

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Munich

After more than 14.000 people signed a petition, several organisations have filed an opposition against the European patent EP1572862 held by the US company, Intrexon. The patent was granted by the European Patent Office (EPO) in 2012 and claims many animal species including chimpanzees. According to the patent, the company wants to manipulate the animals with artificial DNA synthesized in partial analogy to the genome of insects. Intrexon is working in the field of "synthetic biology" and aims to produce animals with changed gene regulation to sell to the pharmaceutical industry. Several organisations filed a similar opposition in 2012 against a similar Intrexon patent. There are several ex-Monsanto employees e.g. Robert B. Shapiro currently serving either on the board of the company or in management positions. Intrexon further holds around 50 percent of shares in Aquabounty, a company that wants to market genetically engineered salmon in the US.

The opponents - Albert Schweitzer Stiftung fuer unsere Mitwelt, Deutscher Tierschutzbund, Genethisches Netzwerk (GeN), GeneWatch UK, Gesellschaft für oekologische Forschung, Jane Goodall Institute, No Patents On Life!, Menschen für Tierrechte, Pro Wildlife, Schweizerische Arbeitsgruppe Gentechnologie (SAG), Schweizer Tierschutz (STS), TASSO, Testbiotech and Wild Chimpanzee Foundation Deutschland (WCF) - are calling for animals and especially great apes to be treated with more respect. The joint opposition argues that this patent violates ethical provisions in patent law.

"These patents reveal a new development. Synthetic biology allows major changes in the genome of animals", says Christoph Then for Testbiotech. "Granting these patents goes far beyond the boundaries accepted by European society. It means to run a business to reprogram the genome of great apes."

In 2012, the EPO granted three patents allowing the production of genetically engineered chimpanzees. Two are held by Intrexon which beside chimpanzees, claim animals such as mice, rats, rabbits, cats, dogs, bovines, goats, pigs, horses, sheep and other monkeys. A third patent was granted to the US company, Altor BioScience. This patent was also opposed by several organisations.

The EPO has already granted more than 1000 patents on animals since the first one in 1992 on the so-called "oncomouse". Several patents have been granted to companies claiming great apes. In 2010, Bionomics received a patent on genetically engineered chimpanzees manipulated to suffer from an epileptic disorder (EP 1852505).

Some EU countries have already prohibited experiments on great apes and the EU has adopted Directive 2010/63/EU, which places a ban on the use of great apes in research except under exceptional circumstances. The opponents are warning that patents can create commercial incentives to produce and market these animals by using legal loopholes within the 38 Member States of the European Patent Convention.

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Further information about participating organisations:

www.wildchimps.org [3]

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www.prowildlife.de [5]

www.albert-schweitzer-stiftung.de [6]

www.tierschutzbund.de [7]

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www.testbiotech.org [13]
www.gentechnologie.ch [14]
www.tasso.net [15]

Further relevant information:

The Great Ape Project: www.greatapeproject.org [16]

Possibility for online signatures: http://www.testbiotech.org/en/sign_chimpanzees [17]

Further information: [Patent as granted](#) [18]

[Text of the opposition](#) [19]

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