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My degree was a combined study of biology and geography. In our fourth year, we had to study animal physiology and in a manner similar to many students throughout Europe, this included dissections and experiments on frogs, mice, rats, and in this case, even cats.

At the beginning of that year, along with a fellow student, I told our practice leader that for ethical reasons we don't want to perform animal experiments. We spoke out publicly in front of our fellow students. The professor was angry, but didn't respond with a definite 'no.' However, he told the head of department, who tried to persuade her and I not to object to the experiments.

We were waiting for a decision on our objection and near the end of the semester the Department Head told us that we would not be given a mark for the practical. This meant that we could not continue with the biology branch of our studies and therefore our chosen career paths. We went to everybody to try and influence the decision: all influential people at and around the university, including the Dean. After many 'negotiations,' it was decided that instead of participating in 12 practicals, we would have to do only one. This one experiment was a frog practical—an investigation of the heart of an anaesthetized frog.

We were in a terrible situation. Why was it necessary to sacrifice that frog? Both practical and political considerations informed the decision of what we would do. My colleague was keen to continue a scientific career in biology (plant ecology), and in the 1980s we in Hungary were still under an authoritarian communist regime, which made questioning anything very difficult. The political pressure must be stressed because it meant we had chosen a path that was very dangerous at that time. With this in mind, I knew that to reach a relevant position to struggle for animals, it may be necessary to compromise at some point. In fact, the choice corresponded to the only one that would let me reach such a position. Both of us decided that we would perform that one experiment.

Although we had studied and knew all the relevant material on animal physiology, and performed that practical, we still only received marks of 3 and of 2 (the maximum is 5). But what was more important, we could continue the second part of our practice in a different group, and in that group we didn't have to perform any further experiments. This may have been the 'compromise' by the department to avoid any further complications.

To help compensate for my fault with the frog, I became active in an animal welfare group, which of course had been supporting us during the difficulties. I joined the FAUNA Association, a Hungarian pro-Nature group, and began work with EuroNICHE.

As a fifth-year graduate student I organized a so-called ethical committee at the University to help both animals and students. This consisted of professors and students, and its creation was helped substantially by one of the professors who had wanted to help in our case before but who wasn't able to do anything because he worked for a different department. We arranged several meetings of that committee and in spite of some

opposition, it declared that an ethical codex should be created and applied in the practicals. Unfortunately, that codex was not strict enough and was not applied in the way we had intended.

Two years after my graduation, FAUNA activists and others initiated a petition for humane education at the University. The petition was signed by more than 100 students of biology, chemistry, geography, and psychology students. An indirect result of the petition was that practically all students who didn't want to vivisect had the opportunity to avoid it. Another, worse result was that the animal physiology department declared that every student should sign a paper when entering the University that he or she undertakes to follow every demand related to education. But this happened in 1991 and I believe that in part due to the political changes since then, no such declaration is currently required.

Now I believe that the legal approach is one of the more appropriate. I have been actively involved in the animal protection movement's input in the development of a new Hungarian animal welfare law. I helped ensure that animal use in education was addressed in the law. Alternatives should be used 'where available,' and no-one can be forced to perform an animal experiment. In theory, dissections should be illegal, but along with the other aspects of the law there is plenty of room for interpretation, and non-enforcement.

Reflecting now on the original frog experiment I performed, I still don't know whether I acted rightly or wrongly. It was not a simple situation. Probably if we hadn't publicly objected to these practicals then like other students we could have avoided direct involvement in them, as we did in the second semester. At that time, however, under a communist regime, choices were very limited. If my case had been more recently perhaps I would have acted differently. Certainly I will never be able to save that frog but I hope that I contribute now to the saving of many others.