

Hearing Olivér Várhelyi, Commissioner-designate for Health and Animal Welfare

On Wednesday 6 November 2024, Commissioner-designate for Health and Animal Welfare, Olivér Várhelyi, will face the European Parliament at a hearing with the Environment and Health committees. [LERU](#) and [EU-LIFE](#) together account for some of the largest and most influential research-intensive universities and life science institutes in Europe. Our members investigate many fundamental questions surrounding human and animal biology, and the multiple insights that this research has generated have led to the development of vital therapies for humans and for animals. We have the following points we would like to make for this hearing based on the [mission letter](#) to Commissioner-designate Várhelyi:

- 1) Scientific research is the foundation for a healthy, prosperous, strong, competitive and innovative Europe. Increased and ring-fenced funding for biomedical research, allows the EU to remain a strong player in the field of Health and Animal Welfare and that it can swiftly exploit scientific findings regardless of where they are made. There is no direct reference to the importance of research in the mission letter, although the latest Nobel Prize again emphasises the central importance of basic and applied biomedical research for human and animal health and treating diseases.
- 2) Scientific biomedical research still requires the use of animal and non-animal models in a complementary manner. The scientific community has increasingly developed the latter approaches in the spirit of current EU legislation, but emphasises that at present, non-animal methods cannot substitute all methods involving animals, and in some cases, may not ever be able to.

Questions we would like to ask Commissioner-designate Várhelyi:

- 1) Alongside coordination, the success of European health depends on Europe's ability to expand the understanding of fundamental molecular and cellular mechanisms in health and disease to pave the way for promising new treatments, especially in the context of precision medicine. **How do you plan to support the crucial effort of the European Beating Cancer Plan, as well as other potentially upcoming plans in the fields of mental health, cardiovascular disease, autism and non-communicable diseases?**
- 2) Human health, animal health and preservation of biodiversity need permanent scientific research activities that use both animal and non-animal methods in complementarity. **Do you consider the current EU legislative framework on the use of animals for scientific purposes appropriate or do you intend to revise it during your mandate and if so, which parts?**

- 3) The European Health Data Space is an important step forward by providing a potential platform for sharing data. But to unleash its competitive power, Electronic Health Record and Registry data need to be harmonized across EU countries, be linked to genetic, biomarker and other health data in European biobanks and research cohorts, and allowed for pan-European research. **What are the concrete steps toward enabling data driven health science in the EU Commission?**

EU-LIFE and LERU look forward to working with the next Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare and the European Parliament in the next legislative term and be consulted on all relevant policy initiatives.

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