

Additional questions to Commissioner-designate Várhelyi from the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety and the Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development

We deeply regret that the Commissioner-designate did not on his own initiative apologise for his derogatory remark made in plenary of the Parliament which casts doubt on his respect for and sincere cooperation with this Parliament and its members. Furthermore, Members were disappointed by the following remarks in response to the question on not being women's ally: *"It will be hard to answer all this in one minute, but why do you think I'm not an ally of women? I live my life with four women. I have three daughters, and I live with my wife. Don't you consider me to be an ally of women?"* Finally, we deeply regret the lack of clarity on your side when asked whether it was a good idea of the Hungarian government to authorize Sputnik V and Sinopharm vaccines during the COVID-19 crisis.

Question 1

How will you in your actions promote women's rights? What concrete steps will you take to further promote the access and provision of sexual and reproductive healthcare and to improve the situation of women's health and ensure that Union health policies promote gender equality in healthcare? The European Parliament supports access to sexual and reproductive healthcare in all Member States. During your confirmation hearing, you referred to limitations of the powers of the EU, however, EU policies can support access to sexual and reproductive healthcare. Will you actively work to improve and update the cross-border healthcare Directive to ensure that people in Member States without any or adequate reproductive healthcare would safely and confidentially receive it in another Member State?

Question 2

How will you promote the uptake of EMA-approved vaccines and fight vaccine hesitancy and related disinformation and misinformation in all Member States, including your own? How will you work to ensure that the use of 'loopholes' do not undermine the Union system for approval of safe and effective vaccines? In your reply in relation to the tragedy in Spain, Members understood that HERA already has stockpiles of vaccines for tetanus and dengue ready to deploy. Can you confirm that this is the case?

Question 3

Some targets in the Council Recommendation on stepping up EU actions to combat antimicrobial resistance in a One Health approach are not on track to be met. How you will work to change track on these targets, including through collaborating with Member States on actions in their national plans, take further measures to promote prudent use and stewardship of antimicrobials? Parliament considers that action is urgently needed and simply monitoring Member States progress until 2027 is not sufficient. Will you consider further legislative actions before 2027 and how will you monitor that national action plans are accompanied with sufficient funding to reach 2030 targets? EU as a whole seems to be well on track to reduce significantly animal antimicrobial consumption, in particular thanks to the efforts of EU farmers. However, taking into account Member States different starting points, how would you ensure that reduction margins existing in some Member States translate into actual decreases in sales and use of veterinary antimicrobials? Besides, how would you improve monitoring by the Member States of antimicrobial resistance and antimicrobial consumption? How would you improve harmonisation of the national strategies to address antimicrobial resistance? Given the seriousness of the challenges at stake, how would you strengthen the relevant import controls and ensure more harmonised implementation across the EU?

Question 4

How will you ensure to implement an EU-wide comprehensive mandatory food labelling and traceability system that consolidates the various existing voluntary schemes (sustainable and ethical aspects) into a single, clear framework, without additional burdens that would increase prices for consumers? How do you intend to support consensus among Member States on this issue? Are you committed on bringing together front-of-pack nutrition labelling to promote healthy choices? Additionally, how will such a system ensure that consumers are fully informed through extended origin or provenance information on all food products, thereby enhancing consumer protection, reducing food waste, and supporting sustainable practices?

Question 5

EU rules on animal welfare are applied quite differently among Member States. According to you, what are the primary obstacles which contribute to these differences in compliance levels, and what specific actions or support would you propose to help farmers in meeting their obligations more effectively? Which implementation challenges do you identify in the current provisions? As Commissioner-designate, how do you intend to modernise the existing regulations on animal welfare and assess the impact of possible changes? Do you think that imports should be included in any such legislation? In this regard, how could we ensure that third countries comply with EU requirements? And how concretely would you fulfil the commitment made during the hearing to ensure a balanced approach that is economically viable for farmers and that does not hinder their competitiveness? In addition, as Commissioner-designate, what are your views on the conclusions of the ANIT Committee on animal transport?