

Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi  
European Commission  
Berlaymont Rue de la Loi 200  
1040 Brussels

**Open Letter:** Urgent Call for the Prompt Development of the EU Cardiovascular Health Plan

Dear Commissioner Várhelyi,

As Members of the European Parliament and strong supporters of the [EU Structural Heart Disease \(SHD\) Coalition](#), we write to commend the European Commission's commitment to developing an EU Cardiovascular Health (CVH) Plan and to urge that this plan promptly and fully integrates concrete policy actions to address Structural Heart Disease (SHD) across the Union.

The recently adopted [Council Conclusions](#) on improving cardiovascular health, initiated by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council, clearly recognise SHD as a contributor to the cardiovascular disease burden. This is a unique opportunity for the European Commission to positively impact SHD patients by saving lives, reducing health inequalities, and lessening the burden on healthcare systems.

SHD is a key form of cardiovascular disease affecting the heart's valves, walls, and chambers. It is degenerative, **linked to ageing**, and **while it cannot be prevented, it is highly treatable—if detected on time**. Yet millions of Europeans go undiagnosed or misdiagnosed, often until the disease has reached a critical stage.

By 2040, more than **20 million** Europeans are expected to suffer from SHD, a number that will continue to rise as our population ages. Shockingly, **75% of patients with severe SHD die within three years without appropriate treatment**. These deaths are avoidable. And yet, awareness of SHD among the public remains dangerously low - 7 in 8 Europeans do not know what SHD is.

In addition, SHD is frequently **misdiagnosed as natural ageing—particularly in women**—resulting in delayed or inadequate treatment, despite the fact that **early detection through routine screenings** like stethoscope exams and echocardiography can significantly improve survival rates. Women face pronounced disparities, including longer diagnostic delays and underrepresentation in research, which further compromise outcomes. To prevent avoidable deaths and relieve pressure on healthcare systems, the EU Cardiovascular Health Plan should include a coordinated and well-funded strategy that prioritises early detection and optimised patient pathways from referral to treatment, sex equity, and sustainable investment.

With the EU CVH Plan currently under development, we call on the European Commission to:

1. **Develop swiftly an EU framework for early detection**, including routine heart checks and referral pathways for SHD—particularly targeting populations aged 65+.
2. **Address sex disparities** by mandating sex-sensitive screening and research protocols.
3. **Ensure adequate and sustainable funding**, following the commitment of the EU Beating Cancer Plan, for EU coordination, national implementation, awareness and

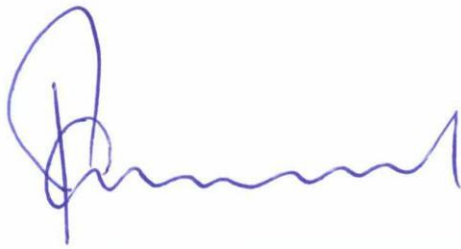
tailored training campaign to support innovation to ensure optimisation of pathways from early detection to referral and treatment to avoid mortality and ensure healthy and active ageing.

We remain committed to working with you and the Commission to ensure that SHD receives the attention it urgently deserves within the EU CVH Plan, and we would warmly welcome a meeting between you and the EU SHD Coalition to further explore this matter.

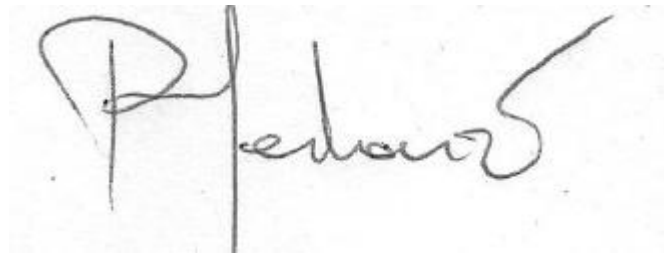
Yours sincerely,

The supporting Members of the European Parliament of the EU SHD Coalition:

*Dr. Vytenis Povilas Andriukaitis (S&D, Lithuania)*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "Vytenis Andriukaitis".

*Romana Jerković (S&D, Croatia)*

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Romana Jerković".