

13 December 2024

RE: The Ocean's contribution to One Health

Dear Commissioner Olivér Várhelyi,

With this letter, the [European Marine Board](#) (EMB) wants to congratulate you on your appointment as EU Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare. We also want to make you aware of the work of the EMB that can help you in addressing the mission with which President von der Leyen has entrusted you.

The EMB is the leading European think-tank in marine science policy, a unique strategic pan-European Forum for seas and Ocean research and technology. We represent the 38 foremost marine research organisations in Europe, supported by the knowledge of more than 10,000 marine scientists, engineers and technologists. Our flagship foresight document, [Navigating the Future VI](#) (NFVI), published in October 2024, provides the newest marine scientific advice to help us all to achieve a secure, prosperous and democratic Europe.

While we certainly welcome the advice from the Scientific Advice Mechanism to the European Commission on "[One Health governance in the European Union](#)", we would like to highlight the importance of the relation between the Ocean and Human Health, not broadly included in this piece of advice. Humans can gain benefits from the Ocean and its ecosystem services including food and energy, but their health can also be at risk from aspects such as storms and pollution. In turn, the health of the Ocean can be significantly impacted by human activity, and therefore a balance needs to be sought to safeguard the health of both. The EMB publication "[Policy Needs for Ocean and Human Health](#)" proposes a way in which the existing regulatory framework could be adapted to incorporate both Ocean and human health together. In addition, the European Marine Board was an active contributor to the blue paper "[How can a healthy ocean improve human health and enhance wellbeing on a rapidly changing planet?](#)" from the High-Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy (The Ocean Panel). The Ocean Panel are world leaders across 19 countries working together to catalyse and implement ocean solutions around the world, including linking human health and the Ocean. This advice explores key areas of opportunity which are relevant to your Mission as EU Commissioner for Health and Animal Welfare, including can the provision of new medicines to fight disease and anti-microbial resistance, inspiration for new technologies, new materials and energy sources from Ocean biodiversity, sustainable production of blue food for ending hunger and malnutrition, and access to healthy marine environments promotes preventive and mental health. Finally, the European Marine Board policy brief on "[Marine Biotechnology: Advancing Innovation in Europe's Bioeconomy](#)" could inform the elaboration of the new European Biotech Act, as marine biotechnology products and applications are highly innovative and diverse, spanning food production, cosmetics, pharmaceutical and wider medical applications.

We would therefore request that the European Commission prioritises and works towards the recommendations highlighted in these documents, and that the Ocean is also considered as part of your work building on the One Health approach. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these topics in the coming months, and to explore how the European Marine Board, as the voice of marine science in Europe, can support you in addressing the Mission that President von der Leyen has entrusted to you

Sincerely,



Dr Fiona Grant
Chair of the European Marine Board