

Working visit of Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety [1]

Published on:
Wednesday, May 3,
2017

On May 2nd 2017, as part of a day dedicated to Belgium, Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, visited the premises of the future Belgian Health Institute. Named 'Sciensano', the new institution will embody the 'One Health' approach, according to which the health of people is connected to the health of animals and the environment. Sciensano should be created this autumn, in the wake of the merger between the Belgian Institute of Public Health (WIV-ISP) and the Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre CODA-CERVA).

The visit was attended by Maggie De Block, Belgian Federal Minister for Public Health and Social Affairs, by Willy Borsus, Belgian Federal Minister for Small Businesses and Agriculture, and by a delegation of senior officials from the Permanent Representation of Belgium to the European Union and from other Belgian federal health administrations in the broad sense.

For nearly two hours, Mr. Andriukaitis and the Belgian Federal Ministers had the opportunity to discuss with eminent scientists of the Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre and of the Scientific Institute of Public Health. Throughout their journey, they could observe closely the functioning of three analysis and research laboratories.

At the heart of the concerns of the European and Belgian health authorities, the topics covered were antibacterial resistance, communicable diseases — in particular avian and human influenza — and the fight against lumpy skin disease, an animal disease introduced in Eastern Europe in 2015. The Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre hosts the European Union's Reference Laboratory for lumpy skin disease, which makes it instrumental in protecting the European livestock against a spread of the epidemic.

During the working visit, Mr. Andriukaitis wished to meet scientists both from the Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre and from the Belgian Institute of Public Health, due to the complementarity of the activities of these scientific institutions expected to merge in the near future. *"In addition to the primary and obvious objective to safeguard the health of human population and of livestock, this move towards an efficient use of resources is fully in line with the 'Europe 2020' strategy of the European Union, whose purpose is to make our economy smart, sustainable and inclusive by fostering growth for all",* said Commissioner Andriukaitis, ahead of the visit.



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