

Press release – COVID-19 vaccines: EU must respond with unity and solidarity



In the plenary debate on Tuesday, MEPs exchanged views with Ana Paula Zacarias, Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs, and Stella Kyriakides, EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety.

A large majority of MEPs showed their support for the united EU approach, which ensured vaccines are being developed quickly and secured access to vaccines for all European citizens. At the same time, they deplored “health nationalism”, including alleged parallel contracts signed by member states or attempts to outcompete each other. In order to uphold the European success story, the EU must respond with unity and solidarity, with all levels of government working together, say MEPs.

Members called for the terms of contracts between the EU and pharmaceutical companies involving public money to be completely transparent. Recent efforts by the Commission, to allow MEPs to consult one incomplete contract, were deemed insufficient. MEPs reiterated that only complete transparency could help combat disinformation and build trust in the vaccination campaigns across Europe.

Speakers also acknowledged the global dimension of the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires global solutions. The EU has a responsibility to use its position of strength to support its most vulnerable neighbours and partners.

The pandemic can be overcome only once all people have equal access to vaccines, not only in rich countries, MEPs added.

The debate also touched upon other issues, such as the need for comparable national data and mutual recognition of vaccinations, the need to avoid delays and increase the speed of vaccination, as well as the unconstructive nature of blaming the EU or the pharmaceutical industry for any failures.

Watch the video recording of the debate [here](#). Click on the names below for individual statements.

[Ana Paula Zacarias](#), Portuguese Presidency

[Stella Kyriakides](#), EU Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

[Esther de Lange](#), EPP, NL

[Iratxe García Pérez](#), S&D, ES

[Dacian Cioloș](#), Renew Europe, RO

[Joëlle Mélin](#), ID, FR

[Philippe Lamberts](#), Greens/EFA, BE

[Joanna Kopcińska](#), ECR, PL

[Marc Botenga](#), The Left, BE

Context

The Commission is expected to publish today an additional communication on the EU's COVID-19 strategy. EU leaders will debate the pandemic state of play during the European Council meeting on 21 January.

Background

On 22 September 2020, Parliament held a [public hearing](#) on “How to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines for EU citizens: clinical trials, production and distribution challenges”. During the December 2020 Plenary session, Parliament expressed [support for the speedy authorisation of safe vaccines](#) and on 12 January 2021, MEPs [blamed a lack of transparency](#) for fuelling uncertainty and disinformation regarding COVID-19 vaccination in Europe.