

Press release – COVID-19 vaccines: Parliament supports speedy authorisation of safe vaccines



Vice-President Schinas presented the Commission's COVID-19 strategy, which is based on the principles of equal access, affordability and safety. He referred to the [statement](#) in Plenary earlier today by the President of the Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who said that the Commission is ready to formally authorise the first vaccine on 23 December, if the European Medicines Agency (EMA) gives the green light to the BioNTech/Pfizer vaccine earlier on 21 December, as [announced](#) yesterday. This approach will allow all 27 EU member states to start vaccinating at the same time.

Many MEPs applauded the EU approach to COVID-19 vaccines and underlined that while authorisation should be given as fast as possible, safety is of utmost importance to create trust in the vaccines. A very thorough and independent authorisation process, like the one being used in the EU, is therefore essential. In this context, MEPs also deplored the disinformation about these vaccines that is circulating on social networks.

Several MEPs reiterated that the process of approving and negotiating access to COVID-19 vaccines must be transparent. They asked when Parliament would have access to the contracts with the producers of vaccines. VP Schinas recognised the need for transparency but said the Commission is bound by confidentiality clauses, including on prices. The Commission is currently negotiating with these companies to be able to share the content of the contracts more widely.

Global approach to vaccination needed

Vice-President Schinas said that the EU has bought more than enough doses for everyone in Europe and will be able finance one billion COVID-19 vaccine

doses for less developed non-EU countries through [COVAX](#), so that no one is left behind, and because no one is safe until everyone is safe.

Several MEPs welcomed the EU's rejection of vaccine "nationalism" as the virus does not respect borders. The approach to vaccinations must be global, they said, and repeated that the EU has a leading role to play in facilitating equal access to vaccines across the world as stated in Parliament's [resolution](#) of 25 November.

Some MEPs raised the issue of intellectual property rights of COVID-19 vaccines. These vaccines should be a global public good, they said, available for all citizens in the world.

You can watch a recording of the debate [here](#).

Background

Developing and deploying an effective and safe vaccine worldwide is likely to be the only way to end the COVID-19 pandemic. To this end, the Commission has proposed an [EU vaccines strategy for COVID-19](#) and listed [key steps for effective vaccination strategies and vaccine deployment](#).

The Commission has also entered into [advance purchase agreements](#) with several pharmaceutical laboratories in order to create a portfolio of potential vaccines against COVID-19. Any vaccine must be [authorised by the European Medicines Agency](#) (EMA) in accordance with safety and efficacy standards. The EMA has recently received two applications for conditional marketing authorisation for two COVID-19 vaccines and is expected to [conclude its assessments of the first one 21 December](#).

On 22 September, Parliament organised a [public hearing](#) on "How to secure access to COVID-19 vaccines for EU citizens: clinical trials, production and distribution challenges".