

## Press release – Vaccine strategy: Budget MEPs quiz EU health chief Sandra Gallina



In her introductory remarks, Sandra Gallina, Director-General for Health and Food Safety in the European Commission, explained what the Commission is doing to obtain enough vaccines to reach its objective of having 70% of the EU's adult population inoculated by the summer. Contracts had to be negotiated rapidly, she said, with liability and indemnification being of paramount importance. The EU has "gone beyond the 12-million-vaccinations mark", she underlined, saying that "there is no need to envy the US or Israel".

The Chair of the Committee on Budgets Johan Van Overtveldt (ECR, BE) emphasised that MEPs "did their duty", by [adopting the Emergency Support Instrument in April](#) and managing [to triple the EU4Health and boost the Horizon Europe research programmes](#) in the negotiations on the EU long-term budget for 2021-2027.

In the debate, MEPs asked for the contracts with Astra Zeneca and others to be more transparent, especially on how funds from the EU budget are used and distributed, and how much money is coming from member states. The deals with the pharmaceutical companies are of "overriding public interest" and should therefore be disclosed, they said.

Some members demanded that 1.5 billion Euros of unused funds from the research programme and the EU budget margins be used to improve the vaccination rollout in the EU.

Gallina maintained that this money should be spent on tackling variants of COVID-19, and that the problem is linked to production rather than the number of doses ordered. She said she was relying on a breakthrough in the second

quarter of 2021 and on companies whose vaccines are not yet registered, as well as on a second contract with BioNTech, to reach the Commission's vaccination objective.