

EU rushing WTO members to adopt weak waiver text

In a [letter](#) to the European Commission, MEPs and Representatives to the World Trade Organization (WTO), a group of over 30 European and international civil society organisations today demanded the European Union (EU) end their attempts to rapidly adopt an unsound proposal on intellectual property rights and COVID-19.

The letter signed by groups including HAI, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the People's Vaccine Alliance, claims the EU has “repeatedly ignored evidence of the effects of restrictive licensing practices on access to COVID-19 medical tools and resisted meaningful negotiations on a proposal for a temporary TRIPS waiver at the WTO to address limited production and shortage of supply”.

After nearly 18 months of stalling negotiations, an [EU text leaked](#) to the media this month, and misleadingly labelled as a quad compromise between the EU, US, India and South Africa, does little more than rehash existing flexibilities with a narrow export waiver and additional cumbersome requirements. The letter says the leaked text also “falls short of a comprehensive pandemic response, as it only covers COVID-19 vaccines, thereby ignoring the existing and growing inequity in access to COVID-19 therapeutics and diagnostics”.

Civil society, which has vehemently advocated for the TRIPS waiver proposal by India and South Africa covering all COVID-19 related health technologies including vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, points out that this latest text contains provisions that could undermine not only the global response to COVID-19 but also future attempts to put health before profit, and has criticised the EU for engaging in a campaign to push through a poor substitute for the waiver that fails to reflect the interests of those countries most affected by the inequity seen throughout the pandemic.

Expressing the frustration felt by many, HAI Senior Policy Advisor, Jaume Vidal, said: “We find it hard to comprehend how the EU would endorse a so-called compromise that could hamper the functioning of the mRNA tech-transfer hub that European Commission and some Member States strongly support. It's hard to see countries in the Global South believing in the promise of equity that the European Council assures guides its push for a pandemic preparedness treaty”.

[Download the full letter \(PDF\)](#)