

Working with the European Parliament

2021 has been another big year for the work of Health Action International (HAI) at the European Parliament. As co-hosts of the [European Parliament Working Group](#) on Access to Medicines and Poverty-related Diseases (EPWG)—with Médecins Sans Frontières Access Campaign—we have engaged with a wide range of cross-partisan Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) dealing with some of the most important dossiers on different aspects of the access to medicines continuum in years. As a result we have provided commentary and input on the European Commission’s proposals on a [European Pharmaceutical Strategy](#) and the design and inception of the European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority ([HERA](#)). We have also seen the conclusion of long-running negotiations, including the reform of [Health Technology Assessment](#) (HTA) regulation and addressed topics such as medicine shortages and transparency of clinical trials.

The response to the COVID-19 has, for yet another year, dominated the legislative agenda, with MEPs putting pressure on the European Commission to grant access to the contracts for the purchase of vaccines. This will enable us to gauge the actual price paid (in addition to the level of public funding for the development of some of the products). The [TRIPS waiver proposal](#) was another topic that the EWPG supported. Our work on this issue included briefing MEPs in debates, hearings and other parliamentary functions. In [June](#), we endorsed the wording that demands the Commission engage in text-based negotiations and to heed the opinion of the majority of the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and accept the waiver ([November](#)). Additionally, letters from European civil society in support of the waiver received the [backing of a large](#) number of MEPs.

It has been a strange and demanding year for all of us, and having consulted with members and friends of the EPWG, we remain confident that the group remains an essential platform, not only for the dissemination of evidence-based advocacy materials, but as a space to bring people from different sectors together to discuss and exchange views on how to improve and secure access to medicines and other health technologies.