

PRESS RELEASE

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For immediate release

Guarantee transparency, affordability and availability of EU funded therapies for COVID-19, demand MEPs

BRUSSELS - A cross-party group of 33 Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) [wrote jointly](#) today (Friday 27 March) to the European Commission, demanding urgent action to ensure the affordability and availability of any vaccines, diagnostics and treatments for COVID-19 developed with European Union (EU) funding.

Currently, EU funded research projects do not contain legal provisions or requirements to ensure that end products will be made accessible, affordable and available for patients and health care systems. Without these safeguards, end products, as well as scientific knowledge and data on the disease, generated with EU funding and expertise, risks being privatised, the MEPs argue.

The [letter](#) makes clear that ‘an effective pandemic response requires necessary medical tools to be affordable to healthcare systems and payers, and to be available free of charge at the point of care.

‘We cannot allow patients to be refused care because of financial constraints or shortages resulting from manufacturing or supply constraints. From this moment forward, we require new medical tools to be immediately available once authorised for use, at an affordable price and in high enough quantities to meet global demand. This requirement aligns with the European Commission’s ambition to ensure ‘the supply of affordable medicines to meet its needs’.

The group encourages the European Commission to move away from a “business as usual” approach, and to place strict conditions on COVID-19 funding agreements. The use of worldwide, non-exclusive licensing is an option, the group suggests, because it enables a number of manufacturers of effective medical tools to rapidly scale up production to meet demands in Europe and elsewhere, resulting in competition that could lead to more affordable end products.

Signatory MEPs said:

Petra De Sutter, medical doctor and MEP (Greens-EFA):

“By financing numerous research projects, the European Commission has clearly shown its added value in this crisis. Research institutes and the pharmaceutical industry are very important partners in the fight against COVID-19, but we cannot allow pharmaceutical companies to prioritize profit maximalization at the expense of public health. Once approved, diagnostic tools, treatments and vaccines for COVID-19 should be immediately accessible for everyone. The European Commission should take action on non-exclusive licensing to make this happen.”

Marc Botenga MEP (NGL):

"In these challenging times, we cannot allow private corporations to put profit ahead of public health considerations. Granting them exclusivity would only hinder the development and rapid deployment of much needed medical equipment, diagnostics, treatment and vaccines."

Michele Rivasi MEP (Greens-EFA):

"At a time when we, MEPs, are being asked to adopt the financial investments to respond to the CoVid-19 crisis, it is obvious to ask the Commission to require that the results of EU-funded research projects remain in the public domain and that the final products and medicines will be accessible, cheap and available to patients and health systems that need them. It would be staggering and totally contrary to our values of dignity and solidarity to allow private companies developing solutions against CoVid-19 with EU funds to leave profit maximisation before public health. It's time to play it together and to be an innovative and strong not-for/profit model of leadership."

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) Access Campaign and Health Action International (HAI) coordinated the letter as part of our role as facilitators of the European Parliament Working Group on Innovation, Access to Medicines and Poverty-related Diseases. The broad, cross-party support shown for the letter by members of the group as well as their parliamentary colleagues is indicative of the important and urgency of this issue.

NOTES FOR EDITORS

For more information on the [working group](#) or its calls on COVID-19 you can contact Dimitri Eynikel at MSF (dimitri.eynikel@msf.org) or Jaume Vidal at HAI (jaume@haiweb.org).

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