

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission
Valdis Dombrovskis
Executive Vice President of the European
Commission
Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

[Letter sent by e-mail]

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cab-dombrovskis-contact@ec.europa.eu;

cab-kyriakides-contact@ec.europa.eu;

Dear President von der Leyen,
Dear Executive Vice President Dombrovskis,
Dear Commissioner Kyriakides,

The European Trade Union Confederation is writing to you about our concern that the European Union are among World Trade Organisation members which have not yet approved a waiver from the copyright provisions in the TRIPS agreement for Covid-19 vaccines.

The [waiver](#) has been proposed by India and South Africa in order to ensure that patents and copyright cannot become barriers to timely and affordable access and development of medical products including vaccines essential to combat Covid-19.

Failure to agree a waiver would mean that a few major pharmaceutical companies will be able to prevent other manufacturers from producing Covid-19 vaccines, impeding the EU's efforts to scale up production at home and the manufacturing of vaccines in developing countries around the world.

As the Commission has correctly stated, 'nobody is safe until everybody is safe'. To ensure the European Union's actions are consistent with its words, we call on you to join the World Health Organization, UN Human Rights Experts, UNITAID and UNAIDS in supporting the waiver at the WTO. The Commission's public dispute with AstraZeneca demonstrated clearly the importance of ensuring that the power to manufacture and rollout Covid-19 vaccines is not left completely in the hands of pharmaceutical companies answerable only to their shareholders.

While the ETUC fully support the principle of European coordination on vaccines as a means of avoiding vaccine nationalism, the process so far has been blighted by a lack of transparency in procurement and unexplained delays in production which have cost lives and livelihoods.

Vaccines have been developed thanks to billions of public investments from the European Union, so vaccines must remain in public hands and the rollout should be under the control of democratic institutions.

Our members in public services and the private sector have worked tirelessly during the pandemic to save peoples' lives, too often at the cost of their own. We owe it to them to ensure that their sacrifices are not undermined to protect the monopoly of pharmaceutical companies.

People before profit must be the guiding principle our approach to Covid-19 vaccines.

Best regards,

Luca Visentini, ETUC General Secretary

