Resolution on meeting the global COVID-19 challenge: effects of the waiver of the WTO TRIPS Agreement on COVID-19 vaccines, treatment, equipment and increasing production and manufacturing capacity in developing countries

2021/2692(RSP) - 09/06/2021 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 355 votes to 263, with 71 abstentions, a resolution on ‘Meeting the global COVID-19 challenge’.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled as a joint resolution by the EPP, S&D, Renew and Greens/EFA groups.

Members recalled that there have been approximately 172 000 000 cases of COVID-19, resulting in over 3.7 million deaths worldwide and that 11 billion doses are needed to vaccinate 70 % of the world’s population, although only a fraction of this amount has been produced.

Temporary lifting of the WTO TRIPS agreement on patents

Expressing its deep concern about the evolution of the pandemic, particularly in low- and middle-income countries, Parliament called for support for negotiations on the text of a temporary waiver of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS), with a view to enhancing global access to affordable COVID-19-related medical products and addressing production constraints and supply shortages worldwide.

Accelerating global vaccine deployment

The COVAX mechanism is facing a shortfall of 190 million doses due to the current COVID-19 situation in India and will not meet its supply targets in the foreseeable future.

Nevertheless, Members called on the EU and its partners to substantially increase their contributions to the COVAX mechanism. They stressed that the supply of COVAX should be a priority, regretting moves by the UK and the US to set up a secondary market for the resale of surplus vaccine doses to other industrialised countries.

The Commission is urged to engage with vaccine producing countries to rapidly eliminate export barriers and replace its own **authorisation mechanism** with export transparency requirements. The United States and the United Kingdom should immediately lift their export bans on vaccines and raw materials for vaccine production.

Voluntary licensing and know-how transfer

Stressing the need to invest in the production capacity of developing countries in order to make them self-sufficient in the long term, Parliament considered that this could best be achieved by encouraging

voluntary licensing arrangements and voluntary transfers of technology and know-how to countries that already have vaccine production facilities.

The Commission is asked to consider whether and how it can provide legal support for compulsory licensing in the least developed countries.

Stressing that intellectual property protection is a key incentive for innovation and research worldwide, Members drew attention to the threat that an indefinite waiver of the TRIPS agreement would pose to research funding, especially for researchers, investors, developers and in clinical trials.

African continent

Given the need to support production capacity on the African continent, Parliament welcomed the announcement by Team Europe of a EUR 1 billion initiative to improve production of and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies. It stressed that the EU now has a responsibility to invest in regional distribution centres, especially in Africa, and to support the creation of an **African Medicines Agency**.

In this regard, Parliament called for support for local licensing authorities, training of qualified personnel to administer vaccines, support for vaccine supply chains and help to overcome obstacles such as lack of cooling infrastructure and reluctance to vaccinate.

New generation vaccines

Members called on the EU to ensure that future advance purchase contracts are fully disclosed, especially for new generation vaccines. They also consider that contract negotiations for COVID-19 vaccines should be carried out with the **utmost transparency**, including by directly involving Members of the European Parliament in the decision-making processes for the contracts, through the Vaccine Working Group.

Parliament expressed its wish to receive on a regular basis a comprehensive and detailed analysis of vaccine production, imports, exports and related forecasts, including information on the country of destination of EU exports, as well as on the origin of imported vaccines and vaccine components.