
COVID-19 Coronavirus: EU proposes multilateral action plan on vaccines. Von der Leyen, “production should not be centralised only in a handful of countries”

A multilateral trade action plan to expand the production of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments and to ensure universal and fair access to vaccines was presented by the European Union to the World Trade Organization (WTO) today. The key requests include: to ensure that COVID-19 vaccines, treatments and their components can cross borders freely; to encourage producers to expand their production, while ensuring that those countries most in need of vaccines receive them at an affordable price; and to use the flexibility already provided for by the existing Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) to facilitate the use of “compulsory licensing”, whereby a government grants a targeted licence allowing a willing producer to make a vaccine without the consent of a patent holder. “Our immediate, urgent goal is to ensure equitable access for low- and middle-income countries, to share vaccines wider and faster”, said the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen. As the EU continues “ramping up production”, it “proposes concrete short- and medium-term solutions to ensure universal access at affordable prices”. The European proposal will be discussed at the G7 meeting next week. “Diversifying manufacturing so that it is not centralised only in a handful of countries and strengthening the resilience of the healthcare infrastructure in least developed countries” are important steps to “ensure global preparedness for future pandemics”.

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