

## Article – Sassoli on the pandemic: “There can be no return to how things were before”



“It is thanks to our collective approach that European countries have not been pitted against each other and the rich countries have not bought up most of the vaccines,” the President of the European Parliament said. “I am strongly opposed to bilateral agreements. I urge you to stand firm; do not succumb to the temptation of vaccine nationalism. A common approach also allows us to monitor, investigate and come down hard on any scams targeting member states.”

“Pharmaceutical companies must honour their contractual obligations, but we should also go on clearing the way for all practical licensing arrangements that will enable us to expedite the large-scale public vaccination campaign. We need to address shortages and supply bottlenecks quickly in order to increase production. Our economic recovery will be more robust the more widely vaccines are rolled out,” he said.

Vaccination campaigns can only succeed if there is public trust, the President said, adding: “Our response to the crisis must involve more democracy.”

Sassoli also stressed the need for the EU to play a bigger role in public

health. "The pandemic has shown us that important decisions concerning security, health, supplies of medical equipment and vaccines, research and manufacturing, arrangements regulating the movement of people and the opening and closing of our borders can only properly be taken at European level.

Addressing heads of state and government at the start of the summit on 25 February, the President added: "The lesson the pandemic has taught us is that there can be no return to how things were before. It would be a mistake, a waste of energy, and it would leave us ill-equipped to address future challenges. Our task now is to develop a European health policy, by allocating clearly defined competences to the EU institutions."