

Press release – COVID-19: MEPs discuss ways to increase roll-out of vaccines with pharma CEOs



MEPs quizzed CEOs and representatives of leading pharmaceutical companies, including AstraZeneca, Moderna, CureVac, Novavax, Pfizer and Sanofi, on how to remove obstacles to faster commercialisation, manufacturing and distribution of vaccines.

You can watch a recording of the hearing [here](#).

During the discussion, MEPs asked about global technology transfers, sharing patents, and how industry intends to update the vaccines in order to keep up with emerging variants. They also grilled CEOs on how the European Medicines Agency could speed up market approval at European level. Some MEPs asked whether an EU export ban on vaccines would help Europe compared to other countries that have introduced export bans. In their remarks, industry representatives highlighted the challenge of building production capacity for entirely new and complex products, and the international nature of supply chains.

“This was a world first: CEOs of the main vaccine manufacturers appearing before elected representatives. It’s good for transparency, and it’s good for democracy. It is crucial to regularly check accountability and commitments made. Moreover, the race to produce vaccines is intensifying and we are

gearing up to use all available tools to support it. This was the point of this hearing”, said Environment, Public Health and Food Safety Chairman Pascal Canfin (Renew Europe, FR). “The European Parliament will play its role fully to win the vaccine deployment battle. The contact group put in place by the Parliament and Commission will further strengthen our role”, he added.

“Today’s challenge is about how to produce extremely complex products on a scale that is absolutely unprecedented. This is an industrial challenge”, said Industry, Research and Energy Committee Chairman Cristian Buşoi (EPP, RO). “This hearing was an exercise in democratic accountability. We wanted to know where the production bottlenecks are and to have a clear picture about the industry’s commitments and obligations. But we also want to help the industry deliver the doses, because our priority is to get vaccination done”.

Background

Developing and distributing effective and safe vaccines against COVID-19 is the most effective response to the pandemic and is at the heart of the EU’s recovery strategy. Given the importance of increasing production and access to vaccines, this hearing aimed to establish the facts and to find solutions to improve the roll-out of COVID-19 vaccines in Europe.

Another objective was to have an open discussion with the CEOs of the pharmaceutical industry, the Commission and other stakeholders on how to overcome impediments to speedier commercialisation, manufacturing, distribution and equitable access to the COVID-19 vaccines.