Priority question for written answer P-002503/2020
to the Commission
Rule 138
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Subject: Vaccine against COVID-19

The Commission stresses that the development of a vaccine and its speedy introduction is ‘essential’, and has mobilised up to EUR 140 million in public and private funding to support urgently needed research. That is all well, but for example in the 1990s, multinational drug companies kept patents for HIV treatments for themselves, and fixed exorbitant prices for their products. Millions of lives were sacrificed. Nelson Mandela’s government in South Africa broke patents, and introduced compulsory licensing which paved the way for affordable and quality generic equivalents. The EU needs to follow this example and put public health before private profit.

We want vaccines and treatments that are freely accessible to everyone, and ask the Commission to propose all the legislation needed to achieve this.

Does the Commission plan to present new legislation in this area, particularly on EU patent protection, patent sharing and accessibility?

Does the Commission plan to propose that Member States engage the debate on patent protection for COVID-19 treatments and vaccines in the WTO, and particularly within the TRIPs framework?

Once a vaccine is found, what steps will the Commission take to ensure that it is made available and accessible to low and middle income countries as soon as possible?