

Free vaccines for everyone

DiEM25 on how to do this, now!

People are dying by the thousands each day, thousands of companies are filing for bankruptcy, and millions of people are languishing under draconian lockdown measures. At the same time, vaccination centres are held back due to a shortfall in vaccine supplies.

The EU's vaccine procurement program has proven an expensive fiasco. To preserve the Franco-German axis, they ordered 300 million doses from a French company that produced none and too few from the German company that exported most of its vaccine output so far to the UK, Israel, the USA etc. Today, the two main companies that can supply the much-needed vaccines announced new cuts to deliveries to EU countries.

This fiasco, and the lives we shall lose unnecessarily, raises the political question: What should be done now to limit the human and economic cost of the EU's latest motivated failure? Two problems need to be solved: Where will the money come from to ensure that free vaccines are available to everyone? And, what to do about Big Pharma, a handful of multinational companies that hold whole populations to ransom?

Who should pay? DiEM25's answer

Central banks are printing mountains of money which they pass on to the banks which, in turn, pump it into large corporations that use the money to buy back their shares and thus boost their paper value (and, of course, their directors' pay). Since the pandemic began, the European Central Bank has printed 1,700 billion euros for that purpose. Therefore, the answer is clear:

The European Council should immediately order the European Central Bank to pay whatever sums are necessary to purchase all the doses of the vaccine Europeans need, **plus another equal quantity to be sent, free of charge, to developing countries.**¹

In summary, using the considerable monetary power of the ECB, the cost of speeding up production and distribution of vaccines can be covered immediately and fairly. Moreover, it is our duty as Europeans to use this power to deliver to developing countries, lacking similar power, the vaccines their people need – and thus to lead other rich economic blocks by example.

¹ Note that technically and legally this is utterly feasible. The ECB is not allowed to monetise member-states. But, given that it is already printing trillions, paying for doses per European citizen (not states) is not a violation of its charter. And if a technical tweak is needed (e.g. the ECB issuing a bond that it then buys itself), so be it.

What to do about Big Pharma? DiEM25's answer

The medical-industrial complex represents a clear and present danger to European citizens. They use the resources provided by our states (e.g. direct research funding and all the accumulated knowledge of scientists educated by the states) to produce medicines and vaccines that they then monopolise through patents – which prove especially lucrative during emergencies like the current pandemic. Taxing and regulating them is important but not enough. The central issue is property rights over their patents. Challenging these can only be part of a challenge of capitalism's most basic tenets.

In the context of DiEM25's Post-Capitalist drive, DiEM25 campaigns for a change in corporate law so that citizens, represented by the EU, acquire shares in pharmaceutical companies operating in the EU so as to benefit directly, as co-owners, from our public research and funding programs.

Only when property rights over patents are socialised will public health become viable.

The time to act is now!

Only through a large-scale intensification of COVID-19 vaccine production will inoculation programs run at full capacity, thus preventing an even greater economic and humanitarian crisis both in Europe and worldwide.

DiEM25 demands that the European Council gives the green light to its institutions, the European Central Bank above all else, to spend whatever it takes to end the pandemic. Moreover, we call upon European progressives to join us in a campaign to transform property rights over life-saving vaccines and medicines.

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DiEM25 is a pan-European movement of democrats, united under the conclusion that the European Union will only survive if it is radically transformed.