

May 20, 2021

Dr. Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission



Dear Madam President,

Witnessing millions of humans getting vaccinated within 18 months of a pandemic is an unprecedented achievement enabled by science and technology.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Merck has been intensely involved in the fight against the coronavirus. Our Life Science business sector is supporting more than 50 vaccine projects worldwide with products and technologies. We also recently announced an expansion of our strategic partnership with BioNTech, to significantly accelerate the supply of urgently needed lipids used to produce the Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine.

Intellectual Property (IP) enabled the development of several COVID-19 vaccines in record time, with additional candidates nearing approval. A waiver would do nothing to eliminate existing production bottlenecks in the manufacture of vaccines, nor provide practical solutions in the fight against the pandemic. Manufacturing those vaccines is highly complex and a multi-step process. It requires specific skills, experience, and regulatory standards to meet safety as well as quality standards. In addition, a waiver increases the risk of counterfeit vaccines entering the supply chain around the world.

Waiving IP rights for COVID-19 vaccines, if it were to be endorsed by the WTO, would hinder the continued collaborations that are essential for uninterrupted research and development into vaccines for new variants or therapies or future pandemics.

We would very much appreciate your support for the European innovation ecosystem, which remains the pillar of a strong and sustainable response to this global health crisis. There is no doubt that the European Union needs to continue leading by example. The EU under your leadership has helped to address global vaccine bottle necks by exporting and sharing vaccines across borders.



1/2

Merck KGaA



We as Merck do our share by expanding our production in Europe. Building up capacity for all manufacturing steps with appropriate quality standards needs to have priority. This will also support the global vaccination alliance COVAX that has been established to help countries get better and cheaper access to COVID-19 vaccines. In addition, dropping potential tariff barriers on finished manufactured COVID-19 products, their inputs and technology is key. The most effective way of increasing vaccine production is to expedite exports and imports of essential input supplies, raw and packaging materials, consumables, and equipment.

Yours sincerely and with kind regards,

