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## **European Council: Sassoli, “pandemic has turned our lives upside down”. Tackling the crisis together, no to vaccine nationalism**

“Over the past year, our lives have been turned upside down by the COVID-19 pandemic”. The pandemic “has brought chaos to our economies, our schools, our workplaces, sparing no area of our lives. We have had to come up with ingenious solutions to keep democracy going. Tackling this crisis has not been easy for anyone, but I’m pleased that we have remained united in our commitment to transparency and democracy; it is this solidarity that is making Europe more effective in the fight against the pandemic and the crisis”. The President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, said this as he addressed the European Council that is taking place by video conference today and tomorrow. “I firmly believe that we are on the path that will lead us out of this tragic crisis together. The pandemic has given us new responsibilities and duties: the responsibility to make choices, and the duty to do so in the general interest – not the interest of the few. The vaccines will prove central to our long-term recovery with no one left forgotten”. Sassoli said “we can finally see light at the end of the tunnel. Three vaccines have been approved by the European Medicines Agency, with more on the way. Vaccination roll-out is gathering pace: 9 million have had the requisite two doses, while more than 18 million have received their first jab. The EU continues to expand its vaccine portfolio: it has secured 600 million additional doses, bringing the total to 2.6 billion – more than enough to vaccinate the entire EU population”.

“It was forward-looking of our governments to give the Commission the mandate to procure vaccines to distribute among all 27 Member States”. Thanks to this approach, “countries have not been pitted against each other and the rich countries have not bought up most of the vaccines. I am strongly opposed to bilateral agreements. I urge you to stand firm; do not succumb to the temptation of vaccine nationalism”.

Valentina Bombelli