

EU Vaccine sharing mechanism

NON-PAPER FROM THE COMMISSION SERVICES

1. **Scene setter:** In its Communication “A united front to beat COVID-19” of 19 January 2021, the Commission set out how ensuring wide and worldwide early access to vaccines will be key to ending the pandemic. Sharing vaccines with third countries is a question of international solidarity, as well as a means to strengthen EU health security and minimise the risks of new outbreaks. Major support to our international partners is already provided by the Commission and Member States through numerous programmes and mechanisms, including the Civil Protection Mechanism and its platform for mutual and international support. Additional momentum could stem from the sharing of vaccines, where the EU can channel it global vaccine solidarity notably in three complementary ways:
 - 1.1. **Financial contributions to COVAX:** the COVAX Facility as the global mechanism for pooled procurement and equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines involving 191 countries, is the primary channel for vaccinating up to 20% of populations in 92 Low and Middle Income Countries.¹ With more than 850 M€ from Member States and the EU, Team Europe is the biggest initial financial contributor.
 - 1.2. **Vaccines sharing via COVAX:** in addition to financial contributions to COVAX, some participating countries are discussing further steps to strengthen COVAX through in-kind donations or reselling. As Member States advance on their vaccination programmes, this would complement the Team Europe’s financial contributions. Setting aside some quantities from the EU jointly purchased vaccines through a common “pool and sharing” effort would build a Team Europe contribution. This will follow the same approach used in the case of Norway and Iceland. The Humanitarian Buffer within COVAX will allow the EU to show solidarity in delivering vaccines to vulnerable populations with humanitarian needs.
 - 1.3. COVAX allows regional targeting meaning that Member States could list countries or group of countries which should benefit from the EU vaccines. To respect equity principles, COVAX would ensure that vaccines financed or provided by other donors such as the EU will lead to an increase of vaccines to other countries.
 - 1.4. **Targeted vaccine-sharing:** in the short term, and in full complementarity with COVAX, the Commission can assist Member States wanting to do so, in efforts to bridge the time until COVAX delivers in larger quantities. This will notably happen through direct reselling or donations from individual Member States for limited quantities to well targeted recipient countries in line with the priorities endorsed by the European Council of 21 January (notably Western Balkans, Neighbourhood and Africa).

¹ First deliveries from Pfizer/BioNTech are expected by end of February, to 18 countries, in line with their assessment of their readiness; around 145 countries will receive first AstraZeneca vaccines through COVAX in Q2 with deliveries starting early March.

2. Current challenges:

- 2.1. The current global shortage of vaccines in the short term, given challenges encountered in the production and delivery of vaccines to Member States and the need to avoid disruptions in the vaccination roll out in the EU.
- 2.2. At the moment, beyond the “common” EU pot for reselling to Norway and Iceland, when Member States are ready to share, their offers are targeted to specific countries or regions. Some Member States have expressed a preference to share through COVAX. The general COVAX approach means possible soft / regional targeting. It implies rather limited visibility of Member States, Team Europe and the European Union.
- 2.3. Vaccine related issues are being discussed, sometimes simultaneously, in several fora either under a “health” strand (Vaccine Steering Board, Health Security Committee) or a “political” strand (Council, Coreper, IPCR). Consistency and synergies between the different tracks are needed.

3. **Outline for an EU vaccine sharing mechanism:** Based on the above and subject to Member States feedback, the Commission will quickly roll out a Team Europe vaccine sharing mechanism as set out below and facilitate its implementation. The ideas below presents an approach that keeps COVAX’s leading role, while reflecting the objectives of all Member States, including with regard to targeting recipients and visibility. For purposes of this non-paper, there is no distinction made between donations and re-selling.

3.1. Principles:

- 3.1.1. *Fairness* - the EU support via the sharing mechanism should continue to be guided by fairness considerations, focusing EU action on where most needed based on the epidemiological situation in partner countries. It will benefit three priority groups in the short term: the Western Balkans, the Neighbourhood and Africa.
- 3.1.2. *Gradual* - EU support to partner countries will build up as vaccines availability improves and until COVAX is able to supply large enough volumes directly from companies.
- 3.1.3. *Zero waste*: The EU approach should minimise the risk of vaccines not being put to immediate good use. To this end, the sharing of vaccines will in many cases need to be pooled with other related health materials and expertise to assist countries in preparing for vaccination campaigns as a coordinated package of assistance. In some cases, a phased approach may be required, with an initial phase focusing on preparedness before vaccines are made available².
- 3.1.4. *TeamEurope* - joint donations, packaging together individual commitments for shared vaccine doses, especially when donations/re-

² The Commission is for instance currently exploring possible support to the African CDC in the setting up of vaccination centres.

selling done via COVAX to achieve bigger volumes and broader spread, ensuring appropriate communication and visibility for the EU/MS. The Team Europe approach respects EU and EU MS competencies and ensures visibility. It combines resources to maximise impact. Its branding includes national flags together with the European flag.

- 3.2. **Sharing mechanism:** The mechanism would offer a single pipeline through which initial doses can be provided (depending on offers from Member States). The EU vaccine sharing mechanism will notably rely on the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM), via the Emergency response Coordination Centre, as the operational infrastructure for receiving requests for in kind assistance and channelling offers of assistance to the requesting countries. This set-up offers the additional benefit that donations of vaccines can be processed as part of the wider efforts to assist third countries in preparing and conducting vaccination campaigns, either through in-kind support under the UCPM or –for certain humanitarian settings- through funding last mile vaccination delivery and support by humanitarian partners present on the ground.
- 3.2.1. Member States are invited to indicate (initially by an agreed date and later on, a rolling basis), how many and which vaccines they intend to make available at what time. Based on the information available, the Commission could prepare scenarios and options on what contributions would mean for the respective countries.
- 3.2.2. When making vaccines available, Member States indicate whether
- 3.2.2.1. donations are for a “global pot” (handled by COVAX)
 - 3.2.2.2. donations are for Africa (handled by COVAX)
 - 3.2.2.3. donations are for the Western Balkan or the Eastern Neighbourhood countries, (handled through COVAX or EU mechanisms, depending on what would be the most appropriate solution)
- 3.2.3. All EU donations should go through the Commission which will moderate and aim for vaccines available for all / as many as possible countries identified in the Communication of 19 January and reflecting Member States’ targeting. The Commission would also try to bundle donations into meaningful Team Europe packages.
- 3.2.4. The Commission will put together proposals and it will be the donating Member States’ decisions how to move forward. There should be a shared understanding such an approach is not to weaken COVAX which should remain the main vehicle for vaccines sharing, and that any donation from the EU side that is happening through COVAX, in an EU package or bilaterally but with some kind of EU support, would be flagged as being part of Team Europe.
- 3.2.5. Commission services will provide support and advice with regard to the legal aspects and discussions with producers and beneficiaries. Ongoing discussions with producers have shown that they require legal and financial assurances for donations and resales to third countries, in terms

of liability, indemnification and also guarantees that third countries will be able to reimburse. For the recipient countries, they will need to be well-prepared to receive and distribute individual vaccines, which will require authorisation of the vaccine, adequate storage and logistics as well as trained staff to roll out vaccinations in the entire country.

4. **Communication & reporting:** Commission will consolidate and distribute information on doses shared and recipients for communication purposes within the Team Europe context, in order to demonstrate that Europe as a whole is delivering.