



Commission adopts €70 million package for early access to EU COVID-19 vaccines in the Western Balkans

Brussels, 28 December 2020

Today, the European Commission adopted a package of €70 million under the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA II) to help fund the access of Western Balkans partners to COVID-19 vaccines procured by EU Member States.

Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér **Várhelyi** said: *"Throughout the pandemic, the EU has shown that we treat the Western Balkans as privileged partners. We continue to act in this spirit also in the case of vaccines, by taking steps to enable a quick start of vaccination campaigns to critical staff and most vulnerable groups in the region early on. Swift vaccination will be decisive in ending the pandemic and launching the socio-economic recovery of the Western Balkans."*

The package will be disbursed in the form of grants that will help cover the cost of the vaccines for priority groups in the region, as well as necessary vaccination equipment. It will enable the Western Balkans to purchase a number of vaccines from the EU Advance Purchase Agreements with six manufacturers, with individual EU Member States sharing a part of their pre-allocated doses.

While the EU continues to support the COVAX initiative, the world's facility to ensure fair and universal access to COVID-19 vaccines, and all Western Balkans partners have signed up to it, the delivery of vaccines under that scheme is expected to start later than the vaccination campaigns in the EU. Access to a number of doses from the EU purchase agreements will therefore enable the region to start vaccinations in parallel with EU Member States.

The Commission and the European Centre for Disease Control are also assisting the region in finalising vaccination strategies in line with Commission recommendations to ensure appropriate preparation of the campaigns and seamless administration of the vaccines. The EU is also funding a project with the World Health Organisation (WHO) to help manage logistics and the delivery of the vaccines.

Background

The European Commission is committed to ensuring that everyone who needs a vaccine gets it, anywhere in the world. This is why it immediately responded to the WHO's call for action and has helped raise almost €16 billion since 4 May 2020 under the [Coronavirus Global Response](#), the global action for universal access to tests, treatments and vaccines against coronavirus and for the global recovery.

The COVAX Facility is the vaccines pillar of the Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator, a global collaboration to accelerate the development, production, and equitable access to COVID-19 tests, treatments, and vaccines. Over €870 million have been so far announced by the EU and the EU Member States for COVAX. COVAX aims to purchase 2 billion doses by the end of 2021, including over 1.3 billion for development countries. It will help to develop a diversified portfolio of vaccines, negotiated with different suppliers, and covering different scientific technologies, delivery times and prices.

The EU's participation in COVAX is complementary with the ongoing EU negotiations with vaccine companies launched under the EU Vaccines Strategy. The EU's efforts to develop and produce an effective vaccine will benefit all in the global community. The EU investment in scaling up manufacturing capacity will be to the service of all countries in need. Through its Advanced Purchase Agreements, it requires manufacturers to make their production capacity available to supply all countries and calls for the free flow of vaccines and materials with no export restrictions.

The Commission is also coordinating the donation of some of the doses procured by the EU Member States to various partner countries in order to guarantee their early access to COVID-19 vaccines for health care workers and vulnerable populations until vaccines through COVAX are more widely available.

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