

Cyprus to Purchase Russia's Sputnik Vaccine

The Cypriot government will purchase 50,000 doses of Russia's Sputnik V vaccine once it is approved by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), a government official in Nicosia has said.

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“It will be a bilateral agreement, which was already approved a couple of weeks ago,” government spokesperson Kyriakos Kousios told state radio.

“This issue is being handled by the minister of health and the relevant officials. Once we have the vaccine approved, we will proceed with the purchase,” Kousios said, explaining that more than 50,000 doses may be purchased, depending on the flows of the other vaccines.

Russia's Sputnik has been in the EU drugs agency's rolling review but no official application for authorisation has been made.

EU Commission spokesperson Stefan De Keersmaecker reiterated on Monday (15 March) that there were no official talks between the EU and Moscow.

However, the head of Russia's Direct Investment Fund (RDIF), Kirill Dmitriev, said in a statement on Monday that his organisation had secured agreements with companies from Italy, Spain, France and Germany to produce Sputnik V, *AFP* reported.

Hungary has already purchased Sputnik while the Czech Republic and Slovakia have made orders. Critics suggest that approving Sputnik would be a “major political defeat” for Europe and respectively, a “major diplomatic victory” for Vladimir Putin.

The issue has so far divided EU member states as some of them remain sceptical about what they think could be Moscow's hidden agenda.

Poland's former prime minister Donald Tusk, the current chief of the centre-right European People's Party (EPP), [recently called on Europeans](#) not to be “naïve” when it comes to Russian and Chinese vaccines.

“I warn against such a naive approach to these very cynical players. I am talking about the Chinese and Russian authorities. And above all, I would warn

the Polish authorities, and also other European countries, against buying and trying to vaccinate their citizens with a vaccine that has not been tested," Tusk said.

The vast majority of Western Balkan countries have already started vaccinating their citizens with Sputnik while Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić has said the EU had "abandoned" the region when it comes to vaccines.

'Possible' to approve Sputnik

EU sources have told EURACTIV that it is "possible" for the EMA to approve Russia's Sputnik vaccine. "Negotiations could start if at least four member states ask so," the sources added.

The same sources explained, though, that with the vaccines approved so far, the EU objective to vaccinate 70% of the EU population by September is "still possible".

However, the delivery delays of approved vaccines and the new stalemate with AstraZeneca pave the way for reconsidering Sputnik.

"When it comes to public health, there is no room for political considerations. We fully rely on the scientific evaluation of EMA," the sources added.

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