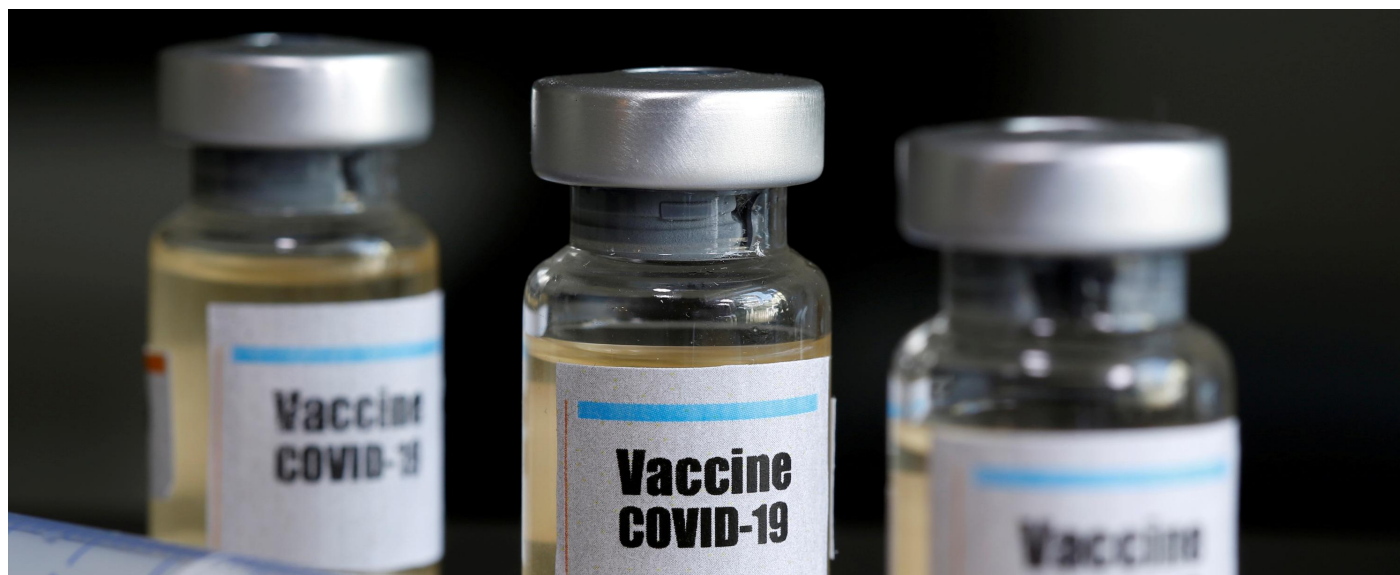


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## AstraZeneca agrees to supply Europe with 400 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine

ROME (Reuters) - AstraZeneca Plc has signed a contract with European governments to supply the region with its potential vaccine against the coronavirus, the British drugmaker's latest deal to pledge its drug to help combat the pandemic.





FILE PHOTO: Small bottles labeled with a "Vaccine COVID-19" sticker and a medical syringe are seen in this illustration taken taken April 10, 2020. REUTERS/Dado Ruvic/Illustration/File Photo

The contract is for up to 400 million doses of the vaccine, developed by the **University of Oxford**, the company said on Saturday, adding that it was looking to expand manufacturing of the vaccine, which it said it would provide for no profit during the pandemic. The vaccine is still in clinical trials. If the trial results convince regulators the vaccine is safe and effective, deliveries would be expected to start by the end of 2020.

The deal is the first contract signed by Europe's **Inclusive Vaccines Alliance (IVA)**, a group formed by France, Germany, Italy and the Netherlands to secure vaccine doses for all member states as soon as possible.

"This will ensure that hundreds of millions of people in Europe will have access to this vaccine, of course if it works and we will know that by the end of summer," the company's chief executive, **Pascal Soriot** told journalists. He said he has "good hope" that it will work, based on initial data.

The alliance "will work together with the **European Commission** and other countries in Europe to ensure everybody across Europe is supplied with the vaccine," he said.

"We have a very self-sufficient supply chain for Europe" with manufacturers lined up in the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and Italy, among others, he said.

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The vaccines are for all EU member states. The four nations that agreed the deal will pay for the total amount, which has not been disclosed, and the scheme allows other countries to join it under the same conditions, a source from the Italian health ministry said.

China, Brazil, Japan and Russia have also expressed interest, he said.

The British Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) has approved the start of Phase III trials of the vaccine after studies showed sufficient efficacy and safety, Soriot said.

At a meeting of EU Health Ministers on Friday, IVA agreed to merge its activities with those of the EU Commission, Germany's Health Ministry said.

The deal is the latest by AstraZeneca to promise to supply its vaccine to governments who have scrambled to agree advance purchases of promising coronavirus immunisation treatments.

It has agreed manufacturing deals globally to meet its target of producing 2 billion doses of the vaccine, including with two Bill Gates-backed ventures and a \$1.2 billion agreement with the U.S. government.

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The deal will add a further 100 million doses to the 2 billion already committed by the group, AstraZeneca said.

There are no approved vaccines or treatments for COVID-19, the highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the novel coronavirus.

“Many countries in the world have already secured vaccines, Europe has not yet. The rapid coordinated action of a group of member states will create added value for all EU citizens in this crisis,” Italian Health Minister Roberto Speranza said.

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