



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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Public health: Joint purchasing of vaccines and medicines becomes a reality in the EU

Today, the Commission approved a Joint Procurement Agreement, which will enable all EU countries to procure pandemic vaccines and other medical countermeasures as a group, rather than individually.

Joint procurement enables Member States to ensure that pandemic vaccines and medicines are available in sufficient quantities and at a correct price should a cross border health threat emerge. The mechanism will benefit all EU countries, in particular the ones which encountered difficulties in purchasing vaccines developed for the H1N1 pandemic in 2009. 27 EU countries have declared their intention to sign the Agreement. The Joint Procurement Agreement is voluntary, and will enter into force two weeks after it has been signed by a third of participating Member States (10 countries) and the Commission.

European Commissioner for Health, Mr Tonio Borg said: *"Joint procurement of pandemic vaccines and other medical countermeasures is a key achievement of our work to protect citizens from serious cross-border threats to health. Through joint procurement all Member States, big and small, can be better prepared for future health threats: they will be able to provide their citizens with the necessary medicines and to obtain them under better conditions than in the past. I call on all Member States to sign the Joint Procurement Agreement as soon as possible so that we can proceed to the first procurement of pandemic vaccines."*

The Joint Procurement Agreement in practice

The potential of the Joint Procurement Agreement reaches beyond vaccines for pandemics. Member States could benefit from extending the agreement to cover the purchase of medical countermeasures for other infectious diseases, such as botulism, anthrax, hepatitis B or polio.

Signing the Joint Procurement Agreement does not imply any immediate financial commitment for Member States. A financial commitment will only be necessary when they sign contracts following procurement procedures launched on the basis of the Agreement.

Through the Joint Procurement Agreement, any EU country can make a proposal to others to procure medical countermeasures together. The process will be guided by two types of steering committee: the Joint Procurement Agreement Steering Committee that will be in charge of all the issues relating to the subject matter of the Joint Procurement Agreement; and the Specific Procurement Procedure Steering Committee that will be in charge of the matters relating to specific procurement procedures.

The first meeting of the Joint Procurement Agreement Steering Committee will be convened once one third of EU countries have ratified the Joint Procurement Agreement. During this meeting Member States will decide on which medical countermeasure they want to purchase jointly.

Background

The call for a joint procurement mechanism came from Member States after reflecting on the lessons learned from the 2009 H1N1 influenza pandemic (popularly known as 'swine flu'). This reflection exercise highlighted weaknesses in the mechanisms in place in EU countries for procuring vaccines and medications. It underlined the need to introduce a common procedure for the joint procurement of medical countermeasures, and in particular of pandemic vaccines, to allow Member States, on a voluntary basis, to improve their purchasing power and have equitable access to vaccines and antivirals.

Council conclusions with these recommendations were adopted in September 2010 and approved at the Council of Health Ministers in 2010, allowing Member States, on a voluntary basis, common acquisition of these products or "common approaches to contract negotiations with the industry". The need to strengthen solidarity between EU countries in a serious health crisis, by creating the mechanism for joint procurement, was further backed by the European Parliament in their Resolution of 8 March 2011.

On this basis, and as the joint procurement of medical countermeasures is included as an article in the [2013 decision on serious cross-border threats to health](#), the Commission launched the procedure to prepare an agreement for the joint procurement of vaccines in the case of a future pandemic.

For more information please see:

http://ec.europa.eu/health/preparedness_response/policy/decision/index_en.htm

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