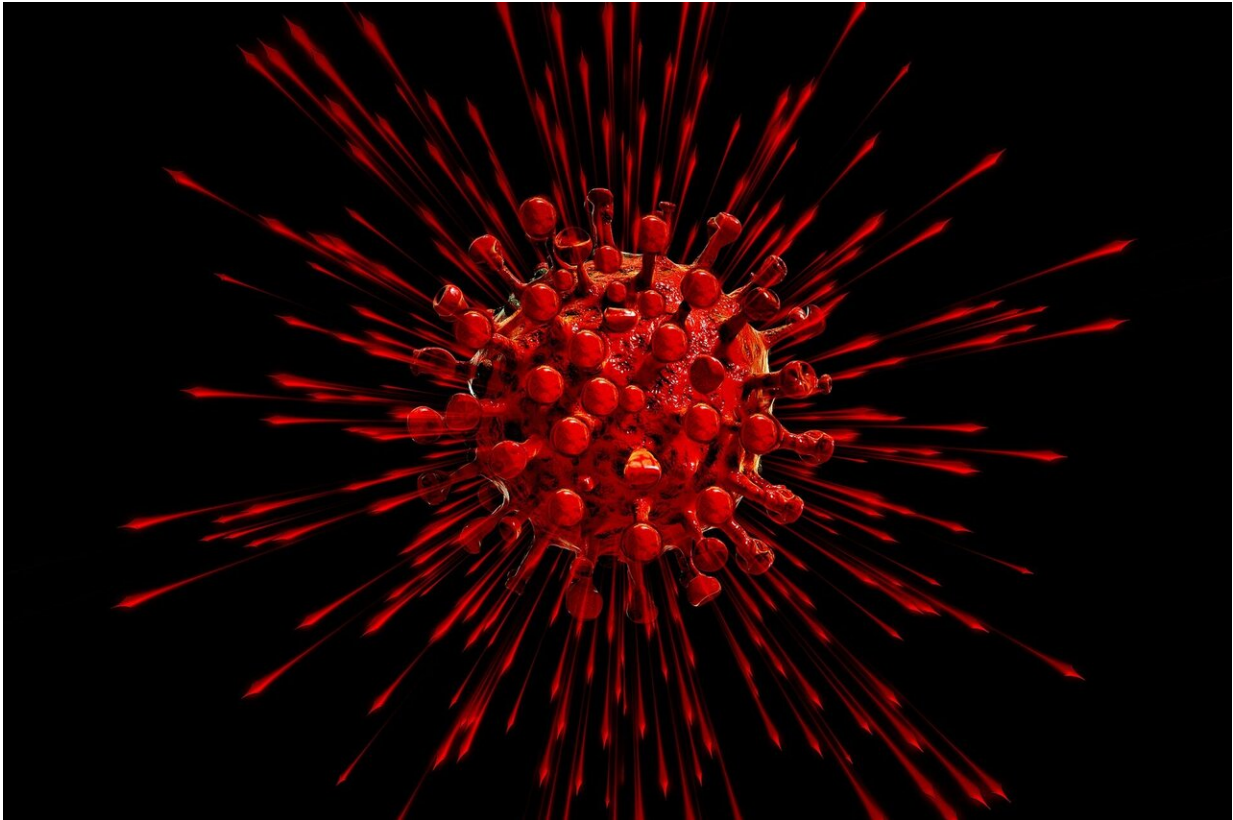


# Merkel, Macron defend EU vaccine strategy

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron on Friday defended the European Union's joint COVID-19 vaccination rollout despite its troubled start.

"I fully support the European approach," Macron told an online news

conference after talks with Merkel. "What would people say if countries like France and Germany were competing with each other on vaccines?"

"It would be a mess, and counter-productive," he said.

Merkel said that although the sluggish rollout had shown that the bloc needed to ramp up pharmaceutical production capacities, "the basic decision to order together as the European Union was and is right".

Anger in the 27-member bloc has grown in recent weeks over the slow pace of [coronavirus](#) inoculations compared with the speedier campaigns seen in the United States, Israel and ex-EU member Britain.

Merkel has taken to the airwaves several times this week to defend Germany's decision not to go it alone.

She said the EU and vaccine makers were "working as fast as possible" to accelerate vaccinations and expand [production lines](#).

The EU has ordered more than enough potential vaccines for its 450 million citizens, she said, but the initial shortages have laid bare that the bloc's "production capacities are not as large as we had imagined".

"But producing vaccines is not something that can be done from one day to the next," Merkel added. "These are complicated processes."

Macron said that the bloc had secured doses from a wide range of vaccine candidates, but admitted that leaders had been caught off guard by the swift success of experimental mRNA vaccines.

The jabs, based on novel technology never before used in a commercial [vaccine](#), were developed by Pfizer/BioNTech and Moderna and became the first two shots to be approved by EU regulators in the fight against

the pandemic.

"Nobody could have known that we were going to have safe vaccines so quickly," Macron told reporters.

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