

# EU proposes joint approach to develop COVID-19 drugs

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European Union Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides speaks during a media conference on an EU strategy on COVID-19 therapeutics at EU headquarters in Brussels, Thursday, May 6, 2021. (Kenzo Tribouillard, Pool via AP)

The European Commission proposed Thursday that EU nations join

forces to develop and deploy COVID-19 drugs across the 27-nation bloc.

In addition to the [vaccine](#) contracts already secured through a similar joint procurement, the EU's executive arm said it will set up a portfolio of 10 potential COVID-19 treatments, with the aim of authorizing three new ones to treat COVID-19 by October.

So far, the antiviral medicine remdesivir is the only [drug](#) authorized across the EU for treating coronavirus patients.

"Vaccinations save lives, but they cannot yet eradicate COVID-19. We need a strong push on treatments to limit the need for hospitalization, speed up recovery times and reduce mortality," said Stella Kyriakides, the bloc's Health and Food Safety commissioner.

The Commission said vaccines alone will not eradicate coronavirus overnight and efficient drugs and treatment plans will be required to treat patients in hospitals or at home, including those affected by long-term symptoms of the disease.

Joint procurements can be launched with the agreement of member states, with a minimum of five EU countries required to start a procedure,

The Commission said it will invest 90 million euros (\$108 million) in studies and [clinical trials](#) and an extra 40 million euros (\$48 million) to support manufacturing and access for COVID-19 drugs and treatments.



European Union Health Commissioner Stella Kyriakides speaks during a media conference on an EU strategy on COVID-19 therapeutics at EU headquarters in Brussels, Thursday, May 6, 2021. (Kenzo Tribouillard, Pool via AP)

In addition to the three drugs it plans to authorize in October, the executive branch said two more treatments could get approved by the end of the year.

As part of its vaccine strategy, the Commission acted as an investor to provide funding to [pharmaceutical companies](#) developing vaccines, speed up production capacities and research. The European Commission has secured up to 2.6 billion doses of COVID-19 shots and is in negotiations with drugmakers for extra doses.

But some EU nations have criticized the coordinated approach, blaming the EU for the initial slow rollout of COVID-19 vaccine shots across the region of 450 million people amid a [contract dispute](#) with AstraZeneca and production delays at other vaccine makers.

Vaccinations have since sped up and a quarter of all EU residents have now received a first dose of [coronavirus](#) vaccine, according to Commission President Ursula von der Leyen. She says the bloc has secured enough doses to vaccinate 70% of all adults in the EU by the end of July.

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