

EU hits goal of delivering vaccines for 70% of adults

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The European Union has hit its target of delivering enough coronavirus vaccine to cover 70 percent of the adult population, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said Saturday.

The 27 EU member state governments are responsible for administering the vaccines to citizens—and some are working much faster than others—but von der Leyen stressed that: "The EU has kept its word."

The EU joint [vaccine](#) purchasing scheme, run by von der Leyen's European Commission, has delivered 330 million BioNTech-Pfizer shots, 100 million AstraZeneca, 50 million from Moderna and 20 million Johnson & Johnson.

All but the J&J jab require two doses to achieve full efficacy, and the EU is home to an estimated 366 million adults.

"This weekend, we delivered enough vaccine to member states to fully vaccinate at least 70 percent of the [adult population](#) this month. By tomorrow, some 500 million doses will have been distributed to all regions of Europe," von der Leyen said.

"COVID-19 is not yet defeated. But we are prepared to continue supplying vaccines—also against new variants. Now the member states must do everything they can to ensure that vaccinations move forward. Only then will we all be safe."

When the coronavirus epidemic hit Europe last year, the European Commission—which previously had little role in [health policy](#)—stepped in to coordinate a joint buying programme for members.

Joint approach

This was criticised at first by some for having been slow to get into gear and to negotiate contracts with drug suppliers, and the plan was hampered later when some firms—notably UK-based AstraZeneca—fell short in deliveries.

But, as industry raced to boost production of the newly developed vaccines, purchases started flowing in, and von der Leyen will see meeting the European Commission's self-imposed July deadline for 70 percent coverage as vindication.

"The EU is delivering," she said. "Our vaccination campaign has accelerated tremendously since the beginning of the year. The joint approach is a success. Only together can we come out of this crisis well."

In addition to the initial roll-out goal, the EU contributes to the international Covax plan to supply doses to [poorer countries](#) and it has pre-ordered many more vaccines for next year as insurance against the rise of variants.

But the vaccination campaign will only be a success if member state governments and their over-worked public health systems manage to give out the shots they are now receiving from the EU plan.

According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, the proportion of adults aged 18 years or over fully vaccinated in the EU and European Economic Area is still only 44.1 percent.

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