

Novavax jab available in vaccine-shy Slovakia

February 15 2022



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Slovakia's health ministry on Tuesday opened registration for the new COVID jab from Novavax, which experts hope will win over vaccine sceptics as it is made from a more conventional technology.

The country of 5.4 million people has one of the EU's lowest vaccination rates. Only 51 percent of Slovaks are fully vaccinated, according to the [health ministry](#).

"Registration will start on February 15, and the vaccination process itself at the end of the month," ministry spokeswoman Zuzana Eliasova told AFP.

The European Commission authorised the US company's vaccine as its fifth official jab for use across the European Union in late December 2021.

Commission head Ursula von der Leyen said at the time that she hoped the vaccine, which is called Nuvaxovid, would "offer a strong encouragement to everyone who has not yet been vaccinated or boosted, that now is the time to do so".

Slovak immunologists have also welcomed the new vaccine.

"I look forward to using Nuvaxovid, as it could increase the willingness of Slovaks to get vaccinated," said Peter Visolajsky, chairman of the Doctors Trade Union Association.

The Novavax offering is a vaccine based on so-called protein subunit technology, which is tried and tested. It has been used for decades to vaccinate people against diseases such as hepatitis B and whooping cough.

Visolajsky said the fact that previous COVID vaccines were tested on stems cells from aborted fetuses may have discouraged religious Slovaks from getting the jab.

"Using a proven and more conventional technology can be an important

argument in Slovakia," he told AFP.

Slovakia has ordered 600,000 doses of the COVID-19 vaccine from Novavax. The first 34,000 vaccines are due to arrive next week, Eliasova said.

Other EU countries have also ordered the [vaccine](#), including Germany, and it has been approved in Britain as well.

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Citation: Novavax jab available in vaccine-shy Slovakia (2022, February 15) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2022-02-novavax-jab-vaccine-shy-slovakia.html>

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