

Minutes: Steering Board meeting, 16 October 2020

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda was adopted.

An update was provided by the Commission regarding the ongoing European Council, for which a short paper “*EU Strategy on COVID-19 Vaccines: state of play*” was drafted that the Commission offered to circulate. The Paper was well received.

It was announced that on Friday 23 October a dedicated session on logistics with Pfizer/BioNTech would take place at 4pm CET, for which the MSs were invited to bring their experts.

2. Implementation of the AstraZeneca Contract

The Commission reminded the Members that the binding allocation was sent to AstraZeneca (AZ) on 1 October. This triggered the [REDACTED] for the Member States to sign and enter the Order Forms. The Commission shared an info note and guidance on how to fill in the Order Forms. [REDACTED] Member States had returned the Order Form [REDACTED]. The Commission reminded the Members to fill in the national contact point list (including fixing a national distribution hub) and to explicitly respond on the [REDACTED] query (i.e. [REDACTED]). [REDACTED] Member States had sent an explicit confirmation that [REDACTED] were acceptable [REDACTED]

The issue of the minimum batch size and on the smallest unit is still being determined by AZ. The Commission announced that a new version of the AZ Vaccine Characteristics file was uploaded [REDACTED] the day before the meeting. AZ is also preparing an FAQ on medical and logistical aspects. In case of further questions, the Alliance Manager (EC or AZ) can be of help. Once the Order Forms filled (the hard deadline is [REDACTED] October but MS were encouraged to do so by [REDACTED]), further discussions on the logistics would be carried out bilaterally between the AZ Alliance Manager and the persons appointed by the Member States.

[REDACTED] informed that they are setting up two working groups: one on the vaccination strategy (with representatives from the Ministries of Health) and one on distribution and logistics – both working groups cover neighbouring countries but expansion to other countries is ongoing. The cross-border element is particularly important in the latter working group as these contacts should be helpful in taking swift decisions closer to the delivery day. The idea is to have a network that can share strategies and answers (e.g. cold chain requirements). Member States were invited to contact the [REDACTED] Representative [REDACTED] by Tuesday 20 October and they could then be added to the initiative.

Some MSs asked clarifications regarding the process of delivery. The Commission explained that AZ would [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] hubs the Member States have designated – this is the principle on which we operate for the moment and which is captured in the APA. Therefore, national hubs are essential on the order forms. For [REDACTED] countries, [REDACTED]

3. Update on the Johnson & Johnson contract

The Commission informed that [REDACTED] opt-out [REDACTED] was received. [REDACTED] was entitled to one more day since their National Holiday (notified to the EC) occurred in the [REDACTED] working days interval. However, [REDACTED] confirmed that they had already indicated no intention to opt out.

Once the opt-out period runs out, [REDACTED] process will be set in motion by the MSs, seeking to accommodate the various needs in terms of number of doses, and respecting, at the same time, the contractual provisions ([REDACTED] for [REDACTED] no obligation to pick up the pro-rata doses from the country that opted out).

4. Update on other contracts in the tendering phase

BioNTech – the first [REDACTED] meeting [REDACTED] prior to the present Steering Board meeting [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Moderna – [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

CureVac – the Members were reminded that a second scientific presentation took place followed by a discussion with the independent experts. Once additional scientific data would be provided by the company, a third scientific presentation and discussion would be organised.

5. Update on discussions with other companies

Novavax – discussions with the company continue.

██████ – the exploratory discussions were nearly finalised leaving the next step up to the Member States' ██████ decision. The Members were informed that a scientific presentation took place the previous week. A clear offer exists and hence a decision in the not too distant future by the Steering Board is welcome.

Valneva – the Members were informed of the latest discussions regarding supply and ██████. These elements will be further addressed in follow-up discussions with the company. Their latest proposal would need to be considered.

The Commission clarified that contacts with many other companies are still ongoing. The dedicated table circulated on a regular basis offers a quick overview of the proposals the Commission is receiving. The Commission invited Members to reach out in case of queries – via email or by phone. In the contacts with companies, negotiations would not be initiated without the direct endorsement of the Steering Board.

Certain MSs ██████ enquired about discussions with ██████ regarding their vaccine candidate – referral to EMA was suggested as a joint course of action.

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/vaccination/docs/2020_strategies_deployment_en.pdf



