The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Austrian Leader Calls for Russian Vaccine's Swift Approval in EU

March 18, 2021



EU approval of Sputnik V would mark a major turnaround for the bloc. **Alexander Avilov / Moskva News Agency**

Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz on Wednesday appealed to European regulatory authorities to approve Russia's Sputnik V and other safe coronavirus vaccines as soon as possible.

With Sputnik V under review by the EU's medicines regulator, reports suggested this week that EU officials are considering launching negotiations to buy doses from Russia. The vaccine's developers announced Monday they had reached production deals in key EU states, including Germany, France, Italy and Spain.

"I call on the responsible agency in Europe to do everything possible to ensure that all possible vaccines are approved as soon as possible," Kurz told Austrian broadcaster OE 24 when asked about the Russian vaccine.

His remarks came a week after the European Medicines Agency (EMA) management board

chairwoman's comparison between Sputnik V and "Russian roulette" sparked outrage in Moscow.

The EMA said it began a "rolling review" of Sputnik V earlier in March to analyze existing data on its safety and effectiveness before deciding whether Russia could apply for EU authorization. A peer-reviewed study published last month assessed Sputnik V's effectiveness at 91.6%.

EU approval of Sputnik V would mark a major turnaround for the bloc, which has publicly dismissed Russia's global vaccine campaign as propaganda while facing criticism for its own slow rollout. EU members Hungary and Slovakia have already purchased Sputnik V doses in a break with Brussels.

European Commissioner for the internal market Thierry Breton on Wednesday called Sputnik V "a good vaccine."

"I think Russians are pretty good scientists, and I wouldn't have any reason to doubt [it]," Breton was quoted as saying at a briefing in Brussels.

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