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WHO, Europe Medicines Agency Finishing Sputnik V Review – Reports

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WHO's regional director told Russian media that "there are definitely grounds for optimism" regarding Sputnik V's approval in Europe. **Aaron Favila / AP / TASS**

The World Health Organization (WHO) and Europe's medicines authority are wrapping up their review of Russia's Sputnik V coronavirus vaccine and are expected to report their findings as soon as this week, the Russian state-run TASS news agency reported Thursday.

The WHO, which has approved eight vaccines so far, and the European Medicines Agency launched the second step of the Sputnik V approval process, an inspection of its manufacturing practices, on May 10.

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"Right now, our specialists are in Russia and their mission here will be completed by June 4," WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge told TASS.

“That’s when a report with recommendations that will be taken into account will be prepared,” Kluge added on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum.

The public health expert noted that “there are definitely grounds for optimism” on the prospect of Sputnik V’s approval.

“Both the European Medicines Agency and the WHO are examining the vaccine, which in itself is a good sign,” Kluge said.

Some Western countries have voiced skepticism toward Sputnik V, which has been authorized for use in around 60 countries, over concerns the Kremlin would use it as a soft-power tool to advance its interests.

Russia registered the two-dose jab in August before the start of large-scale clinical trials, but leading medical journal The Lancet has since said it is safe and over 90% effective.

At least two EU member states have bypassed the bloc’s approval process and authorized the use of Sputnik V on their territory. The EU also recently approved incoming travel for those vaccinated with an EU-authorized jab, as well as the EU Digital Covid Certificate that would unlock bloc-wide travel.

Elsewhere, the head of Russia’s consumer protection agency, which oversees the nationwide Covid-19 response effort, promised on Thursday to address vaccinations of foreign nationals in Russia “soon.”

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