

Germany seeks ways to give its vaccine campaign momentum

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel attends a meeting of the German Federal Parliament, Bundestag, at the Reichstag building in Berlin, Germany, Thursday, Jan. 28, 2021. (Bernd von Jutrczenka/dpa via AP)

Chancellor Angela Merkel and German state governors were planning to

talk Monday with representatives of the pharmaceutical industry on ways to beef up the country's sluggish vaccination campaign.

Monday's videoconference, which also will involve the European Union's Executive Commission, comes as finger-pointing in the bloc's most populous country mounts over who is to blame for the slow vaccine rollout.

By Friday, 1.85 million people had received a first vaccine dose in Germany—a country of 83 million—and more than 461,000 had a second dose. In comparison, Britain, a country of 67 million, has given nearly 9 million people a first vaccine shot.

A slew of bad news about delays to vaccine deliveries was alleviated only somewhat by news Sunday night that AstraZeneca has agreed to supply 9 million additional doses of its vaccine to the EU during the [first quarter](#)—bringing the total to half what the company originally aimed for.

Pfizer, which developed the first widely tested and approved coronavirus vaccine together with German firm BioNTech, has said it expects to increase global production this year from 1.3 million doses to 2 billion doses. BioNTech said Monday that up to 75 million of those additional doses will be delivered to the EU in the [second quarter](#).



German Federal Minister of Health Jens Spahn, left, and Chancellor Angela Merkel talk while wearing a face masks on the government benches during the current affairs hour of the plenary session in the German federal parliament, Bundestag, at the Reichstag building in Berlin, Germany, Wednesday, Jan. 27, 2021. (Bernd von Jutrczenka/dpa via AP)

The German government has pledged to offer everyone [vaccine](#) by late September. In addition to frustration with manufacturers, fingers have been pointed at the EU itself, which ordered the vaccines; Germany's federal government, which distributes them to state authorities; and state governments, which are in charge of the actual vaccinations.

Monday's meeting is meant to help improve coordination, among other things, though Merkel's office has cautioned against expecting too much

in the way of immediate results. It hasn't specified what industry representatives will join in.

"We could carry on like last week—council leaders criticize governors and state ministers, state ministers criticize federal ministers and the federal government, the [federal government](#) criticizes the European Commission and all criticize the manufacturers," Health Minister Jens Spahn, himself a frequent target of criticism, told ZDF television on Sunday.

"The virus is the enemy, the opponent, and no one else," he said. "We all have responsibility and we are responsible above all for doing better."

Germany is in its second lockdown, which is currently due to expire Feb. 14. Infection figures are falling, but are still well above the government's target. Germany has seen over 57,100 confirmed deaths in the pandemic.

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