

Minutes: Steering Board meeting, 2 September 2020

1. Vaccine portfolio and preparation for the Informal EPSCO Council

The 5.1.2e (AT) indicated that the aim of the extraordinary meeting was to have preparatory talks ahead on the Informal EPSCO meeting that would discuss how to complete the portfolio on the procurement of COVID-19 vaccines and secure its financing.

The 5.1.2e (AT) stressed that the goal was to obtain a broad portfolio of vaccine candidates that contained different technological approaches, in order to achieve the highest possible chances of a successful vaccine against COVID-19.

The 5.1.2e underlined that the diversity of the portfolio was good, with three mRNA and two non-replicating viral vector vaccines, but that there was, for the time being, only one candidate vaccine based on the platform of Proteine subunit.

In this light, some Member States were proposing to have Novavax, with whom discussions were ongoing, as a seventh candidate in the portfolio, as an early vaccine on the market, based on protein subunit.

The 5.1.2e asked the Members of the Steering Board to indicate during the meeting whether they would agree with:

- (i) the expansion of portfolio to 6+1
- (ii) providing additional funding to secure its financing.

The 5.1.2e (AT) also asked for further reflection on how proceed with the companies with whom discussions have started but for which there was no ESI funding available.

The Presidency would to inform the Ministers that the portfolio negotiated by the Commission and MSs aimed to be a broad one, including all candidates expected to be early available and with different technological approaches (non-replicating viral vector, Proteine subunit, mRNA). DE agreed on the importance of adding another Proteine subunit vaccine to the portfolio.

DE would also inform Ministers that in order to ensure that contracts were concluded quickly, making thus available the potential vaccine candidates as soon as possible, the ESI-budget had to be increased.

In this light, DE Presidency would ask Ministers whether they would agree to contribute to the necessary increase of the ESI according to their gross national income.

ES agreed to the necessity of a balanced portfolio regarding the different types of technologies. ES also called for a collective and coordinated approach, in the context in which the risk of not having the potential successful vaccine(s) available to all MSs would be more important than having too many doses, considering that MSs would have the possibility to resell or donate.

SE called for a broad portfolio of vaccine candidates that contained different technological approaches, indicating that SE would like to secure all chances of having the successful vaccine when available.

BE supported the proposal for a portfolio of 6+1 and asked what would happen with potential new candidates.

NL supported DE proposal, stressed that Novavax should be covered in the portfolio, and pleaded for an EU common approach. Furthermore, NL stressed that talks with other producers should continue and in December the portfolio should be reanalysed and see if it needed to be increased.

PT agreed with DE's proposal, was in favour of an EU common approach and agreed to the necessity of a varied portfolio. PT echoed the BE's question regarding the new potential candidates and also ask for clarification regarding the financial breakdown of the top-up.

SL expressed support to DE's proposal and look forward to details regarding the financial implications.

BG informed on the fact that their pro-rata attribution would be superior to their estimation in needs and indicated that a possible way forward for them would be to commit to one vaccine per technology.

PL underlined the need for a common EU approach, a diversified portfolio regarding the technologies, and advised against too much interruption and reshuffling, as this might influence the negotiation and ultimately the conclusion of contracts.

HU and IE raised questions regarding the financial breakdown.

RO supported strongly a diversified portfolio with 6+1 and additional candidates in the future.

The Commission informed that dialogue with other possible candidates remained open with a low commitment on entering negotiation pending Member States decision and that candidate companies were invited to provide updates regarding the development of the vaccines.