

Italy factory to produce Sputnik vaccine, first in EU: trade body

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The Sputnik vaccine has not yet been approved by the EU's medicines regulator

An Italian-Swiss pharmaceutical company has agreed to produce Russia's Sputnik V vaccine in Italy, the first such deal in the European Union, a trade body said Tuesday.

"The vaccine will be produced from July 2021 in (pharma company) Adienne factories in Lombardy," northern Italy, a spokesman for the Italian-Russian Chamber of Commerce, Stefano Maggi, told AFP.

"Ten million doses will be produced between July 1 and January 1, 2022," he added, describing it as the "first agreement on the European level for the production on EU territory of the Sputnik vaccine".

Several EU countries have already begun distributing Sputnik V, but it has yet to be approved by the bloc's medicines regulator.

Last week the Amsterdam-based European Medicines Agency launched a rolling review of the Russian vaccine, a key step towards being approved as the first non-Western jab to be used

against the coronavirus across the 27-nation bloc.

"If the vaccine is not authorised in Europe by July 1, the doses produced (in Italy) will be bought by the Russian sovereign fund and distributed in countries where the Sputnik vaccine is authorised," Maggi said.

Italy's health ministry declined to comment on the deal. Adienne was not immediately available and the northern Italian region of Lombardy said it had learned about it through media reports.

But it was welcomed by Attilio Fontana, president of Lombardy, which has been since the start the epicentre of the pandemic in Italy.

If the EMA approves the Russian jab, "it could be an important solution to find vaccines that are still a bit scarce," he said.

The EU has so far authorised three vaccines: the US-German Pfizer/BioNTech jab, US firm Moderna's shot, and the British-Swedish AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine.

The bloc is set to decide on the one-shot Johnson & Johnson vaccine on March 11, while jabs by Novavax and CureVac are also under rolling review.

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