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# **WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE**

**18 APRIL – 22 APRIL 2022**

# POLAND INVOKES A FORCE MAJEURE CLAUSE AND REFUSES TO TAKE OR PAY FOR MORE BIONTECH/PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINES

The Polish government had informed the European Commission and the vaccine producers about the invocation of a *force majeure clause* in the procurement contract negotiated by the Commission on behalf of the 27 EU member states. As a result, Warsaw refuses to both pay for, or take delivery of, further doses.

Speaking about the reasons of the government's decision, Health Minister Adam Niedzielski pointed out the issue of oversupply and severe financial strains caused by the influx of more than 2 million refugees fleeing Ukraine. Warsaw had been trying to find a compromise, asking to stagger the upcoming deliveries over the period of 10 years. The producer's rejection of this proposal is perceived as „a complete lack of flexibility.”

Both BioNTech and Pfizer declined to comment on Poland's recent move, stating only that they had an agreement with the European Commission to supply its COVID-19 vaccine to EU member states. Also the Commission's spokesperson Stefan De Keersmaecker admitted that all member states are bound by contractual obligations, adding that „the Commission understands the difficult position Poland is in”.

Source: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2022-04-19/poland-refuses-to-pay-for-more-covid-vaccines-as-demand-drops>

# THE NEW SPECIALISED COVID-19 COMMITTEE IN THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTED ITS LEADERSHIP

**Socialist MEP Kathleen Van Brempt from Belgium, alongside four Vice-Chairs, will lead the work of a special parliamentary committee established to draw lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and better prepare the EU for future crises.**

During its first constitutive sitting on Tuesday (April 19), the 38 members of a newly set up committee elected its Chair and four Vice-Chairs, among whom two are Polish MEPs: Ewa Kopacz representing European People's Party (EPP) and Karol Karski from European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR). The Committee leadership also includes German MEP Andreas Glück nominated by Renew Europe and Michèle Rivasi, French MEP from the Greens.

Vast majority of the special committee's tasks will concentrate on four areas related to the pandemic: health; socio-economic impact, coordinated EU response in line with fundamental rights and foreign policy.

The first ordinary meeting of the COVI committee is scheduled for 11 May. The body is set up only for a 1-year term (starting from the date of constitutive sitting), and may be extended by the Parliament's plenary.

Source: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/es/press-room/20220412IPR27113/ep-special-committee-on-covid-19-pandemic-starts-work>

# CASES OF HEPATITIS OF UNKNOWN ORIGIN WERE REPORTED IN FIVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES

**Cases of severe unknown hepatitis were recently reported among children in Denmark, the Republic of Ireland, the Netherlands, Spain and the UK, the European Centre for Disease Control announced last Tuesday (19 April).**

The reported symptoms include “markedly elevated transaminases, often presenting with jaundice, sometimes preceded by gastrointestinal symptoms including vomiting as a prominent feature, in children up to the age of 16 years.” ECDC added that abdominal pain and diarrhea in the preceding weeks were also reported.

The potential cause of the unknown inflammation remains unknown. According to Meera Chand, Director of Clinical and Emerging Infections at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), one of the possibilities is that the inflammation is linked to adenovirus infection. Other possible alternatives, such as environmental causes or COVID-19, are being investigated as well. Ms Chand underlined, however, that there is no link to the SARS-CoV-2 vaccines as none of the confirmed cases in the United Kingdom were vaccinated.

Further investigations regarding the spread and causes of the virus are still ongoing.

Source: <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/update-hepatitis-unknown-origin-children>

# Thank you for your attention!

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