



PUBLIC RELATIONS

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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

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PFIZER OFFICIALS MAY BE EXCLUDED FROM THE PREMISES OF EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

On Wednesday (January 11), the European Parliament's Committee on COVID (COVI) approved a proposal to ban all Pfizer officials from the European Parliament's buildings, as a result of the company's lack of transparency in vaccine purchase contracts during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previously, in October and December, Pfizer's CEO Albert Bourla refused to meet with COVI Committee members to speak about the so-called SMS affair involving Ursula von der Leyen.

The proposal to exclude representatives of the American pharmaceutical company was submitted by French MEP Michèle Rivasi to the Parliament's COVI committee. A majority of political groups voted in favour of the ban, except for the European People's Party and Renew Europe, which voted against it.

Following Wednesday's vote, the Conference of Committee Chairs (CPC), which brings together all committee chairs every Tuesday during plenary sessions, will give its opinion on the subject. The CPC will decide on several aspects of the possible exclusion: the duration of the ban, whether the sanction will apply to all Pfizer officials, or whether it is upheld, at all.

The precedent for banning a company's representatives from the Parliament dates back to 2017 when one of the committees voted to ban representatives from the agrochemical Monsanto company, following its refusal to participate in a public hearing organised in the Parliament.

Source: <https://www.politico.eu/article/mep-european-parliament-ursula-von-der-leyen-pfizer-vaccine-contract/>

EUROPEAN COURT OF AUDITORS: THE EU HAS NOT USED THE POTENTIAL OF COVID-19 TOOLS TO FACILITATE TRAVEL

The European Court of Auditors (ECA) published a special report on COVID-19, analysing the effectiveness of the tools that the Commission proposed to ease travel during the pandemic. It found that of all the tools the European Commission has proposed to facilitate travel during the pandemic, only the EU Digital COVID Certificate proved effective.

The auditors also noted that the EU Commission did not manage to overcome certain member states' reservations about using the EU tools due to data protection and other legal concerns. Although health is a national competence of EU countries, ECA praised that the Commission had decided to coordinate action and moved fast to propose suitable solutions to ease travel during the pandemic.

A few hours before the ECA published the report on its website, its member Baudilio Tomé Muguruza held a press briefing, in which he summarised the main conclusions of the report. In his opinion, "it was crucial that all EU countries adopt common tools to coordinate free movement restrictions and facilitate travel despite the unprecedented situation we were faced with." Therefore, the auditors urged the EU authorities to build on this experience and prepare better to be able to face potential future emergencies more successfully. It applies to addressing the lack of specific procedures for utilising these measures in the long term or reinstating them quickly if they are needed again.

Source: <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2023-01-eu-covid-tools-auditors.html>

ECJ: TOURISTS MAY GET REFUNDS OVER COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS

On Thursday (January 12), the European Court of Justice (ECJ) adjudicated that travellers whose package tours were ruined by the imposition of restrictions to combat the COVID-19 pandemic may be entitled to at least a partial refund. The ruling was based on the preliminary question asked by a German court.

Primarily, the tour operator refused to grant a 70% reduction to travellers who went to Spain but didn't have access to the swimming pools and sunbeds and were forced to return earlier than planned. However, in its analysis, the European tribunal found that "a traveller is entitled to a reduction in the price of his or her package where a lack of conformity of the travel services included in the package is due to restrictions that have been imposed at the travel destination to fight the spread of an infectious disease, such as COVID-19."

Furthermore, it stated that it does not matter if similar countermeasures are imposed at the traveller's place of residence or in other countries. Subsequently, the case will return to the German court, which will have to assess if the restrictions in the particular case at issue "could constitute failures to perform or improper performances" of the agreement by the tour organiser.

Nevertheless, the ECJ's ruling means other tourists can press for refunds if their trips were shortened and service not provided due to COVID-related measures. The judgement will apply in the court systems of the 27 EU members where the ECJ has jurisdiction.

Source: <https://abcnews.go.com/Business/wireStory/eu-court-tourists-refunds-covid-measures-96386870>

Thank you for your attention!

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