

EN
E-002952/2024
Answer given by Mr Várhelyi
on behalf of the European Commission
(4.3.2025)

COVID-19 vaccines have been authorised to protect against COVID-19. Vaccines are not authorised with the primary goal of reducing disease transmission, which is challenging to assess in clinical studies and requires large-scale real-world data. Post-authorisation studies indicate that COVID-19 vaccines can reduce virus transmission, though their effectiveness varies over time and across regions due to circulating virus strains and preventive measures¹.

The first COVID-19 vaccines received conditional marketing authorisation based on short-term efficacy, with the duration of protection still being determined. By 2021, real-world data showed reduced protection over time, particularly with new variants. Ongoing recommendations for booster doses and vaccine updates aim to maintain protection as the virus evolves.

The COVID-19 vaccine contracts that the Commission concluded on behalf of the Member States were based on products which were considered safe and efficacious according to EU pharmaceutical law requirements and authorised based on the European Medicines Agency's advice. Studies indicate that vaccine protection declines over time and that this is due, among other factors, to the emergence of new variants. COVID-19 vaccines authorised in the EU are regularly updated to maintain protection as SARS-CoV-2 evolves. The vaccine contracts allowed and continue to allow Member States to order updated vaccines, once authorised and made available by manufacturers. According to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, all vaccines authorised in the EU were highly protective against hospitalisation, severe disease, and death, and delays in their availability could have had severe public health consequences².

¹ <https://www.ema.europa.eu/en/human-regulatory-overview/public-health-threats/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/covid-19-medicines/covid-19-vaccines-key-facts>

² <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/interim-analysis-covid-19-vaccine-effectiveness-against-hospitalisation-and-death>