Question for written answer E-000068/2021
to the Commission
Rule 138
Mathilde Androuët (ID)

Subject: Do the misgivings concerning AstraZeneca's vaccine call into question the contract the Commission has signed with the pharmaceutical giant?

On 27 August it was announced that the Commission had signed an initial contract with AstraZeneca for the purchase of at least 300 million doses of its COVID-19 vaccine. However, serious doubts have arisen as to the vaccine's efficacy. In early December, AstraZeneca and Oxford University gave conflicting accounts of how they came upon the most effective dosing pattern for their vaccine, raising experts' concerns about the reliability of the data. At the end of November, the laboratory admitted that it had made a mistake in its vaccine regimen — an error that distorted the seemingly very conclusive results — and promised to undertake a new study. The previous study, which was published on 18 November in the Lancet in the form of preliminary results of a clinical trial, had already given rise to a number of questions. Why was the regimen changed during the trial? Why use a single-blind study without a proper placebo? Why was a group of older people — over the age 70 but all in good health — used to test the vaccine, with many suffering worrying side effects? Do these questions about the efficacy or even the risks associated with AstraZeneca's vaccine call into question the contract that the Commission has signed with AstraZeneca?