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Answer given by Ms Kyriakides
on behalf of the European Commission
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Vaccine production is being scaled up across the EU in an unprecedented manner. This always involves unexpected challenges. Some companies exceed expectations, while others face temporary difficulties in the scale-up.

As regards AstraZeneca, what matters is that the delivery of a sufficient number of doses in line with the company's earlier commitments is ensured.

The Commission is looking at all options to make this happen.

A Task Force for Industrial Scale-up was set up to ramp up production capacity for vaccines, acting as a one-stop-shop for manufacturers in need of support. This Task Force is working to have a good understanding of vaccine production capacities and the main bottlenecks both in terms of capacity and supply chain issues in view of finding suitable solutions. It stands ready to help facilitate technology transfers, where needed.

The Commission notes that the current vaccines supply issues in the EU are due to insufficient production capacities, and not intellectual property (IP). Given the technical complexity of vaccines, facilitating broad voluntary industry co-operation is the best way to maximise the availability of vaccines in the EU and globally and to tackle new variants. There are already many examples of collaboration and licensing in the EU and other countries.

Unlike voluntary licensing and manufacturing agreements, compulsory licensing in line with Article 31 of the TRIPS Agreement[1] does not guarantee the transfer of all relevant know how and technologies. Using this measure could also dis-incentivise the ongoing productions efforts and potentially impede the EU's future access to vaccines updated to new virus variants. It is thus only a last-resort tool for when all other efforts to make IP available have failed.

[1] World Trade Organization Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights: https://www.wto.org/english/docs_e/legal_e/27-trips_04c_e.htm