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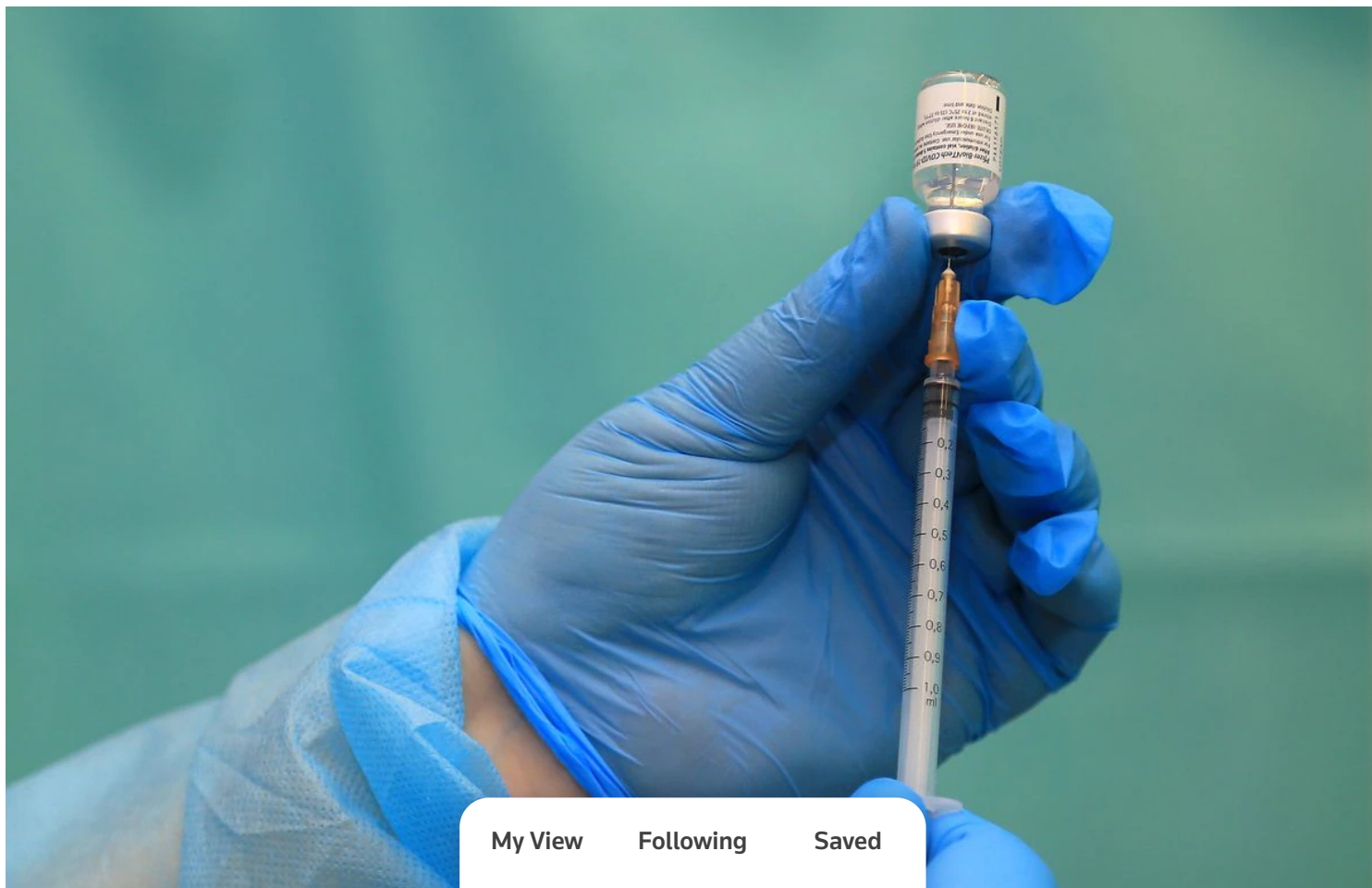
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Europe

Poland declines to take or pay for more COVID-19 vaccines for now

Reuters

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A doctor prepares the Pfizer-BioNTech coronavirus disease (COVID-19) vaccine at the University Hospital in Bialystok, Poland January 4, 2021. Agnieszka Sadowska/Agencja Gazeta via REUTERS

WARSAW, April 19 (Reuters) - Poland will not take or pay for more doses of COVID-19 vaccine under the European Union's supply contract, its health minister said on Tuesday, setting the stage for a legal battle with manufacturers.

Poland, along with other EU members, has been receiving COVID-19 vaccines during the coronavirus pandemic under supply contracts agreed between the European Commission and vaccine makers such as BioNTech SE ([22UAY.DE](#)) and Pfizer ([PFE.N](#)) or Moderna ([MRNA.O](#)).

Poland's biggest supplier is Pfizer. However, the country has seen lower vaccine uptake than most of the European Union and has surplus vaccine stock, part of which it has sold or donated to other countries. [read more](#)

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"At the end of last week, we used the force majeure clause and informed both the European Commission and the main vaccine producer that we are refusing to take these vaccines at the moment and we are also refusing to pay," health minister Adam Niedzielski told private broadcaster TVN24.

"Indeed, the consequence of this will be a legal conflict, which is already taking place," he said.

Poland cannot directly terminate the contract for the supply of vaccines as the parties to the contracts are the European Commission and manufacturers, he said.

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The value of the contract for vaccine supplies to Poland up to the end of 2023 with one producer alone was worth over 6 billion zlotys (\$1.4 billion), with over 2 billion zlotys of that for supply in 2022.

Pfizer said its agreement over the supply of its COVID-19 vaccine to European Union member states was with the EU Commission.

"Our discussions with Governments and the details of vaccine deliveries are confidential," it added.

Pfizer's partner BioNTech only said that Pfizer was in charge of the commercial relationship with Poland.

Poland, a country of around 38 million people, has reported 5,983,864 cases of the coronavirus and 115,809 deaths.

European Commission health spokesman Stefan de Keersmaecker told a news conference on Tuesday that member states were bound by contractual obligations, but that it understood Poland's "difficult position".

"We continue to facilitate discussion between the Polish government and the company in order to find a pragmatic solution to this specific situation the country is confronted with," he said.

In Poland, 59% of the population has been vaccinated with two doses and 31% has received a booster shot. This is well below the EU average of 72.5% and nearly 53%, respectively.

(\$1 = 4.2868 zlotys)

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