Twitter Thread by Dave Keating

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Update from MEP @PeterLiese, health spokesman for the largest party in the EU Parliament (thread):

He maintains #AstraZeneca is treating people in EU as "2nd class citizens" and that doses have gone from the EU to the UK.

"They gave 3 different explanations in less than a week"

Carrot: He's says objections are with AZ behaviour, not vaccine's efficacy

"There's been a lot of talk about AZ being a bad vaccine - very strange fake news in German media. It's definitely not true"

"If someone offered me AZ, and it’s my turn, I wouldn’t hesitate for a minute"

“The AstraZeneca vaccine has not as good data as the vaccines from BioNTech/Pfizer and Moderna but still it is a good vaccine. In October, we would have been happy to have a vaccine that has an efficiency well above 50%."

Stick: "AZ gave 3■ different explanations in less than a week why there is a shortage of supply on the European continent and why they want to deliver only 31 million doses instead of 80 million that they committed to in the contract until the end of March."

1■ "1st explanation was different supply chains. This is wrong because in contract with the EU, two plants in the UK are mentioned for the supply on the continent and at least until a few days ago the final finishing of the vaccine [for UK] has been in a plant in Dessau, Germany"

"The final filling of the AstraZeneca vaccine, at least until a few days ago, among others has happened in Dessau, Germany and the product was shipped to the UK. How can #AstraZeneca argue there are 2 separate supply chains for the UK and EU? It’s nonsense," says Liese.

2■"2nd explanation was there's also reduced supply for the UK" (unclear if that's the case)

3■ "Now they say the UK has a better contract. To be honest, if a company treats European citizens as second class, this has serious consequences for the long-term cooperation with EU"

"Investors will not like that everyone in the biggest market in the world is mad with a company." Liese says he's heard private equity backers are not happy with the company over this week's events.

"3 explanations in less than a week? Can you trust this company when it comes to the contract, delivery and reason for the shortage? My answer is no, when it comes to these issues. But you can trust them when it comes to efficacy."

"It’s clear, they can't deliver as planned. But they can't shorten the delivery to EU and continue delivery to the UK as if nothing has happened. I asked AZ, do you want to be a British company, or a world company:? A world company cannot ignore the biggest market in the world."

Liese says if UK plants need to be used to meet the EU's order, that is only fair.

"If they find another solution, great. But if the only solution is to have a reduction of the delivery to the UK, and that would bring more vaccine to the EU, that is only fair."

"Average people don’t trust the pharma industry. In the parliament I always have to defend that we cooperate and give money to them."

"The reputation of the pharma industry is already bad, if they behave like this it will be even worse."

Interestingly, Liese says EU has been hurt by using more-robust conditional approval process (takes longer) rather than emergency approvals as UK & US did.

But when EU made the decision, they didn't know:
-2nd wave would be so bad
-Pharma companies might give agreed doses away

"Emergency authorisation is less quality than conditional market authorisation. Pfizer had to give more detailed data to EMA on side effects than they gave to the British under emergency authorisation. But EA is a possibility under EU law, that's why UK could use it last year"

"It could be done by Germany, legally it’s possible, for #SputnikV for instance. But this means less data, no liability for the company if they make a mistake, and less people are looking at it. Would be only the Germans, not the Swedish and French and other experts."

"I asked the Commission in October if they’d consider emergency use authorisation, they presented good reasons why not. Also the member states could have done it but they didn’t."

"But I didn’t expect the second wave to be as bad as it is."

"I still think there are good reasons for not doing EA. It’s normally for a patient that is in hospital and can only be cured if you use a medicine that is not licensed but may be helpful. With a vaccination you vaccinate healthy people."

"With BioNTech/Pfizer, the longer conditional approval didn’t have the context that EU would get less vaccine. Because it was in the fridge and they started from day 1 after approval to deliver"

"But now we see that other companies are behaving worse, and that creates a problem"

To paraphrase: he believes EU had good reasons to avoid emergency authorisations so far. But if it means pharma companies are going to give away promised vaccines in the mean time when the more-robust conditional approval takes longer, should EU switch to emergency-approval now?