Last week, British regulators and the European Union’s medical agency said they had established a possible link between AstraZeneca’s Covid-19 vaccine and very rare, though sometimes fatal, blood clots.

On Tuesday, Johnson & Johnson said it would pause the rollout of its vaccine in Europe and the United States over similar concerns, further compounding the continent’s one-step-forward-two-steps-back efforts to quickly get people immunized against the coronavirus.

European officials had been confident that they had secured enough alternative vaccine doses to take up the slack of the AstraZeneca problems and achieve their goal of fully inoculating 70 percent of the European Union’s adult population — about 255 million people — by the end of the summer.

On Tuesday, European officials did not immediately say whether they believed the milestone would also survive the Johnson & Johnson suspension. But the European commissioner for health, Stella Kyriakides, wrote on Twitter that “Today’s developments with the J&J vaccine in the US are under close monitoring” by the bloc’s medicines regulator.

They have been pinning their hopes on at least 300 million doses that are expected to arrive in the region this month and in May and June — two-thirds of which are from Pfizer, which has had a good track record of delivering to the European Union.

The troubles with two major vaccines are casting a cloud over the European Union’s vaccine rollout just as it has finally begun to gain momentum after months of short supplies and logistical problems.

There is mounting evidence that the concerns are eroding Europeans’ willingness to get the AstraZeneca vaccine in particular, and threatening to elevate already high levels of vaccine hesitancy generally.

New and seemingly arbitrary guidelines, which vary nation to nation, around the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine have added to the consternation of Europeans who are still waiting to be vaccinated.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is still being given to older people across the bloc. But some countries have restricted its use for younger demographics. Britain has drawn the line at age 30. In France and Belgium it is 55. In Germany, Italy and Spain, 60. Other nations, like Norway and Denmark, are not administering the AstraZeneca vaccine at all.

It has not helped that the new guidance not to give the AstraZeneca shot to younger people is the opposite of what was recommended when it was first introduced in Europe, when many countries gave it only to younger people because early data did not include large numbers of older people in clinical trials.

The confusion is taking its own toll. According to a YouGov poll published last month, 61 percent of the French, 55 percent of Germans and 52 percent of Spaniards consider the AstraZeneca vaccine “unsafe.” That is in stark contrast to the findings of a similar poll from February, when more people in those countries, with the exception of France, believed that the shot was more safe than unsafe.

Regulators have asked vaccine recipients and doctors to be on the lookout for certain symptoms, including severe and persistent headaches and tiny blood spots under the skin. Doctors’ groups have circulated guidance about how to treat the disorder.

In Poland, where the vaccination campaign relies to a large extent on AstraZeneca and where its use has not been restricted, a recent poll showed that given a choice, fewer than 5 percent of Poles would choose the AstraZeneca shot.

Yet it is hard to predict how serious a blow the latest twist in the AstraZeneca saga — and the new Johnson & Johnson concerns — will be to E.U. vaccination efforts, as officials in Brussels have made big if belated efforts to turbocharge the second-quarter supply of doses.

The sun did not shine. It was too wet to play. So we sat in the house All that cold, cold, wet day.

I sat there with Sally. We sat there, we two. And I said, "How I wish We had something to do!" Too wet to go out And too cold to play ball. So we sat in the house. We did nothing at all.

So all we could do was to Sit! Sit! Sit! Sit! And we did not like it. Not one little bit.

And then Something went BUMP! How that bump made us jump!

We looked! Then we saw him step in on the mat! We looked! And we saw him! The Cat in the Hat! And he said to us, "Why do you sit there like that?"

"I know it is wet And the sun is not sunny. But we can have Lots of good fun that is funny!"

"I know some good games we could play," Said the cat. "I know some new tricks," Said the Cat in the Hat. "A lot of good tricks. I will show them to you. Your mother Will not mind at all if I do."

Then Sally and I did not know what to say. Our mother was out of the house for the day.

But our fish said, "No! No! Make that cat go away! Tell that Cat in the Hat You do NOT want to play. He should not be here. He should not be about. He should not be here When your mother is out!"

"Now! Now! Have no fear. Have no fear!" said the cat. "My tricks are not bad," Said the Cat in the Hat. "Why, we can have Lots of good fun, if you wish, With a game that I call UP-UP-UP with a fish!

“Put me down!" said the fish. "This is no fun at all! Put me down!" said the fish. "I do NOT wish to fall!"

"Have no fear!" said the cat. "I will not let you fall. I will hold you up high As I stand on a ball. With a book on one hand! And a cup on my hat! But that is not ALL I can do!" Said the cat..

"Look at me! Look at me now!" said the cat. "With a cup and a cake On the top of my hat! I can hold up TWO books! I can hold up the fish! And a little toy ship! And some milk on a dish! And look! I can hop up and down on the ball! But that is not all! Oh, no. That is not all.. .

"Look at me! Look at me! Look at me NOW! It is fun to have fun But you have to know how. I can hold up the cup And the milk and the cake! I can hold up these books! And the fish on a rake! I can hold the toy ship And a little toy man! And look! With my tail I can hold a red fan! I can fan with the fan As I hop on the ball! But that is not all. Oh, no. That is not all.... "

That is what the cat said .. . Then he fell on his head! He came down with a bump From up there on the ball. And Sally and I, We saw ALL the things fall!

And our fish came down, too. He fell into a pot! He said, "Do I like this? Oh, no! I do not. This is not a good game," Said our fish as he lit. "No, I do not like it, Not one little bit!"

"Now look what you did!" Said the fish to the cat. "Now look at this house! Look at this! Look at that! You sank our toy ship, Sank it deep in the cake. You shook up our house And you bent our new rake. You SHOULD NOT be here When our mother is not. You get out of this house!" Said the fish in the pot.

"But I like to be here. Oh, I like it a lot!" Said the Cat in the Hat To the fish in the pot. "I will NOT go away. I do NOT wish to go! And so," said the Cat in the Hat, "So so so .. . I will show you Another good game that I know!"

And then he ran out. And, then, fast as a fo'x, The Cat in the Hat Came back in with a box.

A big red wood box. It was shut with a hook "Now look at this trick, Said the cat. "Take a look!"

Then he got up on top With a tip of his hat. "I call this game FUN-IN-A-BOX," Said the cat. "In this box are two things I will show to you now. You will like these two things," Said the cat with a bow.

"I will pick up the hook. You will see something new. Two things. And I call them Thing One and Thing Two. These Things will not bite you. They want to have fun." Then, out of the box Came Thing Two and Thing One! And they ran to us fast. They said, "How do you do? Would you like to shake hands With Thing One and Thing Two?"

And Sally and I Did not know what to do. So we had to shake hands With Thing One and Thing Two. We shook their two hands. But our fish said, "No! No! Those Things should not be In this house! Make them go!

"They should not be here When your mother is not! Put them out! Put them out!" Said the fish in the pot.

"Have no fear, little fish," Said the Cat in the Hat. "These Things are good Things." And he gave them a pat. "They are tame. Oh, so tame! They have come here to play. They will give you some fun On this wet, wet, wet day."

”Now, here is a game that they like," Said the cat. "They like to fly kites”, Said the Cat in the Hat.

"No! Not in the house!" Said the fish in the pot. "They should not fly kites In a house! They should not. Oh, the things they will bump! Oh, the things they will hit! Oh, I do not like it! Not one little bit!"

Then Sally and I Saw them run down the hall. We saw those two Things Bump their kites on the wall! Bump! Thump! Thump! Bump! Down the wall in the hall.

Thing Two and Thing One! They ran up! They ran down! On the string of one kite We saw Mother's new gown! Her gown with the dots That are pink, white and red. Then we saw one kite bump On the head of her bed!

Then our fish said, "LOOK! LOOK!" And our fish shook with fear. "Your mother is on her way home! Do you hear? Oh, what will she do to us? What will she say? Oh, she will not like it To find us this way!"

"So, DO something! Fast!" said the fish. "Do you hear! I saw her. Your mother! Your mother is near! So, as fast as you can, Think of something to do! You will have to get rid of Thing One and Thing Two!"

So, as fast as I could, I went after my net. And I said, "With my net I can get them I bet. I bet, with my net, I can get those Things yet!"

Then I let down my net. It came down with a PLOP! And I had them! At last! Those two Things had to stop. Then I said to the cat, "Now you do as I say. You pack up those Things And you take them away!"

"Oh dear!" said the cat. "You did not like our game .. . Oh dear. What a shame! What a shame! What a shame!"

Then he shut up the Things In the box with the hook. And the cat went away With a sad kind of look.

"That is good," said the fish "He has gone away. Yes. But your mother will come. She will find this big mess! And this mess is so big And so deep and so tall, We can not pick it up. There is no way at all!"

And THEN! Who was back in the house? Why, the cat! "Have no fear of this mess," Said the Cat in the Hat. "I always pick up all my playthings And so ... I will show you another Good trick that I know!"

Then we saw him pick up All the things that were down. He picked up the cake, And the rake, and the gown, And the milk, and the strings, And the books, and the dish, And the fan, and the cup, And the ship, and the fish. And he put them away. Then he said, "That is that." And then he was gone With a tip of his hat.

Then our mother came in And she said to us two, "Did you have any fun? Tell me. What did you do?" And Sally and I did not know What to say. Should we tell her The things that went on there that day?

Should we tell her about it? Now, what SHOULD we do? Well.. . What would YOU do If your mother asked YOU?

Five days earlier, standing in front of the palace, Helena had demanded to see the emperor. When guards tried to push her away, she presented a small package that stunned the guards. They weren’t sure what she was showing them, but they knew it was not something she should have possessed. Instead of being brought to the emperor, she had been held and interrogated about how she had acquired the item. Her confession had been confirmed, and she was then brought to Phrantzes.

Phrantzes now took out the small bundle, unwrapped the flax cloth, and placed the contents on the emperor’s desk.

The emperor’s gaze was as stupefied as those of the soldiers five days ago. But unlike them, he knew immediately what he was looking at.

More than nine centuries earlier, during the reign of Justinian the Great, master craftsmen had cast two chalices out of pure gold, studded with gems and glowing with a beauty that seized the soul. The two chalices were identical save for the arrangement and shapes of the gems. One of the two was kept by successive Byzantine emperors, and the other one had been sealed along with other treasures into a secret chamber in the foundation of Hagia Sophia in 537 C.E., when the great church was rebuilt.

The glow of the chalice in the Great Palace that the emperor was familiar with had dulled with the passage of time, but the one in front of him now looked so bright it could have been cast only yesterday.

No one had believed Helena’s confession at first, thinking that she had probably stolen the chalice from one of her rich patrons. Although many knew of the secret chamber under the great church, few knew its exact location. Moreover, the secret chamber was nestled among the giant stones deep in the foundation, and there were no doors or tunnels leading to it. It should have been impossible to enter the chamber without a massive engineering effort.