



**The Observer**

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## 'It's such a relief': how Europe's Covid vaccine rollout is catching up with UK

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Sat 19 Jun 2021 12.59 BST

On Friday morning, Leyla Çelik woke up with butterflies in her stomach. For weeks, the 22-year-old student at Berlin's Freie Universität had tried in vain to get an appointment for her first Covid-19 vaccine shot so she could volunteer as a polling station administrator at federal elections in September. "I'd basically given up hope."

But last week her university had suddenly got in touch via email, offering her a chance to get a first dose of [Moderna](#) vaccine on campus, and within a few days. By 9am on Friday, the anxiety has turned into euphoria: "It's such a relief," said the native Berliner, nursing her achey shoulder at Freie's biology institute, converted into a vaccine delivery point as of this week. "At last I can catch a train or a bus without feeling anxious."

Millions of continental Europeans are currently experiencing similar thrills at the end of an emotional rollercoaster journey. In the spring, they had stared enviously at countries such

as Britain and the United States, where officials were administering vaccines at remarkable speed, while their own governments couldn't shift out of first gear. *Foreign Policy* magazine wrote of "[Europe's vaccine disaster](#)".

But since then, [EU](#) member states have done a remarkable job of catching up. Since the start of this month, Germany, France and Italy have all administered [more doses of vaccine on a seven-day average than Britain](#).

While the UK remains ahead on fully [vaccinated](#) people in both absolute and relative terms, EU countries are catching up fast: Germany, which on Friday passed the milestone of having given a first shot to 50% of its entire population, is due to overtake the UK in the coming days [in terms of the total number of people who have had at least one dose](#).

In February, economist Sebastian Dullien calculated a route whereby Germany could offer every adult willing to be vaccinated a first dose by the end of July - [a promise](#) Boris Johnson made for British citizens. Angela Merkel had cautiously only made the same guarantee for the end of September.

"In spite of delivery setbacks from [AstraZeneca](#) and Johnson & Johnson, we are now more or less on the end-of-July path we predicted," said Dullien, research director at the Macroeconomic Policy Institute.

A lack of vaccines - caused by flaws in the [European Commission](#) procurement strategy and under-delivering manufacturers - was at the heart of Europe's initial struggles.

Steven Seggie, marketing professor at one of France's top business schools, ESSEC, said: "The success of the French vaccine programme is down to an uptick in [vaccine supplies, particularly](#) Pfizer-BioNTech. Simple as that." "The problem before was purely down to France not having vaccines. Now they have lots and can deliver them."

[French government figures](#) suggest more than 31.3 million French people have received at least one dose of vaccine, of which more than 17.3 million are now fully vaccinated.

Since Wednesday, [12- to 17-year-olds](#) have also been able to get vaccinated with Pfizer-BioNTech, meaning vaccines are now available to all the adult and adolescent population.

## EU vaccination programmes are catching up with UK

Share of people who have received at least one dose of Covid-19 vaccine



Key to the success of the French vaccine programme has been the opening of vaccine centres in town halls, allowing a wide range of health professionals to give the vaccines, including students, first-aiders and even physiotherapists.

In Italy, the first country in Europe to be hit by the pandemic, there was much hope when a 29-year-old nurse became [the first to receive a vaccine](#) on 27 December. The vaccination programme continued at a brisk pace for the next few weeks, before being significantly slowed down by delayed deliveries of AstraZeneca and Pfizer jabs.

A change of government also disrupted progress, as did technical hitches in booking systems. But with the new government, led by prime minister [Mario Draghi](#), came a new vaccine tsar - Francesco Figliuolo, an army logistics expert who gave fresh impetus to the organisation of the rollout.

During the chaotic first quarter of the year, Italy's Covid-19 deaths remained stubbornly high. But as the required doses finally arrived, the vaccine programme accelerated from late April, leading to a drastic fall in deaths and new infections. As of Friday morning, just over half of the population of about 60 million had received a first vaccine dose and 25.13% had received two doses.

Italy has been administering between 420,000 and 620,000 vaccines a day since early June and hopes to have 80% of its population vaccinated by September.

Germany's decision to allow jabs to be administered by general practitioners - which are more evenly distributed across the country than in France and who have a relatively high consultation rate - has proved crucial in speeding up its vaccination campaign. "With the vaccination campaign, we saw a repeat of what happened with testing in 2020," said Ricarda Milstein, a research assistant in health economics at the University of Hamburg. "Until 6 April, Germany was underperforming. Once we allowed the GPs to be involved, we played to our strength and started to turn the tide.

"Germany is now doing what Germany is good at: scaling up a service to deliver at a large volume."

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