

# Program



## Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean

# Vaccine Diplomacy in the Mediterranean

## The Contest for Influence

**March 4, 2021 – 6 PM CET**

**YouTube Livestream:** <https://youtu.be/y37Eb8fdmHI>

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The global Covid-19 pandemic had a severe impact on countries in the Mediterranean region. Most health systems suffered from rising numbers of infections in the first and second waves of the pandemic. In 2020, international actors already tried to support the countries by offering medical equipment and general technical assistance. This was already marked by competition between rival global actors to see who could deliver the fastest, and in some cases it was seen as a publicity stunt and influence peddling rather than an altruistic motivation.

In 2021, this process has even intensified as a number of vaccines have entered the global market and the quest for influence in the Mediterranean has been exacerbated. The contest plays out primarily among China, Russia, the United States, and Europe, all of which eagerly pushed for their domestically procured vaccine variants to enter the global market. Aside from the public health implications of providing the population with vaccination programs, the question once again became geopolitically relevant as to who could deliver the most efficient, rapid and cost-effective vaccine and thus be a reliable partner and increase their sphere of influence globally.

The Chinese and Russian vaccine variants were initially met with skepticism, but recent preliminary studies showed that they can be as effective as vaccines produced by U.S. or European companies. Notably, both China and Russia succeeded in supplying larger quantities to interested countries very quickly, gaining momentum in the global struggle to lead the vaccination program. European countries channeled their support to third countries primarily through the COVAX initiative, which is co-led by the World Health Organization, Gavi, and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. While the COVAX Alliance offers vaccine doses that are low-cost or even free, they tend to be slow in the process and therefore seem to lag behind. Certainly all countries are looking for a quick and cost-friendly option, it remains to be seen which vaccination option will come out ahead in the effort to protect the population from the Corona virus.

Against this backdrop, the Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS PoDiMed) and Casa Árabe are co-hosting an online panel discussion that will explore the current situation of vaccination programs in the Mediterranean region, as well as the geopolitical implications this process may have for the wider region. Experts on the panel will shed light on the underlying technical considerations and current state of affairs, perceptions in the region regarding the actors providing vaccination, and the geopolitical contextualization of the current realities for the region in the months and years ahead. The event will be livestreamed on March 4 at 18:00 CET on the following YouTube channel: <https://youtu.be/y37Eb8fdmHI>

# Program



## Outline

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- 18:00 – 18:05 **Welcome and introduction remarks**  
**Thomas Volk**  
Director, Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
- 18:05 – 18:10 **Moderator**  
**Karim Hauser Askalani**  
Head of International Relations, Casa Árabe
- 18:10 – 18:40 **Expert Discussion**
- Rym Ayadi**  
Founder and President, Euro-Mediterranean Economists Association (EMEA)
- Samer Al-Atrush**  
Independent Journalist
- Sami Nader**  
Director, Levant Institute for Strategic Affairs
- 18:40 – 19:15 **Open Discussion and Q&A**

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*No registration needed – the event will be livestreamed via YouTube and via Facebook*

**Organization:** Regional Program Political Dialogue South Mediterranean  
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