

The European Union has granted Rwanda €95 million (about Rwf 160 billion) to support the BioNTech mRNA vaccine manufacturing plant in Kigali, in a move expected to strengthen Africa's efforts toward vaccine independence and medical innovation.

The funding announcement followed a meeting between President Paul Kagame and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on October 9, 2025, during the Global Gateway Forum in Brussels, Belgium. The forum brought together heads of state, investors and development partners to promote fair and sustainable global partnerships.

According to the Office of the President, the new grant will help Rwanda accelerate vaccine and medical equipment production. Of the total amount, €40 million (about Rwf 70 billion) will go directly to Rwanda to boost vaccine manufacturing capacity, while €55 million will support broader regional programs under the Team Europe Initiative.

In his address at the Global Gateway Forum, President Kagame said Africa's partnerships with global actors should move beyond traditional aid and instead focus on shared progress. He emphasized that genuine cooperation must be based on equality and mutual benefit rather than dependency. Kagame cited the partnership between Rwanda and the EU on the BioNTech project as an example of a practical and balanced model of development cooperation.

The BioNTech mRNA facility in Kigali, inaugurated in 2023, represents a milestone in Africa's pursuit of pharmaceutical self-sufficiency. Built with support from Team Europe, the factory will produce vaccines for various infectious diseases, including those preventable through mRNA technology, and help the continent respond faster to future pandemics.

During the Brussels meeting, Kagame and von der Leyen were joined by European Investment Bank President Nadia Calviño and BioNTech CEO Uğur Şahin. Together they confirmed the financial package aimed at expanding the Kigali plant's operations and strengthening Africa's health systems.

Von der Leyen later said on her X (formerly Twitter) account that the EU is committed to supporting Rwanda's goal of becoming a continental hub for vaccine production and biomedical innovation. She also praised peace efforts between Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of Congo, backed by the United States, saying

the EU is ready to support initiatives that promote stability and investment in the Great Lakes region.

The new grant builds on previous EU assistance, including a €20 million contribution in 2022 to support Rwandan peacekeeping operations in Mozambique. The partnership reflects the EU's growing confidence in Rwanda as a reliable ally in advancing Africa's transformation and sustainable development.