

Letter of 29 January 2018 from the Minister for Medical Care and Sport to the House of Representatives on the relocation of the European Medicines Agency

My letter of 22 November 2017 informed the House that the government is pleased that the European Medicines Agency (EMA) is relocating to the Netherlands. Preparations for its arrival began on 20 November. The present letter outlines the progress made so far, the steps that have already been taken and the plans for the near future.

Immediately after the decision was taken on 20 November 2017, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport set up a project organisation to ensure the relocation is completed smoothly and to coordinate and support the implementation of the undertakings the Netherlands gave in the bid book. One of the first actions was to conclude a Memorandum of Understanding with the EMA before the Christmas recess.

In the Memorandum of Understanding agreements were made with EMA on a common governance structure and on the most urgent issues that need to be addressed in the coming months. The governance structure includes a steering group at senior civil service level, and a task force made up of representatives of the EMA, the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport and other parties with a direct interest, such as the Central Government Real Estate Agency, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and, of course, the Municipality of Amsterdam. Good cooperation and coordination with all these parties is vital for the success of this special project.

Temporary accommodation

At the heart of the Dutch bid book was an undertaking to safeguard the continuity of the EMA's operations. The bid book offered a new, custom-designed head office in Amsterdam Zuidas. Between the ultimate date agreed for the move from London and the completion of the new building in Amsterdam Zuidas, temporary accommodation will be provided in the Spark building near Amsterdam Sloterdijk, to ensure the EMA's business continuity. The Spark building will provide workstations for the EMA's staff, and conference facilities so that the EMA can host its most important meetings in-house. On some occasions more facilities may be required, so it has been arranged in consultation with the EMA that additional conference capacity can be rented in nearby hotels and conference centres when necessary. The lease for this building was signed on 29 January.¹ The measures necessary to ensure the EMA's continuity in the temporary accommodation have been agreed in consultation with the EMA. The temporary accommodation will be ready for use on 1 January 2019.

New head office

The contracting authority responsible for the custom design and construction of the EMA's head office is the Central Government Real Estate Agency. This agency is currently preparing the European award procedure for the construction. The final award is scheduled for the end of March. Construction will then begin as soon as possible. Completion of the entire building is scheduled for November 2019.

Relocation of employees

A key feature of the Netherlands' bid book was the good personal assistance that will be provided to help the EMA's staff find homes and schools and deal with all the administrative procedures that moving to another country entails. The bid book listed a number of actions that would be taken in 2017 and early 2018: 1) the establishment of an information desk at the EMA, 2) personal assistance for all employees and their families, 3) access to schools, and 4) monthly information sessions.

The Municipality of Amsterdam is responsible for assisting the employees during their move, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. It recently launched a support programme to help the employees relocate. A help desk was set up in the EMA's building in London on 4 December 2017. It provides the employees with

¹ The lease takes effect on 1 January 2019.

information on general practical issues such as the education system, the availability of schools and housing, journey times and day-to-day life in the Netherlands. The help desk has been consulted frequently since it opened and its personal assistance is greatly appreciated within the EMA.

EMA employees and their families will probably begin receiving individual assistance in mid-February. A public award procedure has been initiated for this assistance and a decision is expected in February. The Municipality of Amsterdam will receive €2,500,000 from the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport to help defray the cost. The first families are expected to move to the Netherlands in the second half of 2018.

Headquarters agreement

The Dutch government undertook in the bid book to draft a headquarters agreement with the EMA containing privilege and immunity agreements comparable to those enjoyed by the other European agencies located in the Netherlands. The headquarters agreement is currently being drafted and the aim is to finalise it before the summer, as it will affect the choices the EMA's employees make when moving to the Netherlands.