

Letter to the Dutch House of Representatives on the progress of the relocation of the European Medicines Agency (EMA)

9 January

Today I am ceremoniously handing over the temporary home of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) to its new occupants. I am proud of the efforts that all parties, private and public, have put in to complete the temporary building on time, and I am pleased to update the House on the latest state of affairs regarding EMA's move to the Netherlands.

The premises

On 1 January last, the Netherlands delivered a fully functional, fully furnished temporary home for EMA. This was entirely in line with the schedule promised in the bid book. This temporary accommodation has recently been refitted to meet EMA's needs. The Spark building has 850 working spaces and an extensive conference centre. As of today, EMA can start using the premises: the building is ready. EMA can now move to this temporary accommodation in phases. The largest part of the move will take place in the weeks before 31 March, when the doors of EMA's current headquarters in London will close permanently. EMA itself will see to the move from London to the Spark Building.

The new, permanent headquarters will be delivered on 15 November 2019. The highest point of the core of the building was reached on 18 September. The application of the steel construction around this core started in November 2018, and between March and August of this year the façades of the building will be closed. The building is thus on track to be delivered on schedule. The Netherlands will also be organising the move from the temporary to the permanent accommodation. As agreed, EMA will receive full support from the Dutch government during the move, so that it can continue its activities with as few hindrances as possible.

Relocation of EMA staff

As part of the move, EMA staff will receive individual support, so that they and their families can get off to a good start in the Netherlands. It is important that as many people as possible make the move with EMA so as to ensure the continuity of its activities. That way, the Netherlands will be helping ensure that EMA can continue its work unhindered and can act quickly if there are problems with a medicine. New and innovative medicines must be assessed as efficiently as possible for safety, efficacy and quality, so that they can enter the European market with the least possible delay.

According to EMA, as at today, 24 percent of employees have indicated that they will not be making the move along with the organisation. A large part of this group consists of employees with short-term contracts, for example through a temporary employment agency, and trainees. In view of the move, these contracts will not be extended. That said, EMA has already received 5,000 open applications from all across Europe. With EMA's move to the Netherlands, it is also embarking on the intensive recruitment of staff. It sees this as an opportunity to attract expertise in new areas. EMA Executive Director Guido Rasi briefed the European Parliament in October, and said he had great confidence in how the relocation of staff from the United Kingdom to the Netherlands would pass off.

Opportunities created by EMA's move

EMA's move to Amsterdam offers the Netherlands a unique opportunity to strengthen the Dutch Life Sciences & Health (LSH) ecosystem over the short, medium and longer term. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and the Climate has carried out a study of these social and economic opportunities. The study confirms the view that the establishment of the agency in the Netherlands will have a positive impact on the Dutch LSH ecosystem and that this will in turn create added social and economic value. The House will soon be informed about the activities that the Ministry will be carrying out in close

cooperation with LSH (one of the 'top sectors' designated by the Ministry based on its ability to contribute substantially to global societal challenges) and with relevant stakeholders in the context of EMA's move. I will be following these developments with interest.

Concluding remarks

I am pleased to attach the first report, which will also be sent today to the European Council, the European Commission and the European Parliament. On 25 October 2018, an agreement was reached between the European Parliament and the Council on the amendment to the Regulation, whereby Amsterdam has become the EMA's new home. One of the provisions that was included in this legislative amendment concerns the obligation of the Netherlands to report every three months on the progress made in refitting EMA's temporary accommodation and on the construction of the new headquarters. The next reports are slated for April, July and October, and will cover the new building only, because the temporary building is already finished.

Aside from the report, interested parties can also visit www.relocatema.nl to keep up with all developments related to EMA's move. In addition, a variety of activities will be organised to keep interested parties up to date. In this connection, today all ambassadors of the EU countries to the Netherlands have been invited to Amsterdam to visit the temporary building at Amsterdam Sloterdijk and the construction site for the new headquarters in Amsterdam Zuidas.