

Dutch bid to be new home for EU medicine agency

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The Netherlands on Thursday made a formal bid to become the new home of the European Medicines Agency which will likely have to relocate from London after Britain leaves the EU.

"It is my pleasure to inform you of the Netherlands' candidacy to host the European Medicines Agency (EMA) in Amsterdam," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said in a letter to EU president Donald Tusk.

The agency and its 900 staff of pharmacists, biologists and doctors are tasked with researching and evaluating all [new medicines](#) to see if they are ready to be rolled out across the bloc.

Amsterdam has "outstanding international travel connections and excellent working and living conditions," Rutte said, adding it "meets all the requirements of the agency and its staff".

European Union agencies like the EMA are meant to be located within the bloc, causing uncertainty for the agency currently based in London's Canary Wharf business district.

Several European cities are thought to be in the running to provide a new home for the EMA, including reportedly Dublin, Barcelona and Copenhagen.

"The Netherlands will do everything in its power to facilitate a smooth and efficient transition from the UK to our country, in order to ensure

full operational continuity both for the agency and the large number of scientific experts involved," Rutte vowed.

He said "uncertainty about the move" was already affecting the agency's work and staff and he urged the European Council to "decide on the EMA's new location as swiftly as possible".

European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said Wednesday the "real political" negotiations on Brexit will start after Britain's snap June 8 elections.

He told reporters that both the EMA and the European Banking Authority "must be based in the territory of the European Union" once Brexit is complete.

The British government will have "no say" on the issue because it is not part of the Brexit negotiations, but "will have to ease the burden of relocating" staff to EU cities, he added.

Rutte also took to Twitter to press his country's case saying on his official account: "I firmly believe that NL is best equipped to provide all conditions necessary to enable #EMA to perform its work as effectively as possible."

Since its creation in 1995, the agency has approved 1,100 medicines, including 82 last year.

Of those which gained approval in 2016, 17 were for treating cancer, 14 for infections, and nine for heart disease.

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