

# UK announces pharma investment, aims to boost productivity

November 27 2017, by Jill Lawless

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This Thursday, Dec. 18, 2014, file photograph, shows a sign at the Merck company facilities in Kenilworth, New Jersey. Britain said Monday Nov. 27, 2017, that two major drugs companies plan new research facilities that will bring 1,750 jobs to Britain, part of plans to boost the country's sagging productivity after Brexit. U.S. drug-maker Merck, known internationally as MSD, will open a research hub in London, creating 950 jobs, and German life sciences firm Qiagen is planning a genomics and diagnostics campus in Manchester, northwest England, creating as many as 800 skilled jobs. (AP Photo/Mel Evans, File)

Two major drugs companies will set up new research facilities in Britain that will bring 1,750 jobs, the government said Monday as it unveiled plans to boost the country's sagging productivity after Brexit.

U.S. drug-maker Merck, known internationally as MSD, will open a research hub in London, creating 950 [jobs](#), the government said. The company said it was aiming for a 2020 opening date for the site, which will be home to 150 [research scientists](#) and 800 other staff.

The government also said German life sciences firm Qiagen was planning a genomics and diagnostics campus in Manchester, northwest England, creating as many as 800 skilled jobs.

The announcements were much-needed economic good news for Britain's Conservative government. The U.K.'s budget watchdog has sharply downgraded growth forecasts for the coming years amid uncertainty over the economic impact of Britain's exit from the European Union.

Many scientists fear Brexit will harm Britain's technology and science sectors by hindering access to European funding, markets and scientists.

Last week, the EU announced that the European Medicines Agency will move from London to Amsterdam after the U.K. quits the bloc in 2019, taking 900 jobs with it, in what some economists say is a taste of a Brexit brain drain to come.



This is a Nov. 28 2013 file photo of the MSD facility in Swords, Ireland. Britain said Monday Nov. 27, 2017 that two major drugs companies plan new research facilities that will bring 1,750 jobs to Britain, part of plans to boost the country's sagging productivity after Brexit. U.S. drug-maker Merck, known internationally as MSD, will open a research hub in London, creating 950 jobs, and German life sciences firm Qiagen is planning a genomics and diagnostics campus in Manchester, northwest England, creating as many as 800 skilled jobs. ( Brian Lawless/PA, File via AP)

The government fought back Monday by announcing details of a new industrial strategy. It aims to boost Britain's productivity, which lags behind other major European economies such as Germany and France.

"Britain's productivity performance has not been good enough, and is holding back our earning power as a country," Business Secretary Greg Clark said.

The [government](#) said it will invest 725 million pounds (\$968 million) in

areas including artificial intelligence, driverless cars and the [life sciences](#) , "with the aim of making the U.K. the world's most innovative nation by 2030."

That comes on top of a previously announced 1 billion pounds in spending on innovative industrial projects.

Britain aims to increase spending on research and development from the current 1.7 percent to 2.4 percent of GDP within a decade.

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