

US firm Advent to buy Sanofi's generics unit

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Sanofi first announced its intention to sell Zentiva in 2015

US private equity firm Advent International has agreed to acquire Zentiva, French pharmaceutical giant Sanofi's European generics arm, for 1.9 billion euros (\$2.4 billion), a statement said Tuesday.

"Advent's offer is firm, binding and fully financed," the statement from Advent and Sanofi said, adding that "the transaction is expected to close by the end of 2018".

The deal, which is still subject to regulatory approval, is one of a string of mega-mergers and acquisitions in the global pharmaceuticals sector in recent months.

Sanofi CEO Olivier Brandicourt first announced an intention to sell Zentiva in November 2015, shortly after taking the reins of the French company.

"Following a comprehensive review of strategic options for our generics unit in Europe, we have determined that transferring this business to Advent is the best option to ensure its long-term success," Brandicourt said in Tuesday's statement.

Advent said it aims to build Zentiva into a "new, independent, European generics leader".

According to Bloomberg News, should the sale go through, it would "add to the more than \$15 billion in transactions that Sanofi has announced so far this year".

Sanofi took over Zentiva, which is based in Prague, in 2009.

According to its website, Zentiva traces its roots back to the 15th century Black Eagle pharmacy, one of the oldest in the Czech Republic.

Shares in Sanofi slid 0.3 percent while the Paris market was up 0.3 percent overall.

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