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European Medicines Agency to move to Amsterdam

The European Union's drug regulatory body will leave London because of the United Kingdom's Brexit plans.

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A man crosses a canal in Amsterdam.

After more than a year of uncertainty, the new home of the European Medicines Agency (EMA) is finally clear. The European Union member states chose Amsterdam from among 19 candidates, after a secret ballot on 20 November.

The transition is expected to be relatively smooth because more than 80% of staff indicated in a survey earlier this year that they would be prepared to relocate to Amsterdam with the agency.

Slovakian capital Bratislava had also been a hot favourite among commentators, most particularly because Slovakia does not yet host any EU agency. However, only 14% of the staff said they would be prepared to go there. In an interview with *Nature* last month, EMA executive director Guido Rasi said that a catastrophic loss of staff on such a scale might have crippled the agency.

The EMA, with its 900 or so employees, is responsible for determining the safety and efficacy of therapies and licensing them for marketing in the EU. It also monitors adverse reactions to marketed treatments. And it has been fundamental to the development of harmonized EU-wide regulations on 'advanced therapies' for serious diseases such as cancer — including treatments involving biological molecules, stem cells or cells that have been genetically manipulated.

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In an analysis of the various bids in September, the EMA said that any transfer could result in delays to the approval of new medicines and a slowing down of some public-health initiatives such as those to tackle antimicrobial resistance. But full recovery could be expected in two to three years, it said.

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