EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

Ms Femke Halsema
Mayor of Amsterdam
Postbus 202
1000 AE Amsterdam
The Netherlands

10 March 2023
EMA/104648/2023
European Medicines Agency

Dear Ms Mayor,

Subject: Meeting to discuss proposals for a new Erotic Centre in Amsterdam

Thank you for agreeing to a meeting to discuss the European Medicines Agency's concerns about the potential impact of the City of Amsterdam's plans to create an Erotic Centre outside of the current location in the city centre.

As you are no doubt aware, we have been reaching out to our contact points in your administration since 17th February as soon as we learnt through media reports about these plans. We formally requested an urgent response already on 23rd February.

We also contacted the Ambassador to International Organisations and the Deputy Secretary General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, requesting urgent feedback and additional information on the same date. So far, we have not received any additional information.

I was disappointed that I and my staff had to learn through the media that two out of three proposed locations for the centre were in the immediate vicinity of the European Medicines Agency, especially since we had hosted a face-to-face meeting with representatives of your administration on 14th February.

The 'inpassingsverzoek' document that were annexed to the decision of shortlisting, clearly show the proximity of two of the proposed locations to our offices, and of course to the RAI Metro station which is the nearest public transport point to our offices (3-minute walk) and two of the proposed locations. Both locations are also within sight of our offices.

Let me stress that I applaud any efforts to improve the working conditions of the sex workers in Amsterdam and provide them with a safer workplace. EMA does not intend to express any view on the proposal to move the red-light district per se.

However, given that the proposal is based on various considerations, including the need to reduce overcrowding, nuisance, drug-dealing, drunkenness, and disorderly behaviour in the De Wallen area – these are the words used in the inpassingsverzoek document – I believe that the concerns that

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triggered the plans of the municipality have the potential to have the same negative consequences in any alternative area.

EMA is a relatively new international organisation in Amsterdam, hosting 900 international staff and thousands of international delegates, many of whom have already expressed concerns to us about the potential impact of these proposals on our work. Many of my staff have chosen to live in this area, due to its proximity to our offices and even more use the RAI station for their daily commute.

EMA's work is essential for the protection of public health in the EU, ensuring the safety, quality and efficacy of new medicines and vaccines for the EU market. The nature of our work means that both staff and international delegates often work late in the evening, while the majority of our delegates are staying in nearby hotels.

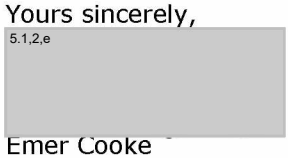
You will appreciate that I have a responsibility and duty of care to my staff and my experts who could potentially be greatly impacted by these proposals. As such, I come in good faith to express my concern about locating the Erotic Centre so close to EMA's building. Our concerns are that such a decision is likely to bring to our surrounding environment the same negative impacts affecting the current location.

I would also like to remind you that the Dutch government was successful – out of 18 other countries - in its bid to host the Agency following its move from the UK due to Brexit and we greatly appreciate the efforts of the Dutch government and the City of Amsterdam to provide an appropriate environment for our important work.

You will also recall that this was a highly competitive process, with many essential requirements to be met by the host government including the need to ensure the duty of care for staff and visiting experts and security of our working environment. Furthermore, the Seat Agreement signed by EMA and the Dutch government clearly states that it is the duty of the host State to ensure the security and tranquillity of the premises and to avoid disturbances in the immediate vicinity.

I trust that you understand the concerns that I am hearing from staff and delegates alike and I look forward to our meeting to learn more about the plans of the municipality and to discuss these concerns.

Yours sincerely,



Emer Cooke
Executive Director