

Interview: Kalin Tochev - Country Manager IMS Health at QuintilesIMS Bulgaria



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Kalin Tochev, country manager of IQVIA Bulgaria, discusses the main trends taking place in the Bulgarian pharmaceutical sector and highlights the end-to-end approach that IQVIA offers to its clients to help them successfully navigate a dynamic environment.

Mr. Tochev, you have a quite unusual profile coming from different industries such as coffee trading. What factors triggered you to accept this new challenge in the healthcare world?

In the last 10 years, the consumer goods industry went through a big transformation driven by the adoption of new technologies that helped to better understand consumers' behaviour, improve marketing communications and increase the effectiveness of salesforce. This experience helps as the pharma industry is following similar trends due to the adoption of technologies in areas like multichannel communication with doctors, understanding patient behaviour in treatment compliance and usage of Big Data for taking better decisions for future actions.

The merger of Quintiles and IMS Health was made definitive in May 2016. What is the legacy of each one in Bulgaria and how has it affected to the current positioning of the combined company?

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Even though the merger was completed earlier, the integration was implemented more recently on a local level. I have to say that this operation has created a real sense of belonging to a big team. On top of that, the merger has also given a broader career prospective and opportunities to our teams in terms of the possibilities of development in fields that did not exist in the separate organizations. Our clients are also excited to learn about our increased capabilities to offer end-to-end solutions from molecule to market and the launch of Next Generation clinical trials, which are run faster, based on the data about patients.

In terms of leadership, our company is the number one global player and we have the leading position in Bulgaria too. Since Nov 6th 2017, we are now known as IQVIA.

You were recently appointed as country manager back in March 2017. What are your key areas of focus to continue driving the success of the company?

One of our main objectives as a service company is to deliver accurate data to our clients faster than before and, as country manager, it is my duty to ensure successful implementation of all the initiatives in place that target this ambition – adding new sources of information, automating the processes and shortening the time to deliver the data to clients. The key areas in focus are new data sources, improved technologies supporting sales and marketing processes of our clients, market research and advisory.

What is the role of the Bulgarian affiliate within the regional operations of IQVIA?

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Thanks to the easy access to talented people and the current attractive economic situation, IQVIA has developed a strong global hub that serves the company, made up of more than 400 professionals. On top of that, an additional 100 employees are involved in the local research and commercial operations. These numbers position Bulgaria as one of our big offices in Eastern Europe and shows our commitment to the country.

In regards to the specificity of the Bulgarian landscape, the core challenge lies in the unpredictability of the market, thus increasing companies' need to turn to reliable sources of market intelligence. How are you reacting to this need?

IQVIA offers an end-to-end solution with all the capabilities needed to accompany its clients in this front. The insights requested are all those needed to understand the environment and predict the next steps – this specific information may vary according to the clients' positioning but, regardless of the strategic direction, IQVIA is able to provide the right data at the right time. We are capable of

providing our clients worldwide with clinical and real-world experience informed by deep scientific expertise across every major therapy area combined with leading healthcare Big Data and technologies fuelled by local commercial expertise to find unparalleled insights.

How are you innovating in your operations in order to continue enhancing your services' outcomes?

We are a service and an IT company so both sides are strongly reflected in our daily and strategic motto. We are, therefore, continuously innovating in what we deliver and how we deliver. We are investing in improvement of the technology solutions that we offer to clients, so that we can offer more products and services. For example, we have developed a new BI solution that helps our clients in Bulgaria to visualize data and save time and effort and we are also planning to launch a new CRM system to increase the frequency of the delivery of some products - from monthly to weekly.

The pharmaceutical arena has been one of the fastest growing sectors in the country - steady growth rates of 7-10 percent on annual basis during the last decade and it is expected to continue maintaining this performance. What are your conclusions on that?

We expect that such growth will continue in the future based on a growing GDP and an increasing allocation of funds on healthcare expenses. Additionally, innovative medicines are the best way to target chronic diseases and we expect some new therapies to be available in Bulgarian market in the future.

What is the footprint of IQVIA in the CRO arena?

We are positioned within the top players in the market with a team of more than 100 experts that are managing local clinical research operations. Additionally, we have a global clinical research function of more than 400 experts that collaborates in different processes throughout the clinical research service. This global clinical research function has been a great investment of the company.

How are you collaborating with the industry stakeholders to continue developing the CRO arena in the country?

IQVIA is an active member of the Bulgarian Association of Clinical Research (BACR) and, over recent years, the association together with the local authorities has significantly improved the regulatory environment, in turn enhancing the capability of the country to attract new clinical research projects. It is worth stressing that there is a deficit of Real World Insights (RWI) in

Bulgaria. On this front, IQVIA is actively working on collecting epidemiological data that will enable both private companies and government health authorities to better predict the future trends and, subsequently, determine the best actions.

It is important to show to the government the economic relevance of clinical research since it represents one of the main areas of investment of pharmaceutical companies. In 2015, pharmaceutical companies invested USD 250 million in developing R&D activities in Bulgaria. Our predictions on this front are that clinical research will continue growing at a high single digit rate in the upcoming years.

Concretely, eHealth is one of Health Management Program's top priorities for 2020. Nevertheless, its implementation is more than questioned. Considering IQVIA's expertise in this front, how are you helping the government to succeed in this regard?

Bulgaria currently is not well placed in the digitalization of its system but, at least, the commitment of the government in this front is quite clear – Obviously, it is not an easy journey and it requires strong investments. We have examples such as Hungary, which in quite a short period completed its digitalization that can be used as a benchmark of the process in Eastern Europe. I believe that global healthcare IT firms such as QuintilesIMS can certainly contribute in in this front being positioned as a partner for the government.

How does IQVIA differentiate itself from its competitors?

As the regulatory and competitive environment in Bulgaria is becoming more and more complex, pharmaceutical companies need to undertake fact-based decisions in a faster and more accurate way. Hence, it is in this context where IQVIA can offer a unique solution since it has the information, technology and consulting capabilities to help its current as well as potential clients to understand and predict the trends in the industry enabling them to take proactive steps to improve their efficiency, grow the business or defend their positions against competition. Thanks to the integrations between Quintiles and IMS Health, we are capable of offering end-to-end solutions to help our customers to achieve their goals through improved predictability, efficiency, and safety, in a compliant way.

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