Funda Gücer – Country Manager, Mylan Turkey



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04.01.2019

Tags: Turkey, Generics, Mylan, M&A, Strategy

Funda Gücer, country manager at Mylan Turkey, portrays her experience in introducing the company to the Turkish market. She provides her expert insights into current trends in the Turkish generics market and reinforces her company's commitment to providing quality, affordable treatments.

Can you begin by introducing Mylan's Turkish affiliate to our global audience, highlighting its growth and its importance in the company's global operations?

Mylan is a global pharmaceutical company committed to setting new standards in healthcare. We provide more than 7500 products in 165 countries and territories around the world, including Turkey.

Together with many other members of this "family", I have, since 2008, had the honour of leading a great team, working together, and building a strong organization from scratch in Turkey. We have transformed a small organization to the one we see today with more than 150 employees. We are part of Mylan's Rest of World segment where we have grown twenty-fold in less than a decade, with sustainable double-digit organic and value-added non-organic growth. Mylan Turkey took its present form in August of 2016 via the acquisition of Meda, which had been operating in Turkey since 2007.

By keeping our global mission in mind, to provide medicine to 7 billion people in the world, we strive to deliver a wide product portfolio across segments, optimizing a broad range of manufacturing capabilities worldwide and launching complex products like biosimilars, especially for the treatment of chronic diseases.

You were the Country Manager of Meda at the time of the merger. How was your experience in navigating the transformation?

It was an agreeable journey for me – while it was challenging, it was a pleasure for my team and me to adopt the “Mylan mindset.” My team’s excellent communication skills ensured that we understood and represented our new brand well in our country. We have had a seamless integration process, and now as Mylan Turkey, we are proud to increase access to affordable treatment for Turkish patients with our current portfolio and products in the pipeline.

Throughout the transition, we have even been able to enlarge our team. In so doing, we were able to help the Mylan affiliate gain a strong footing in the Turkish market, as we have a wealth of experience navigating the domestic market. We also brought our courage and dynamism with us into the next chapter.

Turkey is a fast-paced environment that is not easily navigable. The team spirit and ability to adapt have definitely been the drivers of our success.

Given that you head a top-15 pharma company in Turkey, what are some of the trends and dynamics that you see shaping the broader Turkish pharma industry?

As a country, Turkey is at the meeting point between the three continents that made up the old world: Asia, Africa and Europe. Turkey has always carried value for global companies thanks to this geographic position, and the young and active 80 million population, and its dynamic pharmaceutical market.

The Turkish pharma market is one of the biggest and one of the fastest growing within the emerging pharma markets; it comprises around USD 5.0Bn with its retail sales; around 95 percent of which is reimbursed.

The prioritization of local production, the presence of biosimilars and the vision of Turkey as one of the greatest R&D based countries are part of its “2023 plan” – the 100^{th} anniversary of the

Republic. The Turkish Government aims to make Turkey one of the world's top ten economies in healthcare services by 2023. The forecast states that the demand for generics will expand rapidly given the government's focus on sustainable pharmaceutical expenditure in the country.

Biosimilars and complex generics are critically important for our patients in their challenge against serious diseases in particular, and as a significant player in that field, we want to take these opportunities to foster competition and facilitate patient access to Mylan's pipeline.

After the Health Transformation Program (HTP) in Turkey, there is nearly universal coverage – nonetheless, the country has not increased its health expenditure in terms of GDP. That established, how can companies like Mylan provide budgetary relief to Turkey?

By keeping our global mission in the core, that includes providing medicine to 7 billion people in the world, we strive for delivering a wide product portfolio across segments; optimizing a broad range of manufacturing capabilities worldwide and launching complex products like biosimilars especially for the treatment of chronic diseases. Even today, with approx. 15 million boxes of unit sales in total per year; Mylan Turkey is a driver of volume on our global mission to increase the access to high-quality medicines.

We have a great relationship with the Turkish authorities, and they understand that we want to help them increase quality healthcare access in a cost-efficient manner.

When we met with other stakeholders, they told us that Turkey provides challenges in distribution, as there are no pharmacy chains (thus creating over 25,000 SMEs to sell to). How has Mylan adapted to this challenge?

It is all about concentration and efficiency. Mylan has decided to specialize in a group of key therapeutic areas, and in so doing, we do "more with less." Today, we are operating in pain and inflammation, respiratory and allergy & dermatology.

It is true that it is completely different selling in Turkey than in Europe. From a managerial perspective, it is essential to have a strong relationship with distributors and wholesalers. We have a great standing in the pharmaceutical value chain and we are able to avoid problems in this area.

In Turkey, 67 percent of the population is in between the ages of 15 and 64. As this large portion of the population gradually ages, how is Mylan preparing for the concomitant epidemiological shift?

Turkey has one of the youngest populations in Europe with a total life expectancy of 75 years of age. Like all over the world – increasing industrialization, tobacco use, physical inactivity, and unhealthy diets deepen the burden for chronic diseases. Mylan Turkey, with a large range of products, is a strong partner in pain management, dermatology, respiratory, cardiovascular & metabolic diseases.

Mylan's portfolio is large and comprehensive – as a global company, we are prepared for this shift and we will be there to offer the needed treatments for the ageing population in Turkey.

Since the merger, what do you consider to be your biggest achievements?

I think that Turkey is one of the world's most unique countries. That established, I consider the biggest accomplishment to be ushering Mylan into the country without a hitch. This country is not easy to understand from a legislative and economic perspective. Our primary initiative remains focused around growing our portfolio to provide better health and increase access to high-quality medicine in Turkey. Since the end of 2016, with the integration process, we have strengthened our team by adding new talented members to our team from different areas of expertise.

We have also collaborated with our stakeholders and started the process of adding new products to the Turkish market. We continue to build on our proven ability to develop and commercialize difficult-to-manufacture products for patients, including biosimilars. We do believe that this area is set to develop in Turkey.

In parallel, it is important for us to continue to strengthen our core business in Turkey, the prescription (Rx) portfolio. The trust and loyalty we have gained during the last 10 years from our key stakeholders are extremely valuable for us.

I also am proud of Mylan's country ethics – at Mylan, we do not do what is easy, but what is right. Our Meda team operated under a similar set of principles, and it has been a pleasure to continue adhering to our values under a new brand.

When we return in 2023, where will we find you and Mylan Turkey?

We are committed to delivering better health for a better world. With this passion, we focus on driving higher access to medicines in pain management, dermatology, allergy, cardiovascular and metabolic diseases. We will continue to be a strong partner to the healthcare providers in Turkey and add new affordable products and move into new therapeutic areas in the years to come. This will add value to the people in Turkey and at the same time bring long-term opportunities for Mylan. Our experienced and dedicated team puts their daily efforts into turning this commitment into reality.

What is your final message on behalf of Mylan Turkey?

I have no doubts that Mylan Turkey will continue its strong journey and will turn our mission into reality through Team Mylan Turkey’s committed efforts. I am proud to serve Mylan’s mission to increase access to high-quality medicine in Turkey and be a strong partner to the healthcare community here.

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