

Emmanuelle Boishardy - General Manager, GSK Czech Republic



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Emmanuelle Boishardy joined GSK in France 20 years ago. In 2017, she embarked on her first assignment as General Manager - in the Czech affiliate. She recounts how she adapted to her new position in a foreign country and turned the affiliate around by overhauling compliance processes and successful launches in respiratory, vaccines and HIV, while making the Czech Republic one the highest-ranked affiliates in terms of employee engagement. Emmanuelle also shares her dedication to changing the mindsets of key stakeholders by showing the value of GSK's innovation.

Emmanuelle, you became general manager of GSK Czech Republic almost three years ago now, in January 2017. Tasked with overseeing the efficient implementation of the company's European strategy and improving the overall performance of the CE cluster, what have been the main milestones in this endeavor?

Since this is my very first experience as general manager of an affiliate, everything was new for me: new role, new country, new language, and new culture. So, when I arrived in the Czech

Republic, my first objective was to get acquainted with the local organization, its people and culture. As a newcomer, it was a challenge at first to determine my leadership style and build trust with the team. I asked myself if I should adapt my leadership style to the local culture. In the French culture, people put their trust in others first, then adjust if need be. In the Czech Republic, on the contrary, trust must be built. It takes time to reach a level of complete trust and be able to have open conversations with people. In the end, I decided to keep my French managerial style, and it worked well.

The second objective was to put compliance issues on the table, instead of brushing them under the carpet, and make sure that the Czech affiliate was on board when it came to compliance and ethics, in line with group standards. We reviewed our compliance processes, simplified them, and adopted a culture of accountability for mistakes. During the first year, six audits, both internal and external, were performed. It also served as an opportunity for me to deeply immerse myself in these processes.

In addition to familiarizing myself with the local organization, I dedicated myself to understanding the healthcare system in the Czech Republic and forming relationships with key stakeholders. However, in 2017, the Czech Republic held elections, which led to the introduction of many new faces, not only the Minister of Health, but also health insurance funds, so I had to start from scratch. This presented an amazing opportunity to change the tone and quality of the discussions, build trust, and find mutually beneficial solutions. As a result, we were able to smoothen market access for our last product, which only took ten months after EMA approval to gain full reimbursement in the country.

With your HQ in the UK and a growing presence in the US, how would you assess the importance of the Czech affiliate for the group?

One of my objectives was to make the Czech Republic a trusted affiliate for our HQ in London in terms of compliance and performance, and to make sure that new launches were a success thanks to perfect implementation of the strategy and brilliant execution. I think we succeeded in these objectives.

We have regained trust from London, and as a result, the Czech Republic is now considered a growth market, unlocking more resources and more products, especially in oncology, to support our development plans.

About oncology, although the company has long been associated with its portfolio of respiratory products, due to generic competition and pricing pressure in the respiratory field, GSK seems to be refocusing its efforts on growth areas such as oncology and immunology, exemplified by the acquisition of TESARO last year, and is gearing up for three cancer launches in 2020. How are you transitioning the local affiliate to support this strategy?

Since TESARO was not present in the Czech Republic, the country was not part of the first wave of integration of TESARO's products and people. However, before this summer, the Czech Republic was included in the expansion market. TESARO's innovative cancer treatment is registered but not reimbursed, and thus not promoted at all. The product exists in the Czech Republic and we are working hard to unlock access for the benefit of the patients.

New HIV cases in the Czech Republic have increased by 128 per cent over the past eight years. Health authorities seem intent on combatting the issue. On November 25, Czechs had the opportunity to be tested for HIV anonymously for free as part of the European HIV Testing Week, an event attended by the Minister of Health Adam Vojtěch. How does GSK contribute to improving HIV diagnosis and treatment in the country?

In the Czech Republic, GSK has full responsibility over the HIV portfolio, and not ViiV Healthcare, the joint venture between GSK and Pfizer. We are completely aligned with the 90-90-90 target of the World Health Organization (WHO) to help end the AIDS epidemic by contributing to better screening, diagnosis, and treatment. In these endeavors, we partner with patient groups and the LGBT community, for instance by supporting the Prague Pride in August.

Regarding treatment, we launched a new innovative type, replacing the previous three-drug combination antiretroviral therapy. This new approach simplifies treatment and makes it more convenient for patients.

As part of World AIDS Day on 21 - 22 November, GSK sponsored a symposium in Pilsen. How does this highlight the importance of the Czech Republic when it comes to advancing AIDS research and treatment?

The Czech Republic plays an important role in HIV/AIDS research and treatment. Czech experts are among the top in the field of HIV, and, in the Czech Republic, HIV positive patients have a life quality and expectancy comparable to the healthy population.

I am extremely proud of the event we organized in Pilsen, where we managed to bring a panel of seven international experts, a rare feat in the Czech Republic, and to discuss current issues and the latest findings on HIV treatment. The timing was perfect as the symposium followed on from the European AIDS Clinical Society (EACS), Europe's largest event for over 3,000 HIV experts from around the world, in Basel, Switzerland.

How has the vaccination portfolio been performing in the Czech Republic?

GSK is a global leader in vaccines, and the franchise is growing rapidly. Locally, we have more than 15 vaccines available, and the franchise is performing well.

Within the franchise, our key priority is our meningitis B vaccine. Even though the vaccine is neither mandatory nor reimbursed, we worked with both the Health Care Professionals (HCP) and the parents in order to raise awareness of the severity and danger of meningitis B. In the Czech Republic, it is possible to have branded awareness campaigns. For the first time, we launched a successful disease awareness campaign using digital channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and bloggers, as well as TV in September. In just one year, we more than doubled the level of disease awareness. While there is still a lot of room for improvement, the results are there. We will continue these efforts next year. Thanks to increased awareness, all pediatricians were able to vaccinate children. Vaccination is crucial especially since, unfortunately, two children died of meningitis B this year in the Czech Republic. In addition, there were more than ten cases reported, with debilitating consequences for the children who contracted the disease.

The aim of the campaign is not only to raise disease awareness, but also to educate about the importance of vaccinations and drive the right conversation between parents and physicians. As an anecdote, I personally go on the field on a monthly basis to meet physicians. During my visits, many physicians showed me lists of questions asked by parents. One email by a dad had more than 100 questions about vaccination! While this level of interest is amazing, doctors simply do not have the time to educate parents as their priority is to take care of patients.

When we met with Jakub Dvořáček, CEO of the Association of Innovative Pharmaceutical Industry (AIFP), he explained the difficult and lengthy process for innovative pharmaceuticals to receive permanent reimbursement. How do you navigate this tough regulatory environment when it comes to market access?

It is true that the market access process takes a long time, and it is difficult to predict the outcomes of assessments as transparency is lacking. On our side, we did a lot to improve the quality and standardize dossiers we submit to make it easier for the agency to review them.

Moreover, passing the budget impact assessment usually requires a drastic price decrease, which is sometimes impossible to do because of reference pricing strategies at the EU level. Volumes in the small Czech Republic market cannot compensate for a price decrease in France.

As an industry, we have started several discussions with authorities around these issues. I am personally leading the Innovation working group of the Association of Innovative Pharmaceutical Industry (AIFP), whose priority is to improve access for innovative products and speed up the process. This year, the Innovation working group worked hard on demonstrating the value of innovation in the Czech Republic. In partnership with Ernst & Young, we conducted the *Innovation for Life* study and published the results in November this year. The study clearly demonstrates the value of innovative medicines for the healthcare system, not only from an economic perspective, but also from a survival and quality of life perspective. The association is now working hard on communicating these insights to key stakeholders in the government and health insurance funds, with the press conference held in November earlier this year. This report should not just be a collection of numbers, but a tool to change the mindsets of authorities, and convince them that innovative products should not be viewed as a cost, but as an investment which ultimately saves money and saves lives.

There is a long journey ahead of us to shorten the market access process. But we can already see a lot of efforts being done by SUKL.

In a recent [interview](#) at the FT Global Pharmaceutical and Biotechnology Conference in London, CEO Emma Walmsley emphasized her belief that culture is fundamental for any organization. GSK regularly ranks among the best employers in the Czech Republic. What are you doing to continue this legacy?

This is my favorite topic! I am fascinated with culture, and how to boost the engagement of employees. This year, we put in place a program called Modern Employer based on three pillars: Be You, Feel Good, and Keep Growing. Around each pillar, we organize activities. For instance, we have some expats working here. During the Be You week in September, they shared their story on how to be themselves at work. We also asked our employees how they experience their own values and the values of GSK.

For the “Feel Good” pillar, we organize many sports activities. For instance, every year, we have a three-month walking challenge where different teams compete to reach a maximum number of steps. This team building exercise was a lot of fun and created an incredible atmosphere in the office.

Last, but not least, the third pillar, Keep Growing, is all about personal development: coaching, mentoring, and personal development plans. We put together a Learn at Work week in October where people shared their tips and experiences. I also developed locally a Modern Leaders program to develop the leadership skills of my managerial team.

The results of the Modern Employer program were simply outstanding. A few weeks ago, we received the results from the global internal survey: the level of engagement in the Czech Republic is over 94 percent, ten percent above the GSK average! Moreover, 100 percent of our employees said they are proud to work at GSK.

What does the future hold for yourself and for GSK in the Czech Republic in the next three to five years?

We had a fantastic year and I think we have built a strong foundation for the future. We will continue growing in respiratory, vaccines, HIV, and tomorrow in oncology. I hope we will be able to bring new innovative treatments in oncology and immunology.

I am incredibly optimistic for the future of the Czech Republic. We need to build on this momentum, and I am confident we will win again in 2020!

Vaccination does not always fully protect 100% of those who are vaccinated. Bexsero is a meningococcal group B vaccine to prevent invasive meningococcal disease. The vaccine is registered prescription-only medicinal products. The vaccine is administered by a physician by intramuscular injection (usually in the thigh or upper arm). Carefully read the patient information leaflet before use; available also at www.gskompendium.cz.

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