Brigitte Nolet – Country Manager, Roche Belgium & Luxembourg



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Brigitte Nolet, country manager of Roche for Belgium and Luxembourg, speaks about her transition to the Belgian market and her priorities for leading the affiliate. Nolet goes on the elaborate on the vast commitment Roche has to the Belgian market and the company's mission not only to drive innovation but to act as a partner to authorities even in the current shifting political environment of the country.

As a country manager who held several international positions before coming to Belgium, how did you find this shift in your focus of responsibilities?

Belgium is the fourth country in which I have worked and lived with my family. This has been a wonderful opportunity to operate on a more local level and understand the differences from the global roles I held prior. Each of my different experiences has built on one another, and as a first-time general manager, I am able to reference what I learned in a global context and appreciate what that means at a dynamic country level such as in Belgium.

What I especially have learned is that leadership is such an important skill in any position someone might have – you can be a leader both as an individual contributor or as a line manager. People are the most important part of any business, which is exceptionally true in Roche. How we work together, collaborate internally, and interact with stakeholders is the biggest common denominator

between all the countries I have lived in and roles I have held whether it be in the government, non-profit, or private sector. In all these fields, working together towards a common goal is the most effective way to create long-term solutions for healthcare systems.

What current priorities do you have in place for leading such a key affiliate of Roche?

The real focus of Roche is to ensure the best possible quality and access to healthcare for people living with diseases in Belgium and Luxembourg. Internally, one of our priorities is to make sure that we develop and support our people so that they are fulfilled both personally and professionally as we work towards our patient-centred mission.

What makes Roche so special is its ability to leverage a pharmaceutical division to bring essential medicines coupled with a diagnostics division to bring certainty in diagnosis. Meanwhile, additional members of the Roche group help us focus even further on data, insights, and the future of healthcare when it comes to digitalization.

How is Roche positioned within the Belgian healthcare ecosystem?

In terms of our positioning in the healthcare system overall, Roche is the largest biotech company and our innovations aim to bring better-targeted therapies to patients. We are better equipped than any other company to further advance personalized healthcare and we are committed to responsible, thoughtful, and equal partnerships in ensuring sustainability for the future. We are continuously looking for ways to collaborate with stakeholders and seek partnerships where possible to create a stable and predictable environment for patients and health systems alike.

We are very proud of the work we have been able to accomplish here in Belgium. Our pride is in the partnerships we build locally and how we have been able to work with all health stakeholders and will continue to do so. Belgium is an extremely dynamic country in which to work. It is a country that has truly stepped forward in wanting to be a frontrunner of innovation through leadership in health policy, for example, such as in clinical trials.

Through our clinical trials division, the affiliate runs a portfolio of clinical trials for a multitude of western European countries. Being a key contributor in clinical trials is such an important part of evolving a healthcare system and we are very proud of this locally. Furthermore, having a healthcare system with hospitals and practitioners who want to be at the forefront of science and

work with Roche to bring innovations into the country is a tremendous part of the Belgian story and how it wants to define itself among other countries in the world.

What does Roche, one the of biggest and most innovative pharma companies, value so much about Belgium when it comes to clinical development?

Belgium is a multi-faceted health care environment that reflect the country's ambition to be a magnet for innovation in Europe. There are interesting local health policies, such as the cancer immunotherapy framework, which is a good example of the government's aim to prioritize access to the future of innovative medicines. This commitment to immediate access for patients and predictability for the industry is truly a unique stance we have not seen anywhere else in Europe.

Belgium's ability to look to the future and set policies focused around science is a major factor in its competitiveness for attracting this level of investment. Moreover, there are excellent research centers here with top-tier physicians who are multilingual, advanced thinking, and internationally active as leaders within their fields. The quality of Belgium's hospitals, medical professionals, and health science policy are major factors that make the country so appealing and highly performant.

What has been your experience with the valuation of innovation in Belgium?

Certainly, every country is unique with its own approach to healthcare. As the industry, it is our responsibility to be fair and transparent in working with legislators to find reimbursement solutions. Looking at the portfolio of the industry overall, science is clearly advancing phenomenally. Therapies are becoming more precise and will be further bolstered by a convergence with digitalization. Clinical trials will become more refined as we begin to sub-populate patient groups due to the rise in precision medicine. In oncology care, for example, the focus is shifting from classifying tumors based on location to examining the DNA of a tumor.

To be able to support the evolution of science and ensure that patients living with diseases can have access to these innovations, the current healthcare model will have to evolve. The industry and Roche have a responsibility as a stakeholder to work with authorities and other decision-makers to find these solutions going forward.

Providing patients with personalized healthcare solutions is a key focus of Roche's global strategy and last month the affiliate launched the GeNeo project. Can you elaborate on the scope of this initiative?

GeNeo is a very exciting project and one of the first of its kind. Together with the Belgian Society of Medical Oncology (BSMO), Sciensano, and all seven of Belgium's research centers, Roche is exploring the benefits and promising value of a consistent, nationwide Personalized Health Care (PHC) Framework in the Belgian health care system. The GeNeo project is the start of the PHC pilot project (GENEO), harnessing the advance in scientific knowledge, data analytics and digital technology to give each individual patient the best possible care and rationalize system resources at the same time.

GeNeo has been constructed on the solid foundation of the existing BSMO 'Precision' infrastructure and will include state-of-the-art tumor characterization via Comprehensive Genomic Profiling (CGP); therapeutic options based on extensive tumor profiling, treatment decision support based on a national molecular tumor board guidance and the further development of a clinico genomic database.

Thanks to the medical and technological advancements and the growing ability to collect integrate and analyze health data, we are finally at a stage where we can unlock the promise of personalized healthcare for patients, physicians and society. For patients this could translate to an improved quality of life or a longer life; fewer unnecessary treatments, side effects and associated costs through smarter decisions on whether, when and how to treat; and greater peace of mind with higher probability of success.

For physicians, personalized healthcare can bring clarity in an increasingly complex landscape of treatment options; increased confidence in their treatment decisions; and potentially improved outcomes for their patients.

For society, it means better and efficient use of resources in the healthcare system, higher cure rates, and lower burden of disease all which will positively benefit patient's and caregiver's life quality and contribution to society. Personalized healthcare will be a key component of sustainable health systems, where data will empower tailored care and improved outcomes for patients.

Minister Maggie De Block has highlighted the country's capabilities in eHealth and expressed her ambitions for Belgium to be a top player in health data mining. Do you

see possibilities for Roche to leverage these assets?

The electronic healthcare record infrastructure is just another strong example of how Belgium stands out within Europe in terms of its capabilities to evolve its healthcare system for the future. Digital health and making data-driven decisions in healthcare policy is the key for the ongoing sustainability of the healthcare system. Looking at data will be a major factor in ensuring that the investments being made in policy and innovation are the right ones. As we move forward as responsible partners together, Roche is in a good position to be able to support the Belgian government as it embraces this new field.

What about value-based healthcare?

Data-driven decisions and value-based pricing are closely linked – they go hand in glove. This transition will require many stakeholders to sit around the table to resolve how to advance the reimbursement system in this direction. Achieving value-based healthcare will require a seamless integration into the current system. The Belgium government has been clear this is the direction they want to embark, and Roche is more than willing to be part of this negotiation. The commitment exists; therefore, it is just a question of what the mechanisms will look like. I am confident we can reach the solution together.

How do you hope to position Roche as a partner to the health authorities for ensuring continued access to innovation?

For Roche and the industry as a whole, it is our responsibility to work with the government to talk through what healthcare will and should like in the future, where science is taking us, and how we can be a thoughtful stakeholder in that dialogue. We all have the same goal of making sure patients have the right diagnostics, access to treatment, strong outcomes, and the opportunity to live a fulfilled life. As an industry, we have our role to play in achieving this mission and we want to carry out our role moving forward.

Right now, we are in a situation in which Belgium does not necessarily have a stable government, but the importance of future stability and predictability within our environment is key in maintaining the advantage we have in Belgium. The strength of the 2015 Pact of the Future was that it brought these values to all stakeholders in the country. As we move ahead, what we must consider is how can we continue the partnership of the industry and authorities and have the same

dialogue as a new government forms.

Furthermore, openness must come from all sides – the government needs predictability from the industry, just as much as we seek a clear and predictable environment in which to operate. The relationship which has existed in recent years is a defining characteristic of Belgium. Therefore, the vitality of maintaining this ecosystem for the future cannot be understated.

What is the kind of company culture and working dynamic you try to create among your team?

As I mentioned, one of my priorities is to make sure that each team member in Roche has personal and professional fulfilment in the company. This is about creating a culture of collaboration where we work as teams and can make quick decisions within the vision of supporting patients. We are very purpose-oriented towards our patients and their families, and the way that we work helps enhance that focus.

The management level of pharma is often a male-dominated playing field, but times are changing. Do you have any advice for women in the industry looking to follow your career path?

As an affiliate, 66 percent of our team consists of women and within Roche, I have led different women's professional groups and am a mentor in the healthcare businesswomen's association. I believe the biggest issue being faced today is how can we bring equality to the table in all workplaces. This will require both women supporting women and men supporting women. In my career, I have been fortunate enough to have both men and women as mentors or managers who supported me to be a strong leader.

My message to women is not to be afraid – think thoroughly about what you are looking for and do not hesitate to step forward and ask. Empowerment is about not holding ourselves back and about creating opportunities where women can thrive also. The best path forward is to be clear on what you want. The moments when I truly had a significant advancement in my career were when I was absolutely clear and courageous to request what I wanted. I held myself back for years, thinking I would not be liked if I was too direct. It is the opposite. The clarity of intention allows for stronger mentoring and development discussions. Be courageous and clear about what you need. Therefore, it is critical to create the right corporate policies to move women through, and at the same time,

ask how men and women can both be mentors to support women in achieving their ambitions.

Working in politics and the pharmaceutical industry, exploring how to empower, mentor, and move women forward has been a huge passion of mine. As a mother, I have two young daughters that I hope will be confident and happy in their future careers.

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