

Estève Speranza Managing Director Nordic Countries, Servier



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Servier's Estève Speranza outlines the rationale behind the French group's reorganisation in the Nordic countries, how the global shift towards oncology is playing out in his region, and the Nordics' relevance to Servier as an innovation hub and home to its antibody centre of excellence.

What excites you about working for Servier and what has kept you at the company for such a long time?

Firstly, Servier is pretty unique in the pharmaceutical landscape as an independent group governed by a non-profit foundation. This preserves the company's independence and allows for a longer-term vision than that of public companies that are constantly under pressure from their stakeholders. The profits that we make can be reinvested into the company focus to prioritize therapeutic progress and better serve patient needs.

Moreover, I have worked across many different roles and markets over the last 18 years in Servier within sales, marketing, and cross-functional leadership positions which has decidedly maintained my level of interest and motivation at the company.

What priorities did you set when you initially took the job as managing director for the Nordic countries?

My first priority was to meet all members of the Nordic team and listen to them. It became very clear that we could be more effective and people be even more fulfilled, individually and as a group, by optimizing our organization from a country-by-country basis to an integrated Nordic one. There are of course many differences between the countries in the Nordic region in their markets, health models, and access to innovation as examples but at the same time so many similarities. This location will continue to be developed as we emerge out of the pandemic to become more cross-functional between departments and countries.

The success of our transformation hinges mainly on the ability to create the conditions for performance. Giving each manager the means to involve their teams in building the company of the future together is the purpose of the Servier Leadership Model that we have recently implemented. It provides a frame of reference in terms of management principles and behaviours shared by all employees and based on the 4 Group's values: Dare to innovate, Care, Grow by Sharing and Commit to succeed. Everyone could be a leader, it's a matter of mindset.

Finally, we have taken the opportunity of this change to conduct cultural difference training for assistance between both France and the Nordics, and within the Nordic countries themselves.

The commitments of the employee drive the performance and monitoring of these commitments through Gallup's Q12 engagement survey showed a great improvement last year among the Nordics. The results demonstrate that the employees are collectively engaged and committed in this organization, they better understand their expectations, and they recognize the impact of their work.

In addition, the advent of COVID rapidly changed the scene and we have successfully put all our efforts into guaranteeing two other priorities that were even more important at that time: the supply of our medicines to patients and our employee's health and safety.

Servier's annual reporting shows significant growth in the Group's oncology business. Is this broadly reflected in the Nordic region?

Previously, Servier was a stronger presence in the Nordics. However, it has been suffering from losses of exclusivity for certain drugs in cardiology and psychiatry which has diminished the company's presence in the region.

Today, Servier in the Nordic region is in line with the broader focus on oncology. The group has been investing in oncology locally and at a group level with the growth from the launch of new drugs and acquisitions demonstrating the benefit of these investments.

Therapeutic needs are changing. Although we have not yet won the battle against chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases or diabetes, meeting the therapeutic needs of cancer patients has become crucial. As a company committed to improving patient health, Servier has chosen to focus on developing and promoting treatments for cancers that are difficult to treat and with high unmet therapeutic needs, such as gastrointestinal, hematologic and pediatric cancers. 50 percent of the R&D budget is now invested in oncology with programs focusing on two promising areas—immunotherapy and apoptosis.

The acquisition of Shire's oncology business in 2018 was one of the first steps to further engagement in oncology to create a presence on the market. Moreover, the Shire purchase created

an opportunity to begin Servier's operations in the United States.

Earlier this year, Servier further expanded its oncology portfolio with the acquisition of Agios Pharmaceutical's oncology business which further consolidates the company's presence in the US. This will also benefit Servier in the Nordics with the opportunity to launch new drugs on the local market and to bring us into the exciting area of precision medicine.

Additionally, Servier's local acquisition of the research biotech Symphogen in Denmark will benefit the company by developing drugs based on high quality monoclonal and bi-specific antibodies. Symphogen has become the antibody centre of excellence of the Group as its cutting-edge research platform can deliver antibodies with unique functionalities providing best or first in class potential. For the last 20 years, the people at Symphogen have demonstrated a remarkable drive for innovation, having released one preclinical candidate each year. Through its teamwork and commitment to developing innovations that benefit patients, Symphogen is perfectly aligned with Servier's values.

What do the Nordics mean to Servier and is there a plan for more acquisitions and more partnerships within the region?

Servier is actively looking for further partnerships and acquisitions worldwide, including in the Nordic region due to its high level of innovation. Locally, we have a strong history of promoting research collaboration between academia and the pharmaceutical industry. Nordic countries are considered among the best in the world in terms of clinical trials conducted per capita because of a highly skilled workforce and advanced research infrastructure among the most renowned in the world, particularly in biotechnology.

How have you tried to build the brand of Servier as an oncology company with an offering for cancer patients in the Nordics?

It is not an easy task entering oncology and having to face off against big pharmaceutical companies. However, the common aim between companies is to innovate in order to find better therapeutic solutions for the patient.

And involving the entire health care sector—not only researchers and health care professionals but also patients and their families in every stage from development to post-marketing is the best way to ensure the effectiveness of new therapeutic solutions and improve patient care. This will become even more prominent in the future as personalized medicine gains more and more ground.

Servier has launched specific programs in collaboration with patient associations and health care professionals to develop tools to improve the quality of life for patients with gastrointestinal cancers and support them, as well as their families, throughout their journey.

The Group is as well a preferred partner to the world's leading network of experts in acute lymphoblastic leukaemia, the most common type of childhood cancer. This drug in Servier's portfolio strengthens for me the sense of pride to work for the company, especially in regard to curing children with cancer.

Are the Nordics seen as an important early launch market and a testing ground for oncology drugs coming onto the market?

While it is an important early launch market, the market access for Nordics is more complex than it was previously. Even if the rate of availability and time to availability for new medicines in the region is still good according to EFPIA Patients WAIT (Waiting to Access Innovative Therapies) indicator published early this year, it has undoubtedly become more and more difficult in recent years to introduce innovation. The total number of positive recommendations has decreased or with limited access, while assessment times have dramatically increased. No matter the clinical value, price has become the main factor for evaluation. To continue to be a centre of excellence in healthcare, the Nordic region must remain an attractive place where to launch innovation.

However, following the acquisition of Agios, Servier will move into the domain of precision medicine. This presents further challenges related to determining costs and the right price for a drug targeting a niche section of the market.

At Servier, are you ready to engage in risk sharing and outcome-based approaches?

Yes, I strongly believe that we should try to seize every opportunity that we have to bring innovation to the patient. These performance-based contracts can work with increased dialogue and greater transparency between partners.

What kind of company culture have you been looking to build and unite the team behind in the Nordics?

The Servier culture itself has served as the vision for the team in the Nordic region being both long-term and patient-focused. And taking this position as managing director and guiding my own team out of France has confirmed to me the importance of the company's values and the commitment to success, care, growth by sharing, and innovation.

Therefore, I have tried to further implement this Servier culture into the Nordic branch of the organization and drive the employees through a belief in these values.

Looking into the future, what are your priorities and expectations for your role at Servier in the Nordics?

The priorities are to consolidate the organization following its change. We must continue to shift our working culture to have the mindset of a leader and an innovator. Additionally, learning to work together in person again and travelling for business following the impact of the pandemic will be key objectives of the year. Finally, we will of course prioritize regaining access to doctors and medical professionals to raise disease awareness and promote Servier's drugs for the benefit of patients.

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