

Interview: Aleksandra Miric – Director, Pharmanova, Serbia



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Aleksandra Miric, a pharmacist with a strong background in industry and development, presents the activities of Pharmanova, the company which she directs and which has built up a leadership position within dietary product manufacturing in Serbia.

Can you tell us something about your company?

Pharmanova d.o.o. is a domestic private company founded in 1991, and is one of the first private companies in the Serbian pharmaceutical sector. For more than two decades of existence, Pharmanova has gained the status of leader in dietary products manufacturing, with a well-established business built on customer trust, quality and innovation. Pharmanova has continually been present in the markets of both Serbia and the region as a loyal and reliable partner of the pharmaceutical sector, with recognizable high-quality brands.

We have developed from a modest galenic laboratory to a modern production facility in Obrenovac which was designed, built and maintained in accordance with strict European standards, i.e. Good Manufacturing Practice guidelines. Since 2008, our production has been conducted in a plant we consider to be one of the showcase facilities of Serbia’s pharmaceutical industry.

Since the factory has been designed specifically for the manufacturing of medicines, Pharmanova offers high-quality production standards for all categories of products manufactured in our facility, whether dietary supplements, medical devices or cosmetics. To add to this, we have production lines for pharmaceutical dosage forms: solid, semi-solid and liquid dosage forms. We can organize the service, development, and production of all products while adhering to regulation.

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Manufacturing contracts with renowned pharmaceutical companies (such as Hemofarm) stand as testimony of our knowledge and dedication to quality. We strive to maximise our production capacity utilisation and gain new knowledge through useful cooperation with our partners.

From its very establishment, Pharmanova has been in the markets of the region – Serbia is our base, but we also have representative offices in Montenegro and Macedonia, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo we are represented by our partners. We are also present in the markets of Romania, Greece, Turkey, Ukraine, Albania and Kuwait, partially through the distribution of our own brands, and partially through contract manufacturing for our clients. If we compare Serbia and the rest of the region, Serbia is still our largest market with the greatest amount of pressure, rapid changes and the promptest adoption of new trends.

You export over 30 percent of your output, and the number is rising. How much of your export success is explained by the dynamics in the market?

Serbia is not such a big country or market so once you have mastered the domestic market you look elsewhere to expand. The Serbian market brings us the most revenues, followed closely by the traditional markets of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and Montenegro.

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An ancillary positive outcome of exporting is that we are recognized for having an excellent quality product. Our high standards have prevailed, and although it is currently not as profitable as the Serbian market, the potential for export is very high.

In Serbia, there are few companies that deal with the export of herbals, teas, drugs, and extracts. Because of its climate and its ecology, we have many medicinal plants, and we have exported for many years. Herbal production is healthy here, and there is a stable supply chain to suit, from plants to finished products. This area can be considered as a comparative advantage in Serbia to other Balkan markets.

What challenges do you encounter regarding employment?

The pharmaceutical industry is demanding, both in terms of knowledge and finances. Knowledge innovation and rapid implementation of new technologies is a must – which means that demands on the staff are high, particularly in a system such as ours. Pharmanova is a medium-sized company with Serbian capital – we are often faced with the situation that colleagues opt for jobs in foreign companies due to a feeling of security inspired by the size and financial power of such systems. What we offer is challenging – we are independent and we have to create our own system and our own products from scratch. It is a great pleasure and a great relief when you manage to develop employees who participate in the life of the company, develop its spirit and see their personal professional objectives in company objectives. We are making an effort to be recognized as a desirable employer. We have emphasized our stability over the past 26 years and the development path of the company that enabled many of us to become experts in certain areas.

How do you go about choosing the right branding for Pharmanova and the right brand ambassadors?

Our product portfolio includes mainly products containing plant based active substances, vitamins, minerals and enzymes with recognizable brands and packaging design. Some of our brands are continuously present on local markets for 20 years.

For Pharmanova, we would like the face of our brand to be someone well-known, well-respected and an everyday user of our products. [Serbian long-jumper] Ivana Spanovic is a great choice, but we wanted to ensure that she is not too busy to take on the challenge given her Olympic ambitions. Her introduction to the brand was a great move for her and created a buzz at Pharmanova. We also cooperate with the well-known local writer Mirjana BobiÄ? - MojsiloviÄ?, a person with a great personality and a great sense of humour. These women represent our company and send out the message about our values.

We also need strong teams to support all of products and present our brand to the market. The final keystone is communicating the brand to the people â?? you need to invest in good communication and good marketing.

What is the current state of the pharmaceutical industry in Serbia and in the region?

We think that neither Serbia nor other markets in the region have yet achieved maximum development. Dietary supplements, OTC drugs and medical device markets, where Pharmanova conducts its activities, are still growing, and domestic manufacturers have a chance to be important stakeholders in these areas. It goes without saying that it is necessary to follow trends and accept new quality demands, participate actively in the changes taking place in the pharmaceutical sector and in the manner of doing business, and show great flexibility and endurance with respect to policies and economic conditions. A decline in the populationâ??s purchasing power is our everyday life, that is why we try to extend our sales of products and services to other markets and bring additional revenue into the country. We are very proud when we manage to raise the interest of partners from developed European markets for our products or when we draw them to manufacture their brands here. We promote ourselves as capable partner, not as a cheap manufacturing base.

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