

Interview: Janis Kalejs – Country Manager Baltics, Mylan



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Janis Kalejs, country manager Baltics at Mylan, discloses the strategies he has used to successfully lead his affiliate through corporate changes and explains how Mylan aims to continue providing affordable

as well as high-quality treatments to patients in the region.

What is the history of Mylan in the Baltics?

Mylan’s affiliate in the Baltic region started back in 2014, with the acquisition of Abbott Laboratories’ Established Ph. Products Division to pursue the company’s expansion strategy and this footprint further expanded in August 2016 with the acquisition of Meda. Indeed, it is with this latest acquisition that I joined the group as a country manager overseeing the Baltic region.

How important is the legacy of Abbott and Meda in the current positioning of Mylan in the Baltic States?

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Very important! Thanks to Mylan’s acquisitions, there has been the possibility to continue supplying the past medicines as well as strong pipeline of new ones to target key therapeutic areas. The aim is to increase access to medicines on the market.

How would you assess your journey successfully driving the integration between these two companies and what advice would you give to any general manager that has to lead a global integration in a country level?

Although the integration process of two different cultures could have been challenging, our constant focus on patients, business continuity and value creation as the core of our organization has helped us to lead a smooth integration. The key is to focus on what you wish to achieve and the rest is only a matter of technique, building on your strengths while eliminating your weaknesses.

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What is the corporate strategy of Mylan in the Baltic region and to what extent do the three Baltic markets differ from each other?

The strategy of Mylan in the Baltic region is aligned to the global one, which lies in increasing access to high quality medicines worldwide through introducing new affordable generics into the market. The Baltic region market is very similar to the one in Western Europe, partly because the Baltics' economy is very dependent on the other European countries. Nevertheless, while growth may be a challenging factor in other parts of Europe, the Baltic region is perceived as sustainable, predictable, and growing economy.

Within the Baltic region, the three states – Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania – have undeniable subtle differences in terms of healthcare and economic development. For example, the Lithuanian pharmaceutical market has much more products on the reimbursement list compared to the two other countries. This means the country provides better access to patients, yet it puts higher cost constraints on the government and taxpayers. Therefore, despite Mylan's common Baltic management, the company approaches each country slightly separately. In a nutshell, the Baltics is not a place where one strategy fits all.

What are the major challenges that Mylan is facing in the Baltic region and more specifically in Lithuania?

The first challenge lies in selecting the right product portfolio – Mylan's global offering contains more than 7,500 products – and the right markets, that will bring utmost value for both the company and the patients. The second challenge lies in the increasing cost pressure of pharmaceuticals, which I would say is a global threat. As a result, making a long-term plan together with the authorities and the payers is essential to provide affordable medicine in Lithuania.

September 2017 has been an active month in terms of product launches and market approvals for Mylan globally, with clear examples such as a generic version of Novartis's Gleevec[®] Tablets, and other products in the women's health arena. When should we see these products on the Baltic market?

Although we are a relatively young pharmaceutical company in the Baltic region, we have already marketed 68 products. This is certainly an accomplishment to be highlighted. Indeed, we have a robust pipeline of future product launches planned.

For a successful product launch in the Baltic region, partnership with key stakeholders in the market, including governmental institutions, is crucial. For example, we have been a member company of the Lithuanian generics' association for a few years already.

How are you adapting your portfolio to the Baltics region and what specific actions do you aim to implement in order to further strengthen Mylan's presence here?

Historically, in the Baltic region, Mylan has developed products in several therapeutic areas such as cardiology, gastroenterology, oncology, respiratory, dermatology and allergy. This year, we launched several medicines to target HIV, oncology and cardiology. Moving forward, our vision is to develop the categories with the highest needs while causing high treatment cost. That being said, our business is mainly focused on prescription medicines today and our future relies on generics.

On top of that, I would like to highlight that we contribute to local charities, especially in Lithuania. Finally, we are in the process of implementing digital medical solutions directly to patients. For example, two years ago, we implemented a mobile application that helps allergy patients better monitor their treatment thanks to a daily requested symptoms-check – this raise the bar of quality treatment.

Lithuania may be challenging for pharmaceutical companies in terms of limited funds and squeezing pricing models. Have you been able to offer the same level of options across Mylan’s portfolio as in any other EU affiliates?

We do our best to bring as many products to the Baltic region as possible. I am very confident that our organization is very well positioned in the Baltic region as not only a long-term player but also as a decisive player in this market. We are indeed in the process of bringing new products to the Baltic markets that will provide better healthcare to our people.

This is not your first time leading an organization as country manager. In your experience, what have you found to be the most effective ways to empower and motivate your team?

Attitude and shared values are key to build up the best team. I have been privileged to be working with employees who are all patient-centric and who genuinely want to contribute to the society everyday they come to work. I deeply believe this is critical to ensure the organization remains highly customer-focused.

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