

Interview with Silvia Mainescu, Managing Director, Boiron Romania

08.08.2011

Tags:

[BOIRON Romania](#)

The field of homeopathy has a long history in Romania, dating back to the late 1800s. However, the real growth only really took off in the 1990s. Can you give a brief introduction on homeopathy in Romania and what have been some of the key milestones for this field in the country?

In Romania's pharmaceutical market, the field of homeopathy has indeed started to develop a while ago. The most important milestone is the fact that the Minister of Health has started recognizing homeopathic drugs 20 years ago.

When Boiron first started to develop its Romanian operations, it was a major advantage to enter a market where the effectiveness of homeopathic drugs was controlled, and where the awareness for this field of medicine had already been created. Boiron started in 1995 with the registration of its drugs in Romania. At that time, we were strongly cooperating with the National Medicines Agency, in order to find the best way to align with the European Directives in Romania. The Romanian Agency was already very well developed in this respect, while Romania was now obliged to harmonize with the European regulations.

It was a delight for us to find such open-minded people here, with whom Boiron has been able to collaborate so closely. In turn, the local Romanian authorities also found a reliable partner in Boiron, following our extensive experience in one of Europe's most developed pharma markets, France.

When Romania entered the EU in 2007, the new Drug law already included the way homeopathic drugs were to be analyzed, registered and controlled, which was done in the same way as classical synthesis.

When Focus Reports interviewed Thierry Boiron back in France, he was saying that homeopathy should be a medical, social and international reality. How do you feel that homeopathy is now being perceived by Romanians?

We can see an every-day changing mentality in this sense. If we look back at the beginning, when we first started meeting doctors and pharmacists, they were always willing to find out more about homeopathy. Now, 10 years later, the field of homeopathy as well as the Boiron name have become familiar. Nonetheless, we have always considered it a challenge to bring more information and to further educate patients about the efficacy and beneficial results of our medicines.

As a manufacturer, it is our duty and responsibility to bring information about our drugs as well as the results about the research we conduct. Moreover, there now exist associations and schools that educate doctors and pharmacists that use homeopathic drugs. This is being done worldwide, including in Romania. Every day we see more and more satisfied patients returning.

This must also be positive for Boiron's numbers. Worldwide, the company already generates more than EUR 0.5 billion of which 46% comes from outside of France. How important is the Romanian market for Boiron's international footprint?

Romania is very important for Boiron's international activities. First of all, as I already mentioned, Romania has a strong tradition in homeopathy. Moreover, a key advantage is that Romania is very similar to France in terms of how regulations are being applied. Further to that, the mentality of the people is also quite similar to Boiron's home market. Of course, we also need to take into consideration that Romania is the 7th most populated country in Europe.

Secondly, the healthcare specialists in Romania are very well trained. The expertise of Romanian doctors and specialists can even be used as a model for other markets abroad. If we for example start a clinical trial in Romania, the results can be used all over the world with 100% certitude that the trials comply with all regulations for good practice.

Can you tell us more about Boiron's choice to invest in Romania to conduct some of its international clinical trials?

Already 5 years ago, Boiron has decided to increase its budget for international clinical trials. The five year investment plan was a major step for Boiron, as it was decided that R&D investment would also be taking place outside France. For the field of homeopathy in particular, the investments were significant.

So far, Boiron has already conducted a clinical trial in Romania on dermatological field, specifically targeted towards cement workers. We had the luck to work with a very reputable dermatological professor as well as a medical doctor specialized in occupational medicine. They were eager to explore the use of Boiron's Homeoplasmine medicine in to these previously unexplored areas. The successful outcome has been broadly published and the results are now used internationally. A second study has also been conducted to prove the effectiveness of homeopathic medicines to reduce pain amongst women having difficulties with breast-feeding after birth.

Overall, our research is conducted across 2 lines. On the one hand, research is being done on the effectiveness of our homeopathic medicines. On the other hand, research is also being conducted to examine the way our homeopathy actually works. This second area is a very important stream of research which has not yet been done by Boiron in Romania. However, we are currently considering collaborating with a university in the Romanian city of Targu Mures. The high expertise of doctors in Romania clearly offer such opportunities for further research.

Boiron is well known in France where the company holds more than half of the market, but how do you see the competitive edge in Romania compared to local competitors such as PlantExtrakt?

For us, competition is not exactly the correct word to describe our situation in the market. This is because Boiron competes with any other pharma drug in the market, rather than homeopathic drugs alone. In Romania, Boiron has been present with its main product Oscilloccinum since 1998. This medicinal drug competes with large pharma drugs.

Today, there are doctors in Romania that understand the value of prescribing Oscillococcinum together with Ibuprofen, or other drugs for flu or cold. This way of looking for synergies also represents the way we see competition.

In terms of flu and cold market, Oscillococcinum is not first, but nonetheless has taken a lead position in its respective market. It is still the most sold homeopathic drug in the entire world, and is also the key product in our portfolio. In addition to that, the cough syrup Stodal is Boiron's second biggest product within the Romanian portfolio.

In a recent press article, you already projected 15% growth for this year. Where is this growth going to come from?

We will obtain this growth from addressing a new geographic region in Romania. Boiron will increase its presence in the region around the well-developed city of Cluj-Napoca. Another strategic orientation which we develop this year is to increase the awareness of our public through an efficient educational communication.

What will remain the most challenging aspect to achieving these growth figures?

The most challenging, or interesting, aspect will be addressing the question "how to get the information to the patient more easily". We need to keep trying to give more direct access to the information about possibilities and benefits of the homeopathic treatments and drugs.

You have been general manager at Boiron Romania since the year 2000. What achievements are you most proud of so far?

I am proud of the people at Boiron Romania, and their willingness to develop within the company. They understood our "project", which is what makes me proud. Whenever I go to a congress, a conference, and so on, it makes me proud to see how fellow colleagues from the industry are surprised to see that, despite being a small team, we have achieved so much. We started with 3 people and are only 15 today.

Lastly, on a personal note, we do not always get to interview a female general manager. Do you feel that there is a different perception towards female managers in Romania?

In fact, the approach is similar and the differences are minimal. It is probably one of the positive aspects about the past communist rule in Romania. The theoretical doctrine, which was not applied in practice, advocated the equality of chances, regardless of gender, origin, religion and so on. In many eastern European and former Soviet countries you will find that women have been trying to get the same chances as men in society.

Do you have a final message about the commitment of Boiron to Romania?

Homeopathy is a medical therapy that can bring numerous benefits to the patients, and should be considered as a primary means rather than an alternative.

[See more interviews](#)
