

# A smoke-free future for Slovakia

**Philip Morris, the leading tobacco company, is celebrating 25 successful years of doing business in Slovakia. The company is looking to the future, and wants to, one day, replace cigarettes with smoke-free products. General Manager Alina Vicovan talks about the motivation that drives the company forward.**

## What is the history of Philip Morris in Slovakia?

It all started with Philip Morris ČR a.s. the affiliate of Philip Morris International (PMI) in the former Czechoslovakia. After Slovakia became an independent country in 1993, Philip Morris Slovakia s.r.o. was established to continue its business locally. By 1996, our company had become the market leader, and we have maintained this position ever since. During the last 25 years we have been running our business successfully but responsibly at the same time. We were, and still are, committed to communicating the serious health effects of smoking and we advocate for effective, evidence-based tobacco regulation founded on the principle of harm reduction.

## Apart from business activities, where is Philip Morris active the most?

One of our principal goals is to be a socially responsible company. We continue to support local communities within our Charitable Contributions program aimed at access to quality education or vocational training, income-generation initiatives, and the promotion of women's leadership roles in society. We have also been a long-term supporter of a project focused on prevention of youth smoking. Another big area of our interest is sustainability. In 2015 Philip Morris joined the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) and its Sustainable Development Goals. By doing so, we committed to incorporating its Ten Principles into the strategy, culture and daily work of our company. As a result, PMI has received recognition on the Carbon Disclosure Project's Climate A-list for the third year in a row. Last but not least, we have also developed comprehensive programs to tackle the issue of illicit trade. But where we can have the biggest societal impact, is the

Sustainable Development Goal number three – Public Health and Well-being.

## The Philip Morris International (PMI) CEO announced that Philip Morris will not sell cigarettes one day. When will this become reality in Slovakia?

Yes, this was the headline of the BBC interview with our CEO, Andre Calantzopoulos, in December 2016. It is a historical moment for PMI, as we are building a smoke-free future through our innovative smoke-less products. This will take time, but the important part is that today we have a better alternative to the conventional cigarettes. It also takes consumer and societal acceptance to achieve overall population harm reduction. As of today, more than 3.7 million adult smokers across the globe have fully switched to our smoke-less product – IQOS.

## What is the motivation that drives the company forward?

We have been manufacturing cigarettes for more than 170 years. Nevertheless, we understand that people need the change. They seek safer alternatives. Many of them cannot simply quit or cut back on smoking and the reality is that the number of smokers in the world keeps increasing. According to the World Health Organization's estimates, there will be more than one billion smokers worldwide in 2025. Many people perceive our company rather skeptically; they are not inclined to believe that we care about people's health. However, it is a fact that we have resolved to take a very brave step and have invested more than 3 billion USD into the development of new products that really have the potential to significantly reduce the smoking-related risks. They are capable of causing a revolution in the whole industry. As a confirmation of

our decision, Citibank has just recently included heated tobacco products among the ten most disruptive recent innovations, and the most significant innovation in the tobacco sector since e-cigarettes.

## Why have you decided to develop and invest into smokeless products?

We want to satisfy different preferences of adult smokers. Our current portfolio of smokeless products contains four product types. Two of them use various innovations and heat the tobacco instead of burning it. The other two products are vapor-based; they do not contain tobacco and utilize other technology. So far, we have been granted more than 2,350 patents and we filed more than 3,750 patent applications in relation to the aforesaid technology.

## What was the crucial piece of knowledge with regard to the IQOS development?

Experts agree that although nicotine is addictive, it is not the primary cause of diseases related to smoking. Thousands of chemical substances are produced in a burning cigarette due to the combustion of tobacco and other materials. Experts agree that the basic cause of the harmful effects of smoking consists in the toxic chemical substances associated with combustion. That is why Philip Morris International has worked and invested into research and development of smokeless products that are potentially significantly less harmful than smoking. Our goal is that all smokers who otherwise would not quit smoking switch to smokeless products.

## The new products have not been on the market that long. Do you have any idea as to how they have been accepted by the Slovak customers?



**ALINA VICOVAN**  
General Manager of Philip Morris Slovakia



## BIOGRAPHY

General Manager of Philip Morris Slovakia, has worked for the company for more than twenty years. During her career, she has held various positions in several countries, including Romania, Switzerland, Russia and Bulgaria, among others. She has worked in Slovakia for almost a year. She has a degree in computer science and finance. Throughout her career, she has worked in finance, business and marketing departments. She has experience with the marketing of a new product category in the Russian market, a corporate transformation project covering various countries and the implementation of large commercial projects.

We are pleased that the initial reactions are very positive. People seem to be open to new things and, at the same time, they look for better solutions. I believe that the IQOS is just the right really high-quality product for them.

## You have been in Slovakia as the general manager of Philip Morris Slovakia for a rather short period of time. Do you have a goal that you wish to achieve here?

I have worked here for almost a year. I am glad that Slovakia is among the first 31 countries with the IQOS presence. As for my motivation – I want to make Slovakia the first country to get rid of cigarette smoke and make Slovakia a first smoke-free country in the world. That is what drives me forward.