

REGIONAL REPORT – ROMANIA



The Regional Political Crisis and the State of Affairs for Project Management in Romania

By Florin Gheorghiu, PMP

When Wall Street sneezes the rest of the World gets flu. It is an old known metaphorical view of how some apparently non related things can affect each other in various ways. This is true when we report over the regional political crisis that rules the Romanian political landscape during the last month. An endless string of allegations thrown by the parties have ultimately ended with a major political crisis affecting the entire social life, capital investors' patience, and making the public observing the scandals in the newspapers rather than focusing on a serious problems.

The elected President was allegedly found responsible by the Special Committee appointed by the Parliament Chambers of overruling and exceeding the Constitutional limits of mandate. In return the acting President has tried to throw everything onto the Lower Chamber and Senate Representatives, accusing the political elite of corruption and of forming of groups of special interest which work against the citizens' interest. (*Palace of the Parliament in Bucharest shown in photo*)



This frustrating episode has been part of Romanian life for more than a month while the country is well into the course of consolidation the EU post accession relations. The turmoil occurred in a moment when attention should be focused on economic problems rather than on the political vendetta the main characters seem to throw to each other.

Meanwhile social and economical life goes ahead driven by mechanisms set in place by corporations, companies, small and medium enterprises. Investors are taking a deep breath in their attempt to understand which way the economy goes under the new conditions in which the country is dragging its feet with a suspended President who is fighting with the Parliament representatives who seem to be driven by a small group of businessmen with strong connections to the political media.

Under this background that appropriately resembles the emerging democracy more than a country with strong democratic credentials, the business environment is struggling to make a good impression on the EU officials in Bruxelles who tightly scrutinize every wrong step and count every mistake on the way to integration.

Although many companies seem to survive unaffected by the political crisis, everybody knows that any Governmental contract is doomed to fail from the very beginning, given the reluctance of state owned companies to sign any contract or to award any bid in favour of private entity without being suspected of a shallow sign of biasing.

Project Management operates within this unstable environment and the main actors are trying to get better positions on the race starting grid. It can be easily reported that the very same figures are keeping the flag in the wind on the battlefield of projects implementation even though it is hard to state how successful their attempts to get new contracts were lately.



We have to congratulate the PMI Chapter that persistently and with diligence continued its mission in Romania, setting the new Board and keeping regular meetings and training sessions with the candidates for PMP certification. Apparently PMI Chapter played an active role since the last election and this is owed to the new Board who are committed to giving fresh shape of large American organization present in Romania. A set of PM events were organized under the auspice of the PMI Chapter and can be enumerated inter alia the Seminar for Product Management.

One that captured attention this time was the 'Project Risk Management Seminar' with Vladimir Liberzon, PMP, founder and former President of the Russia Chapter of PMI. He is currently the Director of Spider Management Technologies, a leading Russian Project Management Consulting company. The Seminar went through all knowledge areas and process groups of Project Risk Management and the way it was tackled was fully in line with PMI's PMBoK concept for Project Risk Management.



Closely following the Chapter's pursuit of better PM representation, CODECS, a combination of Open University/Coaching Institute in UK and CODECS Romania, resumed its PM Café sessions on each beginning of month. PM Café is an elitist gathering formal seminar joining together people with scattered occupations and from various corners of the society. It can be reported by the author that besides the fine selected locations merely downtown Bucharest at a very luxurious hotels or companies' convention halls, the invitees are extremely high profiled individuals with proven and demonstrable results in their field. This seems true whether we talk about medicine, Project Management, industry, education, media or , why not, politics. All these people were and actually are part of a formal group of discussion with a pre-announced main subject always PM centred. What is really great is the fact that CODECS as the Sponsor and event organizer tries to treat the society as any other stakeholder with specific interests to the subjects and topics in debate. Thus we had various subjects part of the separate projects ranging from the importance of

high school education to how and why to fight for a 100 dollars portable computer to be given to each primary school student.

CODECS is doing a wonderful low profile job in the service of Project Management and is my duty and privilege to have the opportunity to bring these people under the stage light for their services rendered for the community's interest. We can count just a few out of it who constantly played a so significant role in education and PM philosophy dissemination.

One of their regular PM Café Sessions is scheduled for the 8th of May at the Intercontinental Hotel where the main topic in debate is underlined by the Structural Developing Funds- "From opportunity to affordability" and a panel of at least four key experts is expected to present his or her approach on the subject.



As part of the American franchise Ten Step Romania, part of the TenStepInc. from the USA, has continued its 'conspicuous' activity though such a big name should have been more active on the ground. The word conspicuous is an attribute appropriate for this small company that is acting extremely low profile, perhaps too low for its potential.

Ten Step Romania has a limited visibility among the PM public and consumers and probably this is due to a limited number of staff, a limited marketing strategy, or simply because the name itself sells the company's products. Ten Step Romania is concentrated only on selling the PMP Certification training courses and this is of a limited market share since certification requires first a considerable experience in PM before any exam passing. There is a consistent audience for Project Management training courses on a short term given the growing interest for the PM discipline and entities like Ten Step should cover this market.

Besides, Ten Step is very well represented via INTERNET where educational materials, articles, samples of specific documents, all tailored for Project Management under Ten Step own logo are posted. More than that, every week the subscribers are notified electronically with short newsletters in the form of 'Play of the Day' issues and some other tips and tricks extremely valuable for the PM average to high level consumer.



PM Solutions, another US based company, has its subsidiary in Romania and is acting for training services and consultancy in Project Management. Even though not yet well presented or upfront at public events either as Sponsor or as main actor, the company manages to stay abreast with the PM philosophy by ensuring customers' tailored trainings. The author is familiar with PM Solutions from a training program awarded to the author's Company, a program that spanned over three months and comprised dozens of Employees. PM Solutions relies on highly specialized professionals under IPMA credentials and is one of the main players in the field of PM tailored training and consultancy services. Clients are confident that PM Solutions

specialists are the best choice for their training purpose given the pondered balance of experience shared between field implementation expertise gained over the projects accomplishment and in-class teaching proficiency.

There are of course a few other smaller players present in the Romanian market on a lower level; the current Report highlights only the most known ones. Simply because their logos could be seen on the banners at the most important PM events. It is my duty and pleasure to let the world know about them.

Under the unrest induced by the political class there is life under the ice shelf. Business goes ahead as normal and the political turmoil is somewhere far away from the hot spot where money flows in and out.

One thing must be certainly brought to the attention: the gap between Project Management theoreticians and professional practitioners and Employers is widening due to the lack of a common convergent approach. Without it the Employers will persistently seek Project Managers who are supposed to act on-site as Site Managers; Companies' will strive to hire the best Project Manager but soon the individual will find that he/she is only a Key Account Manager.

While watching on the Discovery Channel last week a film on a Construction Project, I noticed the poor translation from English to Romanian language. I could not refrain from my native spirit of criticism but this must be reported as lesson learned for those who are going through the same. Translation of the words 'Project Manager' was bitterly displayed in the Romanian subtitling as "Site Manager", a mistake that is re-taken every day at job interviews throughout the country.

The trouble is of course less important than the political disturbance generated by the arguing between the supreme instances of the State but getting deep down into the PM world this fact became acute. It can affect on a long term what is proudly perceived as PM professional landscape by diminishing its strong credentials for which many individuals are competing for. It can also give a bad sign of down rating the professional standards if not set right from the beginning.

It is uncertain if the PM world in Romania will get a flu due to the Presidential Palace sneeze, but surely PM life seems to be rather assisted than autonomous. Without little help from those nominated herein it is hard to believe that PM concepts will make major breakthroughs to match its importance today. In the end we all have to fight against the feeling of numbness that seems to overwhelm much of Romanian society and many people here today.



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