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Project Management Update from Portugal *End of April 2009*

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A slow start but perhaps a promising year for Project Management in 2009 ?

The impacts of the world financial crisis are progressively emerging in the Portuguese economy. International companies employing considerably large workforces are downsizing and some are even closing down their sites, like is the case of Qimonda (a project oriented company). The immediate effect has been a rise in the unemployment rate of Portugal's qualified workforce, including Project Managers. The number of officially registered unemployed professionals in Portugal has grown by 23,8% in March 2009 against the same month in 2008. In the private sector, companies that usually invest a considerable part of their annual budget in projects are delaying investment decisions and reducing the level of investment. Will Project Management also suffer a recession in the Portuguese economy in 2009?

Despite these clear negative signs of economic slowdown, there are fortunately other factors and signs that may counter this negative tendency. A major factor that will stimulate project related economic activities are the government's decision to approve some major public investments, namely the construction of the new airport of Lisbon (the NAER – Novo Aeroporto), the construction of the high-speed rail network (the RAVE/ TGV) and the program to renovate all primary and secondary schools throughout the whole country – the Parque Escolar EPE program, with an overall budget of 2,5 billion Euros.

Although the rate of implementation of these large investments might be slower than expected, these and other major public investment will clearly play an important role in the economic activity of the country in the current and incoming year of 2010 (when world economic recovery is expected to initiate), and in particular they will trigger the need for Project Management. In fact, and as an example, the Parque Escolar program, which is

currently underway, has established a Program Management Office where *Earned Value Management* is being used for monitoring and controlling the program, clearly a major initiative in a public investment to make use of advanced project management methods and practices.

In anticipation to these major investments, the PMI Portugal Chapter, currently the largest Project Management Association in Portugal, with a rising membership fast approaching 250 members, is organizing its **4th Annual Project Management Conference** which will take place in Lisbon, in 5th-6th June, and will count with the participation of a number of international prestigious speakers including the Chair of the Project Management Institute, Mr. **Ricardo Vargas** PMP; PMI EMEA Component Mentor Mr. **Zbigniew Traczyk** PMP; PM Forum Ambassador and Correspondent for Greece, Mr. **Theofanis Giotis** PMP, and Mr. **Dave Prior** PMP and Director of the IT-Telecom PMI SIG. Known for being the largest Project Management event in Portugal since 2001, the PMI Portugal Chapter Annual Conference is also expected to receive the participation of a number of prestigious national speakers, including senior and project managers from large private and government owned companies and public entities like REFER EPE, Parque Escolar EPE, RAVE SA, the Portuguese Navy, HP Portugal, among others. Several Project Management software vendors will also be presenting their products. It is expected that this will event will gather the largest number of delegates ever, coinciding with the current growth in the Chapter's membership, which has recently reached its historical maximum.

The second semester of 2009 will receive another Project Management event which is being organized by IPMA's affiliated APOGEP, a national association founded back in 1994, currently with 200 active members and which has recently elected its new President Mr. **Andrade Dias**. The event is entitled "**The week of the Project Manager**" and will also take place in Lisbon, on the 16th-18th of September.

Finally, another observed positive trend in Project Management for 2009 is the investment in Project Management training that both companies and individual professionals are seeking in response to the slowdown of the economic activity.

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