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An interview with SIMONA BONGHEZ, PMP President of the PMI Romania Chapter

By Florin Gheorghiu

Mrs. ***Simona BONGHEZ****, PMP, IPMA-B, President of PMI Romania Chapter*

In January the acting President of Romania Chapter of the Project Management Institute (PMI®) – PMI Romania Chapter - celebrated one year since the instate ceremony of her capacity as chapter leader in Bucharest. A new poll is to take place by the end of the month and PMI members are called to give their vote for a new Board. It is now high time to look back one year and diagnose what Mrs. Bonghez' tenure has represented during this period for the sake of the Chapter. Ideally placed at the crossroad of Consulting Services and Training tailored for PM and academic life, with strong insights into IT companies, the acting President has an uneasy and rocky road ahead in the current mandate. There have been a wide range of expectations displayed by local PMI members, with a heterogeneous array of IT, telecom, Banking and other industries which form the Chapter's audience. Since her nomination and awarding as Chapter's President, Mrs.' Bonghez tried to play the role of strong link between several separated orientations which existed prior to her appointment among members: a unitary approach of Chapter's role, opening to those to embrace the profession, and giving a fresh breeze to an apparently worn out atmosphere inside the Chapter. To what degree she succeeded in bringing the awaited changes, let's find out in the following interview. I had the pleasure of speaking with her in the beginning of January.

PMWT – What have you changed in the Chapter's life since becoming chapter president and what are the major disappointments after failing to attain some targets?

Simona Bonghez (SB): I believe that changes are now visible, even though one year is not enough to expect clear results. Nevertheless, in our case, I think that the number of meetings and events we had, the involvement of the PMI HQ representatives and the International Conference we have had in October proved that there is a difference.

I cannot say that I have a major disappointment. I knew from the very beginning that it would not be easy, that I would need to fight and spend a lot of my time in order to make this difference. I had the support of the board and of some of the enthusiastic members, for which I thank them once again.

PMWT – How many new PMI members and PMP/CAPM certifications have been certified and registered within the Chapter during the 2007 year?

SB: We are proud to say that, at the end of 2007, the number of the PMI Romania Chapter members grew to 261, which means that we have a 24,5% growth in terms of membership. The number of the PMPs and CAPMs is now 124, which means 42% growth.

PMWT – It is obvious that IT and telecom industries are among the stars benefiting from PM learning and practices. Is it the Chapter's intention to attempt to attract other industries and to make them embrace the vision of PMI?

SB: We had an attempt in 2007 and we will continue to promote this vision among other industries as well. We also want to involve the academic world; we started in 2007 with the PM master program at the College of Communication and Public Relations within the National University for Political and Administrative Studies in Bucharest and we would like to continue this initiative.

PMWT - We know that the total number of PMI professionals with good standing PMP or CAPM credential as per the latest records was less than 150. In order for the entire community to benefit, it is mandatory to grow the critical mass and to increase the visibility. What is your plan for making the Public more acquainted with the PMP credential?

SB: In 2007 we used all the opportunities – events and invitations to different companies – in order to explain the benefits of obtaining an international certificate in project management. We will continue to promote the certification in 2008, more aggressively, considering one-to-one discussions with the big companies in Romania but also by supporting the local REPs in their similar initiatives.

PMWT – Apart from the IT industry could you please rank the next 4 positions of industries displaying interest in PMI and PM concepts, standards and methodologies?

SB: The Oil & Gas industry is more and more interested in applying the PM concepts in their companies. What is interesting is that they recommend this approach to their partners as well; therefore the interest is growing in a larger area. The next industry I can rank here is the construction business development projects. Management consulting companies also become more interested, their employees being mostly oriented toward gaining an international certification.

PMWT – Since you have a dual certification awarded by both PMI and IPMA, how would you define the relationships between the two in Romania?

SB: I would be more than pleased to have a closer relationship with the local IPMA affiliate, but for the moment this is not happening. Maybe in the near future. I really think that we could work better in order to promote project management concepts and the project management profession.

PMWT –In order for PMI to increase exposure for members and certified professionals, some links with the Authorities and Government must be established. Are they in this moment aware of Chapter's actions towards promoting the profession? What is your plan for turning them into real stakeholders for PMI's benefit?

SB: This is a domain where the Romanian Chapter has not yet defined a strategy. Authorities and Government are interested in project management, are aware of the importance of having organizations which promote this profession, but, until this very moment, we have succeed only to start a discussion with one of their representative, no concrete results yet.

PMWT – PMPs' and CAPMs' need to maintain their certification. For this PDU's must be accumulated over a three years cycle and the means for getting the PDUs' are blended. Does PMI intend to support the certified professionals in this mix of options by coming in with some courses, PM events?

SB: Of course we do. We intent to have an agreed schedule for meetings and events shortly after the elections; we hope to be in this regard at least as productive as in 2007. For the courses, we already have an agreement with one of our sponsors and we also intend to collaborate with the existing REPs; however we will provide the courses exclusively to our members.

PMWT – What is your strongest wish you have for the New Year in case a new mandate shall be vested in?

SB: It is difficult to choose as I have many wishes, equally strong. But the one that will help me to achieve most of the objectives I have for 2008 is the cohesiveness of the board of the Romanian Chapter, its willingness to collaborate and availability to be involved in the Chapter development.

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