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Grigorescu, Adriana

National School of Political Studies and Public Administration
(NSPSPA)

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**PROJECT MANAGEMENT AN USEFUL TOOL FOR
THE EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

Adriana Grigorescu
National School of Political Studies and Public Administration
Bucharest, ROMANIA,

ABSTRACT

The concept of project management earns, since 1990, more and more adepts due to the fact that it has proved to be a useful tool in handling socio-economic challenges. The training on project management and the certification of the professionals knows a very fast development in our country. The EU uses the project management as a way of solving the pre-accession preparation and also to integrate the state members into the matrix of Union. Romania is ending the pre-accession period with no impressive results in getting EU project funds. This is why one of the important concerns of the business environment and public administration is the projects management and, most of all, acquiring the knowledge of this new concept. The questions we are focusing on this paper are: Are we prepared to do structural funds project proposals? and What else do we need?

The paper will analyze also the advantages and disadvantages of using project management as a managerial approach on solving companies and/or public administration institutions problems. Also it is very important to know the criteria needed for performance in project proposals. The Romanian government programs regarding project management for the R&D will be presented as a form of education and potential integration tool in EU projects framework. On the other hand, we shall show the steps to be taken for developing skills in project management for public servants and business people as well.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT IN ROMANIA

Soon after 1990, Romania received the access to European funds under different programs. The donors of this funds asked, from the beginning (project proposal) to the achieving the project objectives, for a strict set of rules.

So, everybody trying to access a fund has learned that each application for money means a clear description of the conditions for achieving certain aims and objectives. These should be in accordance with the domain, terms of references (TOR), the limit of funding, categories of eligible expenses, deadlines, and so on.

Those who began to work out project proposals and then to manage the implementation of the approved ones, should use the project management concept.

They should know how to settle the objectives, to plan the actions, to organize and coordinate the team, to evaluate the budget, to identify the risks and to control the outputs.

So, it has appeared the need for training the trainers for this new managerial concept and as a result the necessity for the certification of trainers and project managers. Later, the „project manager” was included also in the Romanian Occupation Standards, as an acceptance of it as a professional job.

Several private companies were created for offering project management training and consultancy, the academic environment introduced it, also, as a new topic for students curriculum and developed new master programs. Public institutions are asking for training programs to prepare their personnel for applying or managing projects.

An entire movement of training and consultancy was created and this new concept began to be applied as a managerial way of achieving different objectives.

Also, it was created the Project Management Association Romania affiliated to the International Project Management Association, that is entitled to certify training programs and individuals.

PRESENT STATE OF PROJECT MANAGEMENT MOVEMENT

This movement has extended from the economic side of the society to education, infrastructure, social cohesion, health, culture, public administration, democracy, covering more and more domains of the socio-economic environment.

One can ask:”Are we prepared to do structural funds project proposals?” that means that are we able to access and manage the structural funds after January 2007?

Based on the knowledge that since now the funds allocated to Romania were not fully used, we have to say that we must extend the efforts to train project managers and to offer consultancy for projects to a larger base.

A better communication and promotion of the European programs, funds and TORs, is necessary in order to reach not only an advised minority, but as much as possible of the targeted segment.

As much as the answer to the above mentioned question shows that is yet room for more action, the answer to “What else do we need?” could start with: more funds available for activating a larger base of subjects eligible for structural funds. That could get into the form of training personnel in project management, preparing project proposals, working out studies and other documents requested by the program, increase the communication and public awareness programs and so on.

A larger base, as we call it, means a bigger number of entities but also a better coverage of the fields of activity.

One of the domains that we would like to put into discussion with this paper is R&D area. The same topics, minuses and pluses could be extended also to this.

From the beginning a lot of programs were dedicated to education and R&D and many professors and researchers were involved in different projects. Many of them were trained and even they have become trainers for project management.

Even under these conditions, the Romania’s participation to the projects on the PC 5 and PC 6 was not remarkable; we can say less than this.

As a result, on the structure of CEEEX program, supported by Romanian Government, there were included two modules, aimed to increase the project management skills and to integrate the Romanian R&D in the European structures, as follows:

Module II – module of human resources development for training, education, researchers mobility and the increase of the attractiveness of the research career. This module is supporting

- projects for training and skills improvement in program/project management;
- projects for training and skills improvement for managers in research.

Module III – module to promote the participation to the European and international research programs. This supports:

- projects for increasing the international visibility.

The expected results of these modules are:

- rejuvenation and performances improvement of the researchers on national and international base;

- increasing the number of young researchers and Ph.D.s.;
 - the increase of the number of researchers involved in post-doctoral programs and long term international projects and cooperations;
 - the increase of the research number who reintegrate themselves in research activities in Romania;
 - the increase of the number of specialised managers for R&D programs, units and institutions.

The performance of these actions will be reflected by the Romanian participation to the European projects in PC 7.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT FOR EU INTEGRATION

Project management plays two important roles: instrument for preparing the candidate states for the integration into the European Union and, at the same time, a tool for the candidate states to learn, use and extend the knowledge of project management to all sides of economic, scientific, social life.

The first role of project management is backed up by the structural funds offered by the European Union. The aim of these is to reduce the development gaps of different regions from the European Union states and the promotion of the economic and social cohesion.

To reduce faster different laggings, we should access as much as possible of the structural funds. This is why the number of entities and persons able to work out and manage projects, on professional basis, should be increased.

This new approach of the matters in economic, research, culture, democracy, health and other social areas of life, proved to have a number of advantages that strongly recommend it as a modern way of solving problems. Among these we can highlight the following:

- focusing on objectives;
- development of staff capabilities;
- better motivation of the employees;
- better coordination between different departments;
- increased profitability;
- high quality of services and products;
- cost reduction;
- efficient control;
- better relationship with the customers;
- minimizing the risks.

The restrictions imposed by the project management, as the integration on the restricted area, time, budget, team, quality, participant expectations determine the managers and team members to cope with the requirements of efficiency, efficacy and professionalism. All these prepare the individuals to be competitive in the new community where Romania will be part of, soon.

The new challenges, that will appear as a result of the enlargement, will be better approached and solved by the individuals and entities already experienced with project management as a performant management technique.

The second role of the project management, to transfer the knowledge over the domain borders, starts from the projects financed by structural funds.

An example could be the IMPACT program, jointly funded by national and European organizations. Its aim is to stimulate de proposals development in order to attract more structural funds allocated for research, tehnological development and innovation. The support of the IMPACT program is the offer to assist potential beneficiaries to work out the documents requested by the structural funds application and/or to professional fill-in the application form for POS-CCE-CDI¹

Further this will be the basis of the Operational Sectorial Program – Increase of the Economic Competitiveness, that helps companies to identify new markets and business opportunities, to better value the results of R&D. It will also be stimulated the partnership between the R&D units and industry, aimed to increase the companies competitiveness by using best practices at the European level.

All the above shown comes to the conclusion that project management is an useful tool for European integration and we should pay more attention to the use it on a large scale. Also, we should be SMART as our project objectives (**S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**pproved, **R**esource determined, **T**ime determined).

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