

## Interview with Dr. John-Paris Pantouvakis

Project Director for the IPMA 26 th. World Congress in Greece and  
current Chair of the IPMA Education and Training Board

By Ed Naughton



*Editor's note: This interview was conducted by Ed Naughton, PMWJ contributing editor and PM World correspondent in Ireland, as they began their work together on the IPMA Education and Training Board in early 2013. Prof Pantouvakis is also an academic advisor to PM World; read more about him at <http://peworldjournal.net/team/editorial-advisory-board/prof-john-paris-pantouvakis-phd/>*

**Ed Naughton:** How did the discipline of Project Management emerge onto your radar?

**Prof Pantouvakis:** It was the mid 1980s when I was following postgraduate studies in the UK and came across the work of people such as Ron McCaffer and Martin Barnes. So, I was initially introduced to project management through construction management and more specifically through computer-aided estimating in an Academic environment. Then, in the early 1990s I started working for a consulting firm implementing EU (then EC) funded projects in Eastern Europe, so I have had my first experiences of project management 'in action'...

**Naughton:** You were the project director for the 2012 IPMA World Congress in Greece during a very difficult and turbulent economic time in your country . What is your abiding memory of that project?

**Pantouvakis:** My abiding memories are: that our (the organizing team) belief to succeed was stronger than the economic challenges we had been facing; and Our deep appreciation for the IPMA family who backed us during such a difficult time.

**Naughton:** What benefits do you think have accrued to the discipline of project management in Greece as a result of hosting the world congress there? Would you do it again?

**Pantouvakis:** The discipline was hosted in Greece during the world congress. We have benefited from the presence and active participation of PMs from around the globe. I think, we also conveyed the message that we try here in Greece and we are committed to success.

Greek project managers were able to meet and interact with their international colleagues and, I trust, the discipline will be boosted in the near future. At the same time, young people were introduced to project management at a high level and many took an interest in the discipline. I think this will be the outstanding legacy of the Congress.

**Naughton:** You are the current chair of the IPMA Education and Training Board. What are your objectives for your two year term of office?

**Pantouvakis:** As the IPMA Education & Training Chair I have the privilege to liaise and coordinate with the IPMA E&T Board, a panel of experts from seven different countries, both Academics and professionals. Together, our ambition is to bring Education & Training closer to the PM professional and our Member Associations and to bring new friends and more visibility to the area.

**Naughton:** Could you tell us about your involvement with PM-Greece ?

**Pantouvakis:** PM-Greece is the Greek member association of IPMA. I am member No. 001, i.e. one of the founding members of the Association in Greece. I am currently the President of the Association and very proud to be involved with many initiatives we have taken in recent years.

**Naughton:** Why did you leave the private sector to become an Associate Professor and Director of the Department of Construction Engineering & Management and the Centre for Construction Innovation at the National Technical University of Athens (NTUA).?

**Pantouvakis:** I think it is only through Academia you can have a greater impact in a discipline, because you have the opportunity to research, publish and teach. At the same time you cannot have a real impact on a practical discipline unless you have practical experiences.

So in areas such as project management (but also in engineering, medicine, etc), practice and theory should go hand and hand. Given the opportunity to be in the safety of an Academic environment does not mean that my interest for practice has diminished. I must confess though that I miss sometimes the hardships of mission critical projects, of real-life and the taste of success when all works well in the end.

**Naughton:** For many years you have attended international congresses on project management – what were your impressions?

**Pantouvakis:** Everybody can speak and argue about project management. It will take a lot of effort and results from professional associations, researchers and academics to establish further the discipline. At the same time, a lot of progress has happened in the last few decades. I think we should all realize that Project Management is a relatively new discipline that has a long road ahead.

**Naughton:** Has project management become a strategically important weapon for organizations?

**Pantouvakis:** In certain countries and industries, it has. But it is not universally accepted or even perceived in the same way. But, yes, I must admit that for some organizations it has become a strategically important weapon that has made the difference.

**Naughton:** What are your views on project portfolio management as enunciated by the major pm professional organizations such as IPMA and PMI?

**Pantouvakis:** We definitely need to see the greater picture and not merely study projects in isolation. It is not really the project we should care for, it is the portfolio of projects. But this is a wide topic to cover.

**Naughton:** What impact has your engagement with PM had on your career and thinking?

**Pantouvakis:** I strive to incorporate PM principles in every possible way. At the same time, I keep remembering that too many projects lacked a proper business case or even the appreciation of their environments only to prove too successful in the end. So this is a difficult question; I use PM as a tool but I dream beyond project management.

**Naughton:** How can PM and IPMA help to enhance/protect/develop the career prospects of our young and emerging professionals?

**Pantouvakis:** We need to guide young people through their career and provide them with knowledge, skills and practical experiences before, during and after certification. IPMA Education & Training Board is taking this into serious consideration.

**Naughton:** Have you any other comments/insights on the world of PM that you might like to share with us?

**Pantouvakis:** I would like to use the words of the Ancient Greeks borrowed by Rodney Turner in the opening of one of his presentations; Project Management should be based on 'pathos', 'ethos' and 'logos' in their true meaning and appropriate proportions. Project Managers should be knowledgeable and appreciative in different areas such as culture, history, story telling, diversity, psychology, and should be capable of producing acceptable (and not optimum) results by finding the perhaps only way that this may be possible. Project Management is, and should be considered, as fun and as 'going the extra mile'.



## About the Author



### **ED NAUGHTON**

*Institute of Project Management*

**Dublin, Ireland**



**Ed Naughton**, BE, C. Eng., F.I.E.I, IPMA-a, PMP, is the founder and current Director General of the Institute of Project Management of Ireland, the leading authority on the PM profession in Ireland. On the international front, Ed was responsible for initiating cooperation agreements with both the PMI (Project Management Institute) USA and the IPMA (International Project Management Association). He is Ireland's representative on the IPMA council of delegates, and a former Vice President-Marketing for the IPMA. He was also the first PMP registered in Ireland. Ed has researched, published and presented many articles and papers on project management and is the author of the Irish Project Management Competence Baseline. During his thirty year career, Ed has worked as a project manager and/or project management consultant on a large variety of high profile domestic and international assignments. Ed Naughton is a graduate of University College Dublin (BE, civil), a Fellow of the Institute of Engineers of Ireland, a Chartered Engineer (Ireland), a Professional Engineer in Canada, and holds an IPMA Level A certification. He is former founder and editor of the quarterly international publication "Project Management Practice". One of Ireland's most respected experts on the topic of modern project management, Ed is an executive advisor to PM World in Ireland. Ed Naughton lives in Dublin and can be contacted at [ed@projectmanagement.ie](mailto:ed@projectmanagement.ie).