

Project Management Report from Zagreb



Development of Project Management in Croatia

Successfully executed projects could serve as wind in its sails

By Gordana Blažević

Last year was a very successful year for the Croatian Association for Project Management, not only for its Young Crew, but also for the overall development of project management in Croatia. The most important events related to project management in Croatia that have marked the year 2013 are certainly the 27th IPMA World Congress and the Global Young Crew Workshop, that were held from 30 September to 3 October in the beautiful city of Dubrovnik. The Croats were given the opportunity to gain insight into the best practices in project management and thus upgrade their skills and competencies that will bring not only personal and professional benefits but also ensure national competitiveness in the future.

IPMA Excellence Award in Croatia

High efficiency projects and excellent project management have become the imperative of today's successful business and knowledge from this field is a *conditio sine qua non* for modern business leaders, and in that context Croatia is no exception. With the intention of raising not only the level of skills in project management, but also the awareness of its importance the Croatian Association for Project Management has granted the IPMA Excellence Award. The award identifies examples of excellent project management and acknowledges innovative projects. It supports professional project management in achieving high performance in projects and motivates project teams to identify and optimize the use of their strengths. The assessment process is based on the IPMA Project Excellence Model. As of this year, the Croatian Association for Project Management has established a national award for project management excellence.

The TriGranit d.o.o. company was declared as this year's gold winner for the construction of the Arena Zagreb shopping center, and we have interviewed TriGranit's project manager Mr. Leo Penović, who received this special award.

1. What does this award mean to you from a professional, but also from a personal point of view?

Receiving an award for the best-run Croatian project at the global IPMA Congress and in the company the world's best project managers, represents the recognition of the project management profession as well as a recognition of the work carried out by my project management team. I am particularly glad that Croatia is starting to recognize the profession of project management, along with recognizing the competence and excellence criteria in the field.

2. Considering the years of experience you have in the field of project management, would it be possible for you to draw a parallel between project management practices today and before a decade? What was the development path in Croatia? Have we achieved considerable progress?

During the past 10 years, projects and project management in Croatia were mainly the result of foreign investments. As a result of that specific context, good practices were implemented and respected in Croatia as well. Also, the realization of numerous infrastructure projects in Croatia enabled project management to form and establish itself as a profession. However, the current economic crisis and the reduction in the number of projects have led to reduced demand for project managers and thus the focus of experts and businesses shifted. In the present circumstances, it is essential to emphasize the importance of the success that project managers create under the conditions of limited resources and capital.

3. In your opinion, what could be a strong impetus to the further development of project management in Croatia?

The only thing that could serve as wind in its sails are successfully executed projects and joint action in the context of the profession. It is also important to continue with the activities that emphasize the principles of project management and the relationship between these principles and project success. The profession of project management must be unified and coordinated, with clear messages and goals. However, this development will not happen by itself, we must be the ones to encourage it.

4. You are currently working as a director on the „Sava Zagreb“ Project. Can you elaborate more on the project itself, and what are, in your opinion, the biggest challenges you're facing?

„Sava Zagreb“ is a multi-purpose project aimed at protecting the Sava river, planning and using its hinterland from the Slovenian border to Sisak. The primary objective of the project is to stabilize groundwater levels and raise the level of protection from flooding. Planning and development of the waterway and the energy use of the river are also an important dimension of the project. Due to the multifunctional character of the project and its great territorial scope, it has a large number of institutional stakeholders, 13 to be precise. They have to make strategic decisions about the direction in which the project will develop, and all the decisions must be taken by consensus. We have developed a project management scheme which focuses on stakeholders, but requires the coordination of large amounts of time and effort. Fortunately, all the stakeholders are aware of the importance of the project and are open for discussion.

5. Once the project is finished, what would you say your biggest satisfaction is?

When an executed investment project begins its life and starts to show the first results important for the project owners, the project manager knows that he did a good job. Getting asked to participate on new projects is also a great satisfaction, but it also represents a new and exciting challenge.

6. What would be your message to young people who are just starting a career in the field of project management?

When we talk about the engineering profession in the context of any discipline, then we can say that project management represents the highest level of an engineer's development. But, in order to achieve that level, one must gather experience in all phases of a project life cycle. The best project managers have gone a long way of development that is necessary to be crossed in order to understand all the processes and activities projects are consisted of and then to manage them successfully.



Mr. Leo Penović receiving IPMA Croatia Excellence Award in October 2013 from IPMA President Dr. Mladen Radjuković (photo courtesy of Jouko Vaskimo)

About the Author



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Gordana Blažević is a member of IPMA Young Crew and president of Young Crew Croatia. She was born in 1985., graduated Faculty of Civil Engineering from the University of Zagreb in September 2010. After graduation, she was working till September 2012 for company OPTIMA Project Ltd, a registered company for performing construction services, expert supervision, consulting and project management. After that, the Faculty of Civil Engineering at the University of Zagreb in the Construction Management Department employed her as a young research associate.

As a president of Young Crew Croatia Gordana is part of various projects on national and international level. She is also member of IPMA Marketing Working group.

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