

## Project Management Update from Turkey<sup>1</sup>



By **İpek Sahra Özgüler**  
International Correspondent  
Istanbul, Turkey

### The Outspeed Start-up Project

Interview with **Mustafa Tulu**  
President, PMI Turkey Chapter



Dear Mustafa Tülü, thank you for accepting my interview invitation about Outspeed Start-Up project. PMI TR has initiated a new project which aims to establish a dialogue between EU and Turkey to strengthen the foundational structure, organisation and management of early start-ups through utilisation of project management practices. Could you give some brief information about this project?

Outspeed Start-Up Project has stemmed from the observation that startups may not actively and effectively utilise Project Management tools and techniques in managing their business as a whole as well as their daily operations.

As newly formed commercial entities, start-ups aim to produce/introduce a product or a service and their initial main concern is to have the product/service ready for sale. With this focus and a long

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action list, they may not / do not pay attention to how they setup their operations routine and manage their limited resources in the most effective way possible. The inherent nature of start-ups typically requires that 2-3 co-founders do almost everything from prototype & product development, to business development; from marketing to sales and so on. If the foundation of a start-up is not set up correctly, problems start occurring long before the product or service is realised. Even if the business idea is valid and market research shows positive signs at the customer end, they may fail due to lack of organisation/structural issues or insufficient/unorganised planning.

In this respect, this project aims at strengthening the foundational structure, organisation and management of early Start-ups through utilisation of Project Management Best-Practices.

The funding application for the project was initiated by PMI Turkey Chapter, in collaboration with PMI France Chapter, PMI Bulgaria Chapter and PMI Slovenia Chapter in Feb 2018. The European Union funding is granted in March 2019 and the project officially started in April 2019. The project is closely monitored and evaluated by the Directorate of EU Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Turkey as well as the Central Finance and Contracting Unit at the Ministry of Treasury and Finance.

### What are the project objectives?

The Outspeed Start-up project aims at creating a long-needed project management practice guide tailor made for start-ups taking into consideration the very nature and needs of the emerging companies in the start-up ecosystem as one of its main goals. Specific objectives of the project include, but not limited to,

- Conducting current state analysis in France, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Turkey to better understand the management needs of Start-ups and their current practices
- Producing and publishing a Practice Guide explaining Project Management Tools and Methodologies specifically targeting Start-ups' needs based on Current State Analysis in all countries involved, Information exchange and best-practice sharing sessions with our EU Partners
- Providing training courses to at least 100 start-ups, 60 mentors and 2 incubation centre managers based in Ankara, İstanbul, Ljubljana, Paris and Sofia by using the Practice Guide mentioned above,
- Initiating a sustainable dialogue both between PMI Chapters as well as between Start-ups from countries in the scope through a web portal where experiences with the PM tools and methods outlined can be shared.
- Establish and strengthen the ties between the PMI Chapters for further collaboration in similar areas of work going forward.

Following artefacts will be produced during the course of this project:

- **Start-ups Survey Analysis and Comparison Report**

This report will be produced based on the survey carried out among 300 start-ups.

- **Start-ups Current State Final Analysis Report**

This report will interpret the survey results in tandem with mentors' and incubation centre managers' input.

- **Practice Guide for Start-ups on how to utilise Project Management Tools and Methodologies** (in English, Turkish, French, Slovenian, Bulgarian)

This Guide will stem from the aforementioned Final Analysis Report. The start-up experts and project management experts from PMI Chapters involved get together to consolidate the tools & methodologies suitable and realistic for start-up operations and foundations.

- **Overall Evaluation and Analysis of Project Impact and Learnings from Start-ups**

This final report will include detailed data as to how the project impact has been observed on start-ups from the countries involved, how we measure the project benefits as well as the learnings from start-ups throughout the project. The report will also outline how the dialogue between the PMI Chapters will be sustained going forward not only for start-up-related projects but also in any other ecosystem where Project Management tools and methods can help make a difference.



[Please introduce the project partners and explain the duties of them?](#)

During the application phase of the project, PMI Turkey contacted PMI France, PMI Slovenia and PMI Bulgaria. They all welcomed the project idea with enthusiasm and provided the necessary documents where needed. We would like to extend our gratitude to Alenka Gruden, Igor Mrzlikar and Miha Lenic from PMI Slovenia, Mihail Mihailov and Todor Todorov from PMI Bulgaria, Isabelle Levasseur and Mark Gray from PMI France for all their support during the application and implementation stage.

During the application stage, monthly meetings were held in order to fill out the application form with sufficient information. Since April 2019, we have the project team holds fortnightly meetings in order to keep track of the progress and take the necessary actions as per the roadmap.

In June, the Project Opening Reception took place in Ankara where all the partners were present. There will be further study visits in all 4 countries within the next 5 months.

As part of the project, PMI Chapters meet local start-ups, mentors, incubation centres, venture capital/angel networks to receive input about startups' needs, their current management practices and to raise awareness about the Project Management tools and methods in this ecosystem. The format of these meetings vary; there can be 1-2-1 meetings, seminars, speaking at an event, etc.

Additionally, the project team is working towards the production of the Project Management Practice Guide for start-ups. The chapters of the guide are assigned to different members of the team. The study visits allow the team to get together and do further brainstorming and exchange ideas about the matter.

Once the Practice Guide is published, the team will be delivering training courses to local start-ups in 6 cities (Paris, Ankara, İstanbul, Ljubljana, Sofia, İzmir).

Through these activities, PMI Chapters in these 4 countries will actively interact with start-ups, mentors and incubation centres to bring this community closer to Project Management world.

**What is the roadmap of this project? How has been the roadmap progress so far and what are the key deliverables?**

The roadmap of the project includes the following activities:

- Carry out the Current State Analysis and a Comparison study in all 4 countries
- Organise monthly events for start-ups, mentors, incubation centres
- Consolidate Project Management Best Practices for Start-ups through study visits
- Publish and Translate a Practice Guide for Start-ups on how to utilise Project Management Tools and Methodologies for their operational routine
- Create a web portal to facilitate experience sharing
- Organise sessions to train at least 100 start-ups
- Organise sessions to train at least 60 mentors
- Organise sessions to introduce the Practice Guide to at least 2 Incubation Centre Managers

The progress we have made so far is extremely satisfying. The survey work is completed and being carried out in all 4 countries. So far, we have received feedback from 154 start-ups and 82 mentors. This gives us the opportunity to evaluate startups' Project Management Maturity which enables us to gain insight about start-ups' knowledge and daily use of project management tools and techniques.

In addition to the Project Opening Meeting, we organised 4 events: 2 for start-ups and 2 for mentors and in the next 2 weeks, further 2 events and a webinar is planned. We have also participated 2 start-up events as a speaker.

Our outreach grows quite significantly thanks to mentors and incubation centres as they act as impact multipliers.

In parallel to these activities, we are working on the production of the Practice Guide. In addition to studying and assessing the relevance of the traditional PM tools and methods, we are also studying Design Thinking, Lean Startup, Agile and other relevant start-up related methodologies.

Additionally, we are in the process of laying out the Specification for the Web Portal which will act as the catalyser for continued PM-related interaction between start-up community actors.

Following the finalisation of the Practice Guide and the creation of Web Portal we will start the 2-day Training Courses for start-ups which will take place hand in hand with half-day informative sessions for mentors and incubations centres.

## About the Author



### **İpek Sahra Özgüler**

Istanbul, Turkey



**İpek Sahra Özgüler** graduated from the Istanbul University with the Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering and from Middle East Technical University with an MSc degree in Software Management. She became a certified PMP in January, 2012 and a certified SCRUM Master in 2014. She works as international correspondent at PMWJ. Before joining PMWJ, she worked for global multinational companies and leading local companies such as Coca Cola, Deloitte, Turkcell Superonline, Havelsan and TAV IT. Over the years, she has gained extensive experience in managing various medium and large scale projects, programs and portfolios.

Her article named “When I Decided to Develop Multi Processing Project Manager’s System” was published in the book “*A Day in the Life of a Project Manager*”. She has published several articles in the *PM World Journal* and one in PMI’s *PM Network* magazine. İpek is actively involved in sailing, writing and discovering new cultures. She can be contacted at [ipeksahra@gmail.com](mailto:ipeksahra@gmail.com).

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