

EMPOWERING A CITY

CASE STUDY

How project management skills are helping the Republic of Macedonia

“I’m sorry but you won’t be able to order a coffee during your exam,” Rik Ellis, a trainer with Novare Consulting, said. He was talking to a group of nervous candidates who were sitting the first ever PRINCE2® exams in Macedonia, the birthplace of Alexander the Great. Having just spent a week in a hotel in the capital Skopje, the candidates were used to ordering drinks throughout the day, and they were surprised they couldn’t have what they wanted during the exam.

“You can take water in with you, but that’s all,” Rik directed the twelve candidates, all of whom worked for the Macedonian government. As the candidates settled down to take the exam, Rik had a chance to reflect on the course he’d just run. “The hotel where we were based didn’t understand the concept of structured breaks, so my candidates were ordering refreshments whenever it suited them. We also had a six course lunch to enjoy every day, so the training days were much longer than they would be in the UK.”

Macedonia is a landlocked country - bordered by Kosovo, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Albania. Because of its geography, it has suffered an unfair share of wars and disputes. But despite this - or maybe because of it, Rik found the Macedonians to be warm and welcoming.

“The delegates had a very positive attitude. There was a great spirit of optimism in the classroom; the delegates were willing to learn and improve their skills.

The course I ran was designed to help government workers hone their project management skills. Now that Macedonia has applied to become a member of the EU, it wants to improve its public services and opportunities for its citizens. Project managers will help fast track Skopje to becoming a top European cultural destination.”

Macedonia has been admitted into the United Nations with the provisional reference of ‘The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’. It’s unfortunate that Greece opposes the use of the name ‘Macedonia’ and the term ‘Macedonian’ to denote the Slavic people of the Republic of Macedonia. However, it’s a long-running dispute that has no easy resolution.

The Macedonians are a proud people and prominent Macedonians are celebrated in sculpture, with statues honoring their heroes all over the city. The centerpiece is a statue-fountain-and-light-show in the main city square, Plostad Makedonija.

The candidates on this PRINCE2 project management course from the Ministry of Information Society and Administration were supported through the British Embassy in Macedonia. Novare Consulting, the accredited training organization that ran the course, won a tender to train the workers. Some were IT specialists; others were project managers, legal specialists, economists and tenders managers.

“The delegates embraced PRINCE2 and said it made a lot of sense to them. They could see how it would work and what a difference it would make. We discussed how it could be tailored and they liked this idea.”

Rik said that any course is made by the people in the room. He reported that all the delegates were engaged, positive and willing to learn whilst maintaining a sense of fun. One of the delegates was Neda Maleska-Sacmaroska, a Project manager working on the British funded programme ‘Support to Public Administration Reform’, implemented by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of Macedonia.



“The whole course exceeded my expectations.”

It was a great experience - extremely interesting and challenging. Since the training was based on project management practices that can be used in various situations it hit all the right spots. Some of the techniques and methods were more applicable to our work in administration, but we wanted to be able to tailor the best practice to our daily work. The course helped us think about what we could do to improve our processes and management practices.”

Neda enjoyed working with Rik throughout the course. She said, “Rik was fantastic, highly professional, experienced and fully committed to passing on his knowledge. Rik made the course serious, challenging and fun.”

Neda found the Foundation level course and exam wasn't too challenging, but the Practitioner was harder.

PRINCE2 is the world's leading project management methodology. It has been widely used and credited by many high profile projects – such as the London 2012 Olympics and the Maasvlakte 2 project in Rotterdam – as being the reason why successful outcomes have been achieved. The method is owned by UK government and examinations – administered by APMG-International - take place in countries throughout the world, in over twenty languages. This was the first time that PRINCE2 exams have run in Macedonia, which is testament to the Macedonian government's commitment to advancing its social and economic position.

One of the famous landmarks in the city is a new memorial to one of its famous children – Mother Teresa. The Nobel Prize winner, who was beatified in 2003, would no doubt have been pleased to see the citizens of her birthplace on the road to a new prosperity. And she would certainly have approved of the way the delegates applied themselves and helped each other through the course. In her words: “I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.”

As the newly qualified project managers put their skills to the test in their roles, the Macedonian people can look forward to more prosperous and peaceful times.



“The Foundation course was not too difficult, although it needs a fresh, young brain to memorize all the information! However, most of us found the time constraints of the Practitioner test quite challenging because English is not our first language.”

Talking about the language challenges, Rik said, “Macedonians are taught English from a young age, so they are very competent. However, as you would expect, queries did come up – especially where the same word had two meanings. The delegates really helped each other out. If someone wasn't clear on something, I would explain it in English, and if they still couldn't understand, then I would check the understanding of one of the delegates who did understand the concept by asking them to explain it back to me in English, I would then ask them to explain it to those who didn't understand it in Macedonian. I couldn't tell, of course, if the explanation in their own language was right which was a little uncomfortable, but we got through the course together and I was delighted when everyone did well in their PRINCE2 exams.”

Novare Consulting are Portfolio, Programme & Project Management Specialists so whether you require accredited training, tailored training, Programme Office solutions, coaching, mentoring, consultancy, competency frameworks we can help.

This year we have worked with Siemens on their Project Management Academy and with Atos to provide experienced Programme and Project Managers for a diverse range of projects. This is in addition to working with a wide range of clients both in the UK and overseas to deliver accredited PM Training.

Our experience of working with a large variety of clients in all sectors means that we are able to work with you to create the solutions that meet your organisational requirements and maximize benefits.

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