



BPM in Europe

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Earlier this year, my fellow BPM-Forum board member Jeroen de Groot and I were invited to speak at the first IPBPM Conference (Institute Portugal for BPM) in Lisbon, Portugal. On Monday morning, 8.30 a.m., we arrived at the venue to find nobody there; no visitors and nobody from the organization. Our first thoughts were that we were at the wrong location as the program was scheduled to start at 9.00 a.m. Eventually, members of the organization showed up around 9 a.m., and with the help of everybody, there the first workshop started around 9.30 a.m. Much to the confusion of the foreigners attending and speaking at the event, people were still walking in around 10.00 a.m. Was this the start of a bad day? No! What happened is that we were confronted with the cultural differences between two countries. It became obvious that there is no single right way to execute the process of organizing something. Different cultures often take a different approach from the one that you are accustomed to. The conference was a great success: well attended, with good quality speakers, and an excellent evaluation at the end. Congratulations to the chairman of the IPBPM, Jorge Coelho.

The fact that we were asked to speak was to a large extent based on a personal relation. The organization was in the hands of IPBPM, the local BPM community. They have a good instinct for sharing meaningful **local** BPM stories with the audience and whom to contact; on the other hand, whom to contact to include local case studies from other parts of the world is another question. That's a much more difficult situation, and, in many cases, finding the good people is either a matter of coincidence, the result of a personal relationship, or simply selecting the usual suspects.

Furthermore, with the ever-growing interest in BPM around the globe, more and more national non-profit BPM communities are being set up to support knowledge sharing. The main benefits of a national community are that information can be shared face-to-face in the local language, and local best practices may take into account the local culture. However, national communities, especially those recently set up, go through a steep learning curve to develop the community itself.

A number of board members from existing national BPM communities around Europe have confronted these two issues: 1) how to get access to local knowledge around the globe, and 2) how to set up and maintain a local BPM community. Board members from the various BPM communities met this summer to address these issues. The result was the formation of the "Process Community." The Process Community is an international non-profit organization. It aims to provide support to the boards of national non-profit BPM communities. Support can be provided for the development and management of the community itself, i.e., how to organize the BPM community. Further, local best practices can be shared, for example, by suggesting speakers, providing case studies, or facilitating international reference visits. So, the Process

Community actually proposes to practice what BPM advocates preach: BPM is about alignment, about Connect-and-Collaborate. By working together and collaborating with global networks like BPTrends.com, we aim to share our local experience and best practices around the globe.

The founding members of the Process Community represent Belgium (BPM-Forum Belgium), France (club des pilotes de processus, C2P), Ireland (Process Innovation Forum), Italy (BPMarea), the Netherlands (BPM-Forum Netherlands), and Portugal (IPBPM). To stress the international character, the chairman will rotate on a yearly basis through participating countries. Although this initiative is still in its youth, it seems to have found an eager audience, as we have requests from local BPM communities in Australia, Brazil, Austria, and Sweden to join. We hope that more BPM communities will follow soon.

How will the average BPM-Professional benefit from the Process Community? By connecting-and-collaborating on a local level, everyone will gain easy access to all those great local BPM stories that are currently untold. Furthermore, local boards will become more efficient in uncovering resources from a broader base.

Obviously, we need to take into account the Lisbon lesson and recognize our cultural differences when working together through the Process Community. Ironically enough, this was one of the main topics of Jeroen de Groot's presentation. He presented his assessment of how likely organizations in a country like Portugal would accept a BPM solution comparable to one in the Netherlands. His assessment was based on an extensive research carried out by Prof. Geert Hofstede in over 90 countries around the world on Cultural Dimensions. If you are going to cross a border, it's worthwhile to check out www.geert-hofstede.com.

For more information on the Process Community, please go to www.processcommunity.org.

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