

AN INTERNATIONAL ACCOUNTING STANDARDS SEMINAR FOR ROMANIAN BANKERS ORGANISED BY THE RBI AND THE ATTF

Between 14 - 18 April 2003, the Romanian Banking Institute organised together with the ATTF a seminar on International Accounting Standards for Romanian bankers. The seminar was very useful and complex, a good opportunity for Romanian bankers to find out more things on the latest developments regarding the IAS. The ATTF trainer, Mr. Marcus Peeraer kindly answered some questions regarding his activity in the field of bank accounting.

Welcome to Romania, Mr. Peeraer. Would you be so kind as to introduce yourself to the RBI newsletter readers?

I come from Belgium and I have been working as an independent consultant in the field of information processing within the financial sector. At this stage, I am especially focusing on the implementation of the International Accounting/Financial Reporting Standards (IAS/IFRS) in the banking and insurance industry.

I partly work as an advisor for a few Belgian banks and insurance companies and partly provide training on IAS/IFRS topics. Two of my training clients are the Belgian Bankers' Association (BBA) in Brussels and the Agence de Transfert de Technologie Financière (ATTF) in Luxembourg.

Tell us a few things about your collaboration with the Romanian Banking Institute.

The majority shareholder of the ATTF is the State of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the objectives of the ATTF are to provide technical assistance and promote the financial centre of Luxembourg to chosen target countries. One of these target countries is Romania. ATTF asked me to provide a seminar dealing with the IAS/IFRS on behalf of the RBI, as ATTF's counterpart in Romania. I felt very happy when the ATTF invited me, especially because ten years ago I already had the luck to provide seminars for the RBI dealing with the basics of EU bank accounting.

Would you please comment on the importance of the International Accounting Standards for the banking sector?

Within the European Union, all EU listed companies need to prepare for the first time financial statements complying with IAS/IFRS in 2005. 7,000 entities will be impacted and will have to prepare financial statements based on the same accounting and reporting principles.

At this stage the introduction of the IAS/IFRS accounting and reporting rules is still a matter of a consolidated reporting exercise and many entities will therefore still report on the basis of restatements. Due to the importance of the IAS/IFRS disclosures for banking supervision, the banking sector needs to be prepared for a different approach to information processing while finding the optimal balance between accounting processing and reporting processing.

We still don't know the exact time when the entire banking sector (listed or not) need to comply with the IAS/IFRS standards, but many banks are already aware that the impact on the banking sector will be huge. Banking supervision bodies, as users of IAS/IFRS based financial statements at individual banking level, are something different from share analysts as users of IAS/IFRS based financial statements at holding (group) level.

Taking into account all the above mentioned issues, what are the main objectives of your seminar and how do you plan to expand its topics?

My seminar is oriented towards the IAS/IFRS implementation at individual banking level and is therefore focused on accounting processing issues rather than on reporting processing ones. As the banking sector in Romania is already impacted by the IAS/IFRS standards, it is an advantage for me to be able to immediately concentrate within my seminars on processing issues. IAS/IFRS is at this stage in full revision and we expect many amendments, improvements and even new standards before the end of this year. Training IAS/IFRS is therefore a delicate matter and training topics must be chosen carefully, while explaining them in their old, amended context.

A two day seminar can therefore only highlight the present situation and warn against some of the implementation issues. Much more training is needed, both provided by local trainers and trainers from abroad.

I hope that I can remain involved in this training process. Romania was my first technical assistance mission abroad (1993) and will therefore always remain something very special to me.

A lot of things have changed in Romania. The professional bank-accounting knowledge level and the level of foreign languages knowledge, especially English, improved amazingly. So, I am sure that, in a very short time, EU can learn from the IAS/IFRS implementation experiences of the Romanian banking sector.

Reporter

