

Licensure and Professionalism in Eastern Europe

The Eastern European nation of Romania lies with the Black Sea to the southeast and Hungary and Ukraine to the north. From 1947 to 1989 Romania was a Communist state that made the difficult transition to free market status in 1989. Nicolae Ceausescu, after 21 years as president and virtual dictator of Romania, was arrested by the army and executed on Christmas day, 1989, along with his wife Elena. The next four years was a struggle to convert to a democratic capitalist form of government. A new constitution was finally adopted in 2004 that *guaranteed protection of private property*. (Romania joined NATO in 2004 and the European Union in 2007.)

This recent history of Romania is similar to several other countries that have accomplished transitions from nationalized property systems to privatization of properties back into citizen ownership, a concept guaranteed by the state according to the new Romanian constitution. We in the West have little understanding or comprehension of the enormity of this transition and what it has meant to institutions like the surveying profession. For example it has meant constructing a national cadaster, parcel by parcel.

I visited Bucharest in September and participated in GeoPreVi 2017 International Symposium organized by the Romanian Union of Surveyors, the Romanian Association of Private Surveyors, the Faculty of Geodesy, Technical University of Civil Engineering, Bucharest and FIG. One aim of this conference was the promotion of “intelligent technical solutions to ensure safer and more valuable property for the benefit of society” while raising awareness about “the importance of the development of sustainable land administration for economic growth and about the role of surveyors in all these matters to the public and among stakeholders.”

I participated on a panel discussion titled “Self-Regulated Profession from Land Administrative Perspective” at which we had a discussion on the concept of self-regulation for surveyors in private practice. They are, and have been for several years, seeking legislation that will give them the power and responsibility of licensure of surveyors. I recited for them the difficulty we have had with politicians and legislators who argue that licensure is merely a device to limit entry into the profession, thereby protecting fee structures. The only purpose of licensure of surveyors, I argued, is the protection of the public against unqualified practitioners. And that is the argument they must make without implying self-regulation for self-serving purposes.

All of this reminded me first, of the critical importance of the surveying profession in a market-based economy in which private property ownership and security of tenure is a primary concern; and second, of the critical importance of professionalism in surveying. Licensure is one aspect of the definition of professionalism and we must never lose sight of that aspect of the protection of the public as in the words of the Romanian surveyors: “intelligent technical solutions to ensure safer and more valuable property for the benefit of society.” ■

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