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## Country Focus

November 2009

# Letter from the Direct Selling Association

by Dan Marius Dumitras, Chairman

TWENTY years ago Romania emerged from the Communist era ready to embrace economic and financial independence.

It was a perfect environment for direct selling, supported by new commercial laws which encouraged small business ventures.

The first such organisation was Safe Invest, an Austrian insurance company. Today there are more than 80 such companies with a significant number of locally-based organisations. Of these, 36 are members of the Romanian Direct Selling Association (RODSA) which has the approval of the Ministry of Justice, Romania.

Since the association was set up in 2002, we have worked with the government and other statutory authorities to establish legal guidelines and ensure compliance by members and other organisations to protect the public and help raise credibility and the image of the industry. There are no obstacles to people joining a direct selling company although taxation of individuals who sell direct is an ongoing issue, which we are hopeful will soon be satisfactorily resolved.

One of the primary aims of the association is to enhance and maintain standards and a code of ethics, and we work proactively with the media to warn against any activity which breaks this code.

We have instigated an academic programme with several universities to raise the profile of direct selling / network marketing as a career option for marketing or business graduates. We also run training workshops and national conventions to encourage sharing of best practice and ensure members keep up to date with legal and financial regulations.

Romania's acceptance in 2007 as a full member of the European Union provided fresh momentum through increased confidence and the industry is thriving. I believe it has entered the final phase of evolution – the selection stage - where only the strongest and best-run companies will survive.

Last year's growth rate was 14.7 per cent over 2007, a drop from previous year (31 per cent) but nonetheless impressive taking into account current economic conditions and comparing very well to other countries. One of the consistently top-performing companies is Forever Living Products while the best Romanian company last year was Life Care (see story page 11).

We support our members in many different ways to ensure they can develop and grow their business for long term sustainable success. We communicate through our website and a regular newsletter and we have hosted authors and speakers of international reputation to share their knowledge and experience. At our annual general meeting in November we will announce the results of a nationwide survey to explore the attitudes and views of Distributors to gauge how well the industry is performing and any areas that need to be addressed.

Next year we are planning a conference to demonstrate that we now have a mature and well run industry. It will be the first event of its kind, open to the public and an opportunity for everyone to see first-hand the potential for ordinary people to achieve financial independence. Those who wish to run a small home-based business can earn between €150 - €200 a month while at the other end of the scale we have some multi-level-marketing leaders who are earning more than €8,000 a month.

The biggest challenge remains one of credibility which is why our association works hard to educate and inform people so they can have confidence in this opportunity – something which would have seemed impossible 20 years ago.

There are many individual success stories showing how this industry has changed their lives, acquiring self-confidence and new skills to reach their dreams. Our aim is to help even more people achieve this goal.

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