

AHK Romania president Anastasiu: Pandemic hit half of business milieu, the hardest is yet to come

Half of Romania's business community is affected by the coronavirus pandemic and hundreds of thousands of people have lost their jobs, but the hardest is yet to come, because the deadlines for certain taxes and bank installments are closing in, says Dragos Anastasiu, president of the Romanian - German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (AHK Romania) and member of the Coalition for Romania's Development, in an interview for AGERPRES.

Anastasiu points out that October 25 is the milestone for the payment of certain taxes, and that bank and leasing installments will become due as of January 1, which will hit hard the sectors that have started shutting down again.

He also suggests that the state should be a partner of the business environment, meaning that while businesspeople pay each month all kinds of taxes and dues, in the time of hardship the state should at least shoulder the burden just as entrepreneurs do.

"It's not the businesspeople's fault that many activities have been closed for two - two-and-a-half months, or others for even longer, see the restaurants, hotels, carriers, events, theaters, sports, it's because of the Romanian state (...) that slammed the hammer on the table. It should then assume the consequences," said Anastasiu.

"I believe that the state should come up with hard money and not just with guarantees, not just with loans and European money, it should put in Romanian money, from the state budget. We are in talks with them on various areas, like for instance HoReCa, hotels, travel agencies and this will have to happen. But I am afraid that this year it will be difficult to impossible to do," he remarked.

"There are areas with almost zero revenues - HoReCa, hotels, carriers, rent-a-car businesses, plus all their suppliers. They should be offered tax forgiveness, they shouldn't be required to pay taxes. Now they are just rolling them over because they have not been canceled but just rolled over. It's an option, but on the other hand the amounts keep building up and the moment you have to pay you will be suffocated. Therefore, probably the only solution is to cancel these taxes," added Anastasiu.

The AHK president also says that the way Romania is perceived abroad has been shaped in the 30 years since the beginnings of its democracy "by the killing of the Ceausescu couple on Christmas Day, continuing with the miners' rampage, the wave of asylum seekers eating swans in Austria, bank robberies, by the fact that Romanians are skilled hackers and maybe ending up with the countless beggars from all over Europe, or most likely from all over the world; all these were the building blocks that have contributed to a certain image." But the state should have stepped in to compensate with the good parts of Romania "starting with its natural beauties and tourist potential and ending with its human potential and so on. We had good parts too. A five-million strong diaspora has proven to foreigners that they are a reliable workforce, which is a very good side. Their leaving abroad was a misfortune for Romania, but then again they did good for Romania's image and for Romania's economy, because they sent home money more than any other investor, as a nation. Romanian expats have invested more than Germany, which is the largest investor in Romania," Anastasiu said.

In conclusion, he voices his opinion that "a country must be run like a company."

"Romania, with its tremendous potential, is in a good place in the sense that we have to see where we started from. It could have been even better had its political class and entrepreneurship been next level. We have slowly reached next level and I think that now is our time. And even if the pandemic shakes us a little, we are still getting closer ...

you can't have a super-performing political class overnight, you can't have a super-performing entrepreneurship in no time, but believe me, there has been some amazing progress in the last five years. And lately in the political class too. There are new people in politics who get the others moving. So I am optimistic that things can get better," said the head of AHK Romania.