Tendencies in the European and Hungarian Management Consulting Market

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SUMMARY

There are two main approaches in the relevant literature of consulting: the first approach emphasises that consultants are helpers; they help clients with solving their problems. The second approach, which views consulting as a special professional service, is used by professional associations and institutes of management consultants. I would like to summarise the different approaches and definitions of management consulting in the relevant English and German literature, evaluate the development of the definitions, and integrate the different approaches. After delineation of the complex definition of management consulting, I will summarise tendencies in the European and Hungarian management consulting market based on surveys of the European Federation of Management Consultancies Associations (FEACO) in the period 1998-2011.
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INTRODUCTION

There is no common definition of management consulting in the relevant literature. We lack unambiguous, common definitions in the area of consulting, which would be the basis or the essential condition for making a fair international comparison. Here I summarise the different approaches and definitions of management consulting available in the relevant English and German literature. Then I shall evaluate the development of the definitions, and attempt to integrate the different approaches.

APPROACHES AND DEFINITIONS OF MANAGEMENT CONSULTING

There are two main approaches in the relevant literature of consulting:

- The first approach takes a broad view of consulting. Peter Block suggests that "You are consulting any time you are trying to change or improve a situation but have no direct control over the implementation… Most people in staff roles in organizations are really consultants even if they don't officially call themselves consultants" (Block 2000, p. 2).
- The second approach views consulting as a special professional service and emphasises characteristics that the consultant must possess. The essential points and fundamental principle of management consulting are included in the definition of Larry Greiner and Robert Metzger, which has been quoted in a number of books and articles: "Management consulting is an advisory service contracted for and provided to organizations by specially trained and qualified persons who assist, in an objective and independent manner, the client organization to identify management problems, analyse such problems, recommend solutions to these problems, and help, when requested, in the implementation of solutions" (Greiner and Metzger 1983, p. 7.) The first approach emphasises that consultants are helpers: they help managers or anyone else solving problems. In this approach a manager can also act as a consultant if he or she gives advice and help to employees rather than directing orders to them. The second approach views consulting as a special professional. This approach is used by professional associations and institutes of management consultants. According to the European Federation of Management Consultancies Associations (Federation Européenne des Associations de Conseils en Organisation, or FEACO), "These services help private and public organisations to analyse and redefine their strategies, to improve the efficiency of their business operations and to optimize their technical and human resources." (FEACO 2012, p.11).

The two approaches can be regarded as complementary rather than conflicting. Management consulting can be viewed as a professional service and as a method of assisting organisations to improve management and business practice.

There is no doubt that management consulting has developed into a specific sector of professional activity and should be treated as such (Kubr 2002). At the same time it is also a method of providing practical advice and help. In this relation not only full-time consultants, but also many other technically competent persons can act as consultants. These people may take part in research, systems development, project development and evaluation, and/or give practical advice to clients. In this relation also coaching can be treated as a borderland of consulting.

The International Coaching Federation (ICF 2006) defines coaching as an ongoing partnership that helps clients produce fulfilling results in their personal and professional lives. Through the process of coaching, clients deepen their learning, improve their performance, and enhance their quality of life. The coach's job is to provide support to enhance the skills, resources, and creativity that the client already has. The ICF defines coaching as "partnering with clients in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximize their personal and professional potential" (ICF, 2012). The coach supports the manager in recognising problems, and identifying when the old solutions are not effective anymore, and helps him or her to improve his or her own solution. The substance of coaching is to put the right question at the right time. A consultant can also act in the role of coach, when instead of offering concrete suggestions to improve effectiveness and increase success, he or she puts the client on the way to finding a solution.

It would be effective if not only full-time consultants were hired but also other technically competent persons whose main occupation may be research, systems development, project development and evaluation or teaching. To be effective they need to have consulting skills and to observe the fundamental behavioural rules of professional consulting, and it is worthwhile for consultants to be familiar with and apply coaching as a work method.

Development of the Definition of the Management Consulting in the Relevant English and German Literature

Traditionally the scope of the services offered by management consultants was confined to functions, subjects and problems regarded as a part of management, although the scope of "management" has never been fully and accurately defined. "Management consultants were keen to stick to their business and maintain their identity, and most of them were not particularly seeking to broaden their services and explore new territory" (Kubr 2002, p. 27).

In recent decades this attitude has changed dramatically: management consultants have started to rethink and redefine their business, widening and enhancing their service offerings. The complexity of management consulting has grown in both the national and international environment. Based on surveys on business consulting in 2001 and in 2005-06 (Tokár-Szadai 2008) according to the opinion of clients one of the most important factors in choosing a consulting firm was the complexity of the service. The consultants have to follow the national and international trend: the growing demand for integrated professional services.

This tendency can be noticed in the changes in the definition of management consulting. According to the European Federation of Management Consultancies Associations – established in 1960 – "Management consulting is the rendering of independent advice and assistance about management issues. This typically includes identifying and investigating problems and opportunities, recommending appropriate action and helping to implement those recommendations" (FEACO 2006). This definition is applied by the members of FEACO (for example the Association of Management Consultants in Hungary (Vezetési Tanácsadók Magyarországi Szövetsége), (VTMSZ1994 and the Bundesverband Deutscher Unternehmensberater (BDU 2012)).

Although neither the name of the 50-year-old Associations of Management Consultants nor the definition it employs has changed in the last decades, they emphasise the widening and enhancing of consulting service, so that it is not narrowed to the traditional classical management consulting activity. They have recognised this alteration, and recently they do not define "management consulting" on their websites (ICMCI, FEACO, ASCO, 2012). In Table 1, we can see how FEACO defined the areas of management consulting services between 2000 and 2004 (FEACO, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004).

FEACO segmented the management consulting market into five key service lines: Operations Management, Information Technology Consulting/IT Implementation, Corporate Strategy Services, Human Resources Management and Outsourcing Services. Corporate strategy services target improving the long-term strategic health of a company, while Operations Management consulting services target the improvement of the operational aspect of an organisation. IT consulting services target improving the way the client stores, retrieves, disseminates and utilises information, which is one of the most important resources in organisations nowadays. Human resources consulting services target improvements in the people element of an organisation. Outsourced services are activities that the client previously carried out within its normal structure and resources, but now chooses to contract out to a consultant or another service provider.

Table 1
Management Consulting Service Line of FEACO, 2000-2004

Corporate Strategy Services – Strategic Planning / Organisation Development – Mergers & Acquisitions – Market & Competitive Intelligence – Sales / Marketing / Corporate Communication – Financial Advisory – Other	Information Technology – IT Consulting – IT System Analysis, Design, Development & Integration – Other
Operations Management – Business Process Reengineering – Change Management – Customer / Supplier Relation Management – Project Management – Turnaround / Cost Reduction – Purchasing & Supply management – Other	Human Resources Management – HR Strategy & HR Marketing – Executive Coaching – Recruitment / Search & Selection – Benefits, Compensation & Retirement – Performance Measurement & Management – Training & Development – Talent Strategies – Other
Outsourcing	

In the last few decades management consulting has developed and changed considerably; it has widened and its complexity is growing continuously. In this new environment, "consultants have felt the need to stress that their field of activity is no longer management consulting (narrowly and rigidly defined), but business consulting (a wider concept and service portfolio) or consulting to management, consulting to business or organizational consulting (more open concepts permitting the service portfolio to be easily adjusted as opportunities and demands change)" (Kubr, 2002. p. 27). Although the Management Consultants Associations haven't changed their name or definition, but they emphasize the widening and development of the service. The meaning of management consulting is changing and widening; nowadays it can be interpreted as business consulting.

Taking into consideration new tendencies in the management consulting (MC) market, FEACO changed categories in 2005 (FEACO 2005) to those shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Management Consulting Service Line of FEACO, 2005

Business Consulting ⟹	Business Consulting – Strategy Consulting – Operation Management – Project Management – Change Management – Human Resources Consulting
IT Consulting	
Development and Systems Integration	
Outsourcing	
Other services	

Source: FEACO 2005

We see in the table that IT Consulting was divided into two categories:

- Information Technology Consulting (ITC) helps organisations to evaluate their IT strategies with the objective of aligning technology with the business process. These services include strategic planning and conceptions, operations and implementations.
- Development and Integration includes the development of applications (including software): the creation of new functionalities through, often tailored, processes developments. Usually these developments integrate or unite internal or external business processes and can involve a conversion of applications so that they can be used for different platforms or conceptions, and the design of services which integrate applications which were created in different existing IT applications or infrastructures (system integration -development).

The previous separately recorded "Strategy Consulting" and "Operation Management Consulting" both became part of "Business Consulting". Earlier "Project management" and "Change management" were part of "Operation Management Consulting", now they are recorded separately as a part of "Business Consulting"."Other services" is a new category: previously it was not recorded separately, rather as a part of other areas.

Permit me to remark that data before 2005 are not comparable directly with data after 2005. We can ensure comparability theoretically with the contraction of certain categories, but in practice comparability is not holistic. Comparing the FEACO Survey of the Management Consultancy Market in 2004 with that in 2005 we can see a "jump": for example the rate of IT Consulting in Hungary increased from 8% to 51% between 2004 and 2005. The reason for this is not a rise in the importance of IT Consulting, but that some activities – those previously recorded as either "Operation Management" or "Strategy Consulting" – are now classified as IT Consulting because of the change and detail of categories.

In the German-speaking countries "Unternehmensberatung" is used, which means "entrepreneurship consulting". BDU (Bundesverband Deutscher Unternehmensberater – Federal Association of German Management Consultants) translates "Unternehmensberatung" into "management consulting", emphasising that its interpretation is wider than classical management consulting and stressing its complexity. Management consulting, IT consulting, and Human Resources Consulting are the parts of Unternehmensberatung. The two divisions of management consulting are organisation and strategic consulting (BDU, 2006). The categories used by BDU are not directly comparable with the categories of FEACO. Interestingly BDU has recently returned to the earlier categories of FEACO (BDU 2009, 2012). Vogelsang calls management consulting "universal" consulting, and he also stresses the complexity of the service (Vogelsang 1992).

Though integrating the previous definitions and approaches and taking into account the basic characteristics and fundamental principles of management consulting the following definition can be made: Business consulting is an independent professional advisory service contracted for and provided to client organisations in order to add value: knowledge and other resources are used to increase effectiveness to achieve other business and organizational purposes. Business consultants assist in an objective and independent manner the client organisation to identify management problems and purposes, they perform the required surveys, analyses and evaluations, recommend solutions to fulfil the aims of the client organisation assist clients to identify and seize new opportunities and help, when requested, in the implementation of solutions.

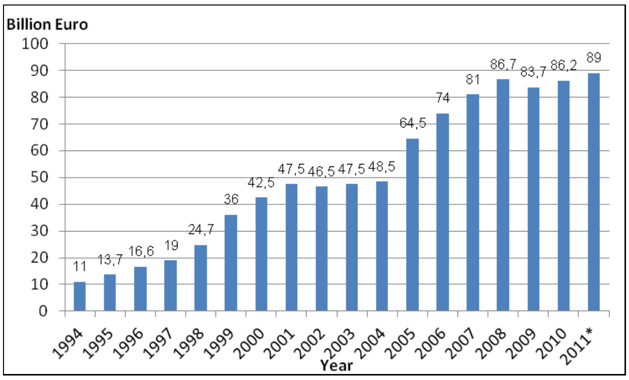
Briefly, in short: Business consulting is an independent, objective service, providing professional assistance in order to achieve business and organisational purposes.

In this article I use "management consulting" in its widened and complex meaning as a synonym of business consulting.

European and Hungarian Management Consulting Markets

After delineation of the complex definition of management consulting, I'd like to summarise tendencies in the European and Hungarian management consulting market based on the surveys of the European Federation of Management Consultancies Associations (FEACO) between 1998 and 2011. FEACO reports are considered to be representative, because the countries delivering data cover 80% of the total European management consulting market. Data were evaluated on a statistical basis, using data and variance analysis to prove the reliability of the results (FEACO, 2008-2012).

According to the international standards of FEACO, the areas of Business Consulting, IT Consulting, Development and Systems Integration, Outsourcing and Other Services are all included in Management Consulting. Between 1994 and 2011 the management consulting market in Europe grew at an average annual rate of 13%. For the first time in more than 25 years, consulting revenues decreased by 2% in 2002. The European consulting market makes up about 33% of the international consulting market (Gross and Poor 2008). Figure 1 shows the development of the European turnover in management consulting.

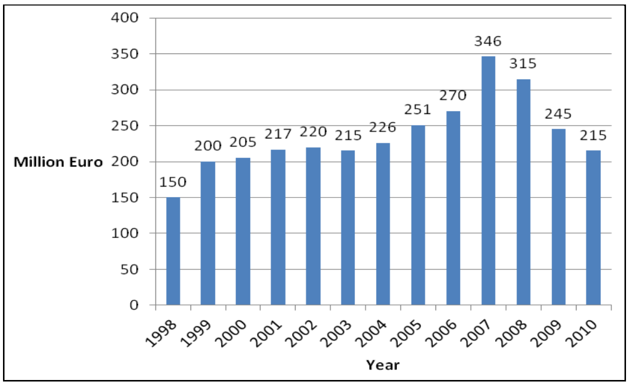


*estimated value
Source: FEACO 1998-2011

Figure 1. Size of the European MC market, 1994-2011

The European management consulting market went through some major changes and difficulties in the beginning of this century. It was influenced by currency pressures, global economic stagnation, the collapse of some industry sectors and a number of other effects, such as scandals, the growing number of consultants finding jobs by the recommendation of their earlier clients, the widening of clients' consulting knowledge. However, the annual growth rate went up to 2.1% in 2003, and the marketplace returned to the size it had been in 2001.The management consulting market in Europe has continued the upward trend of the previous years. After several years of incremental growth, the MC market experienced a slight decline in 2009, but it seemed to be only a temporary downfall: in 2010 the volume of the industry had almost reached its 2008 level. According to estimates, the MC sector is on target to beat the record with an optimistic forecast of 89 billion Euros in 2011 (FEACO 2011). It should be mentioned that these years do not give a uniform picture of European countries. In 2010 the highest decline occurred in Hungary at -12% and in Greece -11.2%, while there are some countries that reported increases (for example Switzerland +5.6%, Germany 5.3%, France 5% and Portugal 4.8%).

Hungary makes up the 0.25% of the European management consulting market (215 million euro in 2010). Figure 2 shows the development of the Hungarian turnover in management consulting in million euro.



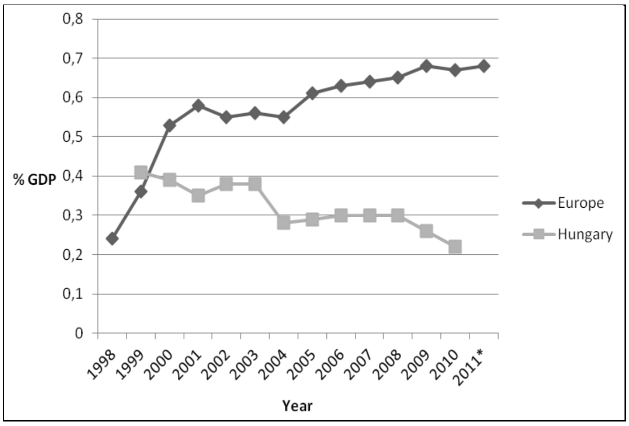
Source: FEACO 1998-2011

Figure 2. Size of the Hungarian MC market, 1998-2010

The Hungarian management consulting market followed the European trend between 1998 and 2007. In that period, the management consulting market in Hungary increased at an average annual growth rate of 9.7%. In 2003 consulting revenues decreased for the first time, by 2.27%. In 2008, the total turnover of the Hungarian MC market accounted for €315 million, which represents a 9% decrease in total turnover compared to 2007. Demand for most consulting services has fallen, due to the deep recession. The growth rate in 2009 was -22.2%. The total turnover of the Hungarian Management Consulting market was 215 million euros in 2010 (30 million euro less than in 2009) and the decline for the Hungarian MC market was -12%. Hungary predicted a -10% decline for 2010 in the previous year, thus revealing a realistic forecasting scheme. The anticipation for 2011 is more optimistic, with a growth rate of 2.5% projected for 2011 (FEACO, 2012).

One way of measuring the importance of the consulting industry in a country is by considering consulting revenues as a proportion of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). The European average was 0.67% in 2010. According to the data of FEACO Germany is at the top with 1.13%, followed by the UK with 1.1%, Sweden with 0.95% and Spain with 0.93%. These countries were above the European average. Hungarian consulting revenues formed 0.27% of the GDP in 2010. The lowest was Poland with 0.09%. Figure 3 shows the development of the European and Hungarian management consulting revenues as a percentage of the GDP in the last 13 years.

The European management consulting market grew at a higher rate than the European Gross Domestic Product. The consulting intensity, measured as the contribution of the management consulting sector to the GDP, increased from 0.24% to 0.67% between 1998 and 2010. The intensity of the growth was different: at the turn of the century (1998-2001) it was very fast, partly because of the introduction of the euro in many countries. After the decline in 2002 the upward trend continued up to 2009. The MC market shows a 0.01 decrease from 2009 to 2010, which means no actual change. For 2011 results are expected to show a return to the 2009 level.

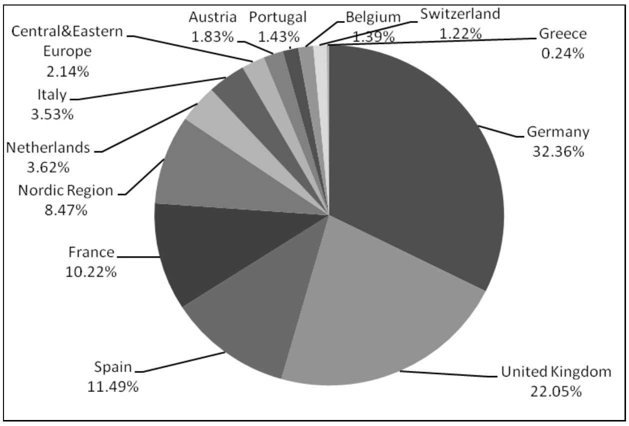


Source: FEACO 1998-2011

Figure 3. Management consulting as a percentage of GDP for Europe (1998-2011) and for Hungary (1999-2010)

In the end of the last century the management consulting revenue as a percentage of GDP for Hungary was above the European average. In the last 11 years it has decreased from 0.41% to 0.22%: the Hungarian GDP grew more than the Hungarian management consulting market. The reason for this can be the settling down of the Hungarian management consulting industry after the "heroic age" of the early nineties.

Figure 4 shows the European management consulting market composition by country / region for 2010.



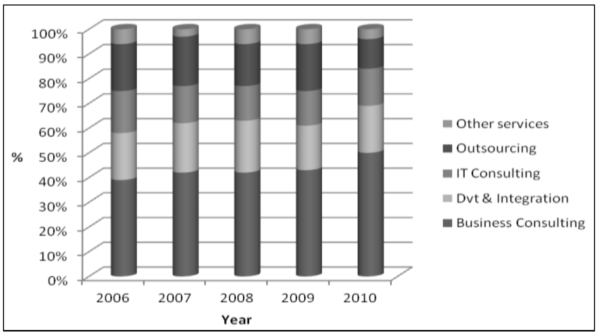
Source: FEACO 1998-2011

Figure 4. Composition of the European MC market by country/region, 2010

The turnover in management consulting was 27,900 million euro in Germany and 19,009 million euro in the United Kingdom. These two countries are the major markets in Europe, accounting for 54.4% of the whole European consulting market. Spain takes third place with 9,903 million euro (11.5%). Central and Eastern Europe accounts for only 2.14% of the whole European consulting market (2,000 million euro in 2010). The Hungarian turnover in management consulting was 215 million euro in 2010, making up about 11.4% of the Central and Eastern European market and 0.25% of the European market.

Figure 5 shows the spending on consulting services in Europe broken down by the percentage spent on key service lines between 2006 and 2010 (that is, using FEACO's revised categories).

Business Consulting is the most robust service line, having increased by 11 percentage points between 2006 and 2010. It now accounts for 50% of the European Management Consulting Market.



Source: FEACO 1998-2011

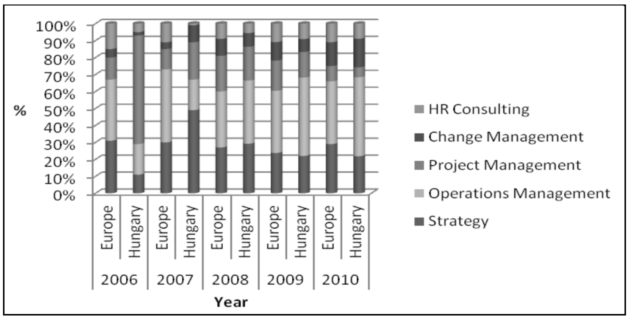
Figure 5. Distribution of the European MC market by service line, 2006-2010

IT consulting services are targeted at improving the way organisations store, retrieve, disseminate and utilise information. IT consulting and IT System Development and Integration are its key areas. At the turn of this century it was the most important consulting activity in Europe because of the fear of the effects of "the Year 2000" on computer systems and due to preparations for introducing the euro. After 2000 and the successful introduction of the euro its importance began to decrease, but it is still the second most important consulting area. Since FEACO divided IT Consulting into two categories in 2005, Development & Systems Integration has overtaken IT Consulting. The proportion of these IT categories together accounted for 34% in 2010.

The Outsourcing Service Line accounted for 19% in 2009 with a 7% decrease in 2010. Outsourced services are activities that the client previously carried out within its own company, with its own resources, but now chooses to contract out to a consultant. More and more business and management processes and functions are regarded as suitable for outsourcing, and many developments in IT focus on enlarging the scope and enhancing the efficiency of outsourcing. These developments cover issues such as reliability, confidentiality, speed of data transfer and worldwide access to business information. In larger IT and management consulting firms, outsourcing has become the fastest-growing area of service and an indispensable source of stable and long-term income (Gonda, 2005).

Other services consist of a variety of services provided by many Management Consulting Companies that are generally complementary to Consulting. Categories here include: Training, Engineering Consulting, Outplacement, Executive Selection and Recruitment, and Audit and Accounting. Other Services, already small, lost 2 percentage points and now its share stands at 4% (FEACO, 2012).

Figure 6 shows the breakdown of Business Consulting (BC) turnover in Europe and in Hungary, 2007-2010:



Source: FEACO 2007-2011

Figure 6. Breakdown of business consulting turnover by topic in Europe and in Hungary (%), 2007-2010

Organisation/Operations Management (OM) aims at the integration of business solutions through Business Process Reengineering (BPR), Customer/Supplier Relation Management (CRM), Turnaround/Cost Reduction, and Purchasing and Supply Management, as well as advice on outsourcing. While there was an unexpected decline in Organization/Operations Management turnover from 2007 to 2008 in Europe, this line of Business Consulting has begun to rise again (FEACO, 2010). The importance of consulting services targeted at improving the operational aspect of an organisation increased constantly and most dynamically in Hungary, growing from 18% to 47% between 2007 and 2010, which is much higher than the European rate (37% in 2010). Operations Management has been the most important area of Business Consulting in Europe and also in Hungary since 2008.

Strategic Planning Development, Mergers & Acquisitions, Sales, Marketing, Corporate Communication Financial Advisory and HR Strategy are included in Strategy Consulting (SC), which targets the improvement of the long-term strategic health of a company. The importance of this consulting area decreased in the beginning of this century up to 2009: organisations prefer to deal with their strategic affairs and solve their strategic problems inside their own company. Strategy increased its share of BC turnover from 24% to 29% in Europe in 2010. Corporate strategies have been the most important areas of business consulting in Hungary since 2007. Following the European trend, its importance has decreased continuously in the last four years, from 49% to 22%, and since 2009 it has been lower than the European average.

Project Management (PM) is described as "[t]he application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to a broad range of activities in order to meet the requirements of a particular project" (FEAO, 2011, p. 11). Only one line of Business Consulting declined from 2009 to 2010 in Europe and that was Project Management. It decreased continuously from 2008 to 2010 (form 21% to 9%). In accordance with the European trend, its importance decreased continuously also in Hungary in the last years (from 22% to 6%).

Change Management (CM) "consists of services which, on top of any other type of consulting service, help an organisation deal with the effects that change has on the human element of the organisation" (FEACO, 2009, p. 11). Compared to 2007 the market share of Change Management tripled in the year 2010. It increased constantly and most dynamically in Europe since 2007 to 2010 (from 4% to 14%). Similarly to the European trend, the importance of Change Management increased from 2008 to 2010 also in Hungary (from 8% to 17%).

Human Resources Consulting (HR) services are those which "target the improvement of the 'people' element of an organisation through performance measurement and management, reorganisation of benefits, compensations and retirement schemes, HR strategy and marketing, the development of talent strategies and executive coaching" (FEACO, 2011, p. 11). Analysing the breakdown of Business Consulting revenue, the most stable market share in Europe, at 11%, comes from Human Resources Consulting. In Hungary this rate increased from 1% to 9% from 2007 to 2010; this improvement was continuous, but this rate was 2 points lower than the European average in 2010.

TENDENCIES IN THE HUNGARIAN MANAGEMENT CONSULTING MARKET

The total turnover of the Hungarian management consulting market was 215 million euro (30 million euro less than in 2009) and the change for the Hungarian MC market was –12% in 2010 (FEACO, 2011, p. 26).

In the private sector, demand for most consulting services has fallen, due to the deep recession. The growth rate in 2009 was -22.2% (FEACO, 2010. p. 28). Clients were committed to carrying out only projects of vital importance, in almost each case related to cost cutting and increasing efficiency. A lack of commitment to long-term development was the characteristic client behaviour in 2008 and 2009. In the public sector, spending on consulting became more cautious due to scandals (for example BKV scandal (Pénzes 2009)). Corruption cases cast a shadow on the profession. The only driver has been the availability of EU funding – though it can have only a limited impact on the profession (FEACO, 2009, p. 27).. According to their opinion the number of bunglers increased in the Hungarian consulting market. They can ruin the image of the professional consultants with their unethical behaviour. One solution can be to popularise the reputation of membership of VTMSZ (Association of Management Consultants in Hungary), which demands professionalism and ethical behaviour from its members.

The estimate for 2011 was more optimistic, with a growth rate of 2.5% projected for 2011 (FEACO, 2011, p. 26). There was a remarkable dominance of Business Consulting within Management Consulting (47%) in 2010. IT Consulting is quite strong in Hungary (36%) and in the United Kingdom (25.9%).

Small firms generate almost half of the total Hungarian MC turnover at 45%. They are followed by the major players, accounting for 32%, and by medium-sized firms, yielding 23% of total turnover (FEACO, 2009, p. 27).

CONCLUSION

There are two main approaches in the scientific literature of consulting: the first approach emphasises that consultants are helpers that help clients solve problems. The second approach views consulting as a special profession; this approach is adopted by professional associations and institutes of management consultants.

In the last decades management consulting has developed and changed, widening its scope and increasing its complexity continuously. The meaning of management consulting is changing and widening; nowadays it can be interpreted as business consulting. The classification of FEACO is accepted in many countries, enabling us to make international comparisons.

New tendencies in the management consultant (MC) market take into consideration FEACO's new categories, changed in 2005. Data before 2005 are thus not directly comparable with data after 2005. We can ensure comparability theoretically with contraction of certain categories, but in practice comparability is not holistic.

The European consulting market makes up about 33%of the global consulting market (Gross and Poór, 2008). For the last 10 years (2001-2011) the management consulting market in Europe has a grown at an average annual growth rate of 6.5%. It went through some major changes and difficulties in the beginning of this century, influenced by global economic stagnation, economic crises, the collapse of industry sectors and a number of other factors.

The annual study of FEACO which maps European management consultancy market also considers the distribution of management consulting turnover among countries. This enables us to compare the data of more-developed and less-developed countries. Applying correlation-analysis to GDP and management consultancy turnover, and to the GDP per capita on purchasing power parity as a share of EU-27 average and the revenue per consultant we can receive similar results: there is a strong, positive relationship between our variables ($r=0.888$, $p=0.00$). Based on the analysis of 24 European countries, a strong, positive correlation can be found between the application of management consulting services and the level of economic development.

The fluctuation of GDP in time and the revenue of consultants are in a strong, positive relationship according to the correlation analysis ($r=0.751$, $p=0.008$): Booms are beneficial for consultancy, more entrepreneurs can afford to hire consultants, contributing to their faster development; stagnation in the economy results in the stagnation of consultancy as well.

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