Romania is one of the countries that have to fight frequently the waters' rage. This summer 100 families in Dolj and Mehedinti counties lost their dwellings in devastating floods. Every year some other hundreds of Romanians in various regions of the country end up in the same situation and depend on the state's help to rebuild their dwellings. But the authorities' support is hardly enough and covers only a small part of the damages. The insurances for dwellings and goods could solve the issue, but most Romanians still consider them luxury products and do not buy them. During the crisis the civil auto liability insurance (RCA) is the only one that sells, on a market that fell 5% last year and is expected to decline between 7% and 10% this year, Ileana Horvath, the president of UNIQA Asigurari, told Bucharest Herald.

BH: What is the growth potential of the insurance market in Romania, compared with other markets in the region?

Ileana Horvath: The development potential of the Romanian insurance market is very high compared with the other markets in the region. The Romanian insurance market dropped 5.29% in the first quarter of the year, against the first quarter of 2009.

The floods which occurred recently in Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia should draw an alarm signal for the Romanians as well, who should star buying insurances. The Polish, which this year faced the biggest floods in the past 160 years, in which over 100 people died, have insurances. This is why the insurance companies have huge losses, but people recover their damages. In Romania most people are not insured and the insurers do not have losses in case of calamities. Only a few cars, of those taken by the floods in the past years had CASCO insurances, but the houses and the goods inside the houses were not insured. Yet we had and we still have floods every year and many TV shows talk about a future earthquake, people are not scared and they do not change their mentality. Another reason why people do not buy insurances is the lack of financial resources. The high level of poverty determines people to expect aid from the state only.

BH: What is the stage of the mandatory dwelling insurances and when will the sales begin?

Ileana Horvath: In the case of the dwelling insurances the sales are still waiting. The data base programme is not ready yet. The local authorities do not have the possibility to identify all the private property dwellings, as there are many dwellings which were not declared at the fiscal authorities. All the dwellings built without permits, in areas prone to landslides, on the shores of the rivers, cannot be insured. The number of dwellings, private property, is estimated at 8 million to 8.5 million units. We hope that the first mandatory dwelling policy will be sold in autumn.

BH: What will be the evolution of the market this year and what are the growth engines?

Ileana Horvath: I think the insurance market will decline between 7% and 10% this year, maybe even more, but it will definitely not stagnate. I do not see any growth engine.

The structure of the car ownership has changed. By 2009 more than 80 per cent of the car owners had new cars. Now the number of second hand cars has stared to increase, because the value of the car is declining and in case of an accident the probability of the damages reaches a higher value, it even reaches the value of the car. Many transporters are conserving their car fleets, not only because the price of the fuel has increased, but also because they do not have contracts any more. If there will be massive lay offs the area of potential customers will decline further

BH: How did UNIQA Asigurari act to minimize the effect of the decline?

Ileana Horvath: Last year UNIQA Asigurari went though a large re-branding process and internal organization, adjustment to UNIQA Group standards and following some market research we discovered that Romanians, even if they do not know many things about the insurances, want the same things the foreigners want: simple insurances, which they can understand, at good prices.

An innovative solution launched by our company last year and which was very well received and appreciated by our customers was UNIQA MeteoAlert. This is a free benefit attached to any insurance product, offered supplementary only to the customers of UNIQA Asigurari. UNIQA MeteoAlert warning consists in receiving a text message on the mobile phone or on the e-mail address, which informs the client that an extreme meteorological event, such as storm, snow fall or hail fall, will happen in his or her location. He or she is also offered advice about the protection measure he or she should take.

We established a partnership with 500 car service units which insure quality mending services and the clients who use these services, benefit from franchise exemption for the first damage. All these measures facilitated a lot the damage process.

BH: What were the financial results of UNIQA Asigurari in 2009?

Ileana Horvath: In 2009 we posted a 2.47 million RON profit. It was a very profitable year, because in 2008, when the company was taken over by UNIQA Group, it registered a 143 million RON loss. But 2010 brings many more constraints, we are just facing the real financial crisis. In the first quarter of the year the underwritten premiums declined compared with the first quarter of 2009. We ended 2009 with a volume of underwritten premiums of 496.7 million RON. We had a 2% decline against 2008 and we have a 10% growth target for 2010, but this target can be modified after making a budget rectification.

The market declined especially in the case of general insurances. Then RCA insurances are the only ones which still sell, because they are mandatory. For CASCO insurances the general decline was of 25.62% and in the case of UNIQA Asigurari, the CASCO dropped by 10.5% in the first quarter of the year.

BH: Right now the insurance market is dominated by foreign insurance groups. Do you have signals regarding new insurers which could enter the market in 2010, possibly through acquisitions?

Ileana Horvath: I do not think that this year we will witness entries on the insurance market, as the big names are already present in Romania. The first ten players own more than 90% of the market and in this period I do not think that there are insurers interested in Romania. There are already insurance companies which ended their activity and their portfolios are transferred to other companies. There are insurance companies which disappear and this will be the tendency by 2013, because in 2013 the new European solvability principle, Solvency II, which will impose a very important capital requirement will be applied and many small companies might not be able to respect this requirement.

Ileana Horvath: Romanii se confrunta cu inundatii devastatoare in fiecare an, dar tot nu isi asigura locuintele si bunurile

Romania este una dintre tarile care trebuie sa se lupte frecvent cu furia apelor. Vara aceasta 100 de familii din judetele Dolj si Mehedinti si-au pierdut casele in inundatii devastatoare. In fiecare an, alte sute de romani din diverse regiuni ale tarii ajung in aceeasi situatie si depind de ajutorul statului pentru a-si reconstrui locuintele. Dar ajutorul autoritatilor este departe de a fi suficient si acopera doar o parte din pagube. Asigurarile pentru locuinte si bunuri ar putea rezolva problema, dar multi romani le considera inca produse de lux si nu le cumpara. In perioada crizei, asigurarea de raspundere civila auto (RCA) este singura care se vinde, pe o piata care a scazut cu 5% anul trecut si al carei decline este estimat intre 7% si 10% anul acesta, a declarat pentru Bucharest Herald, Ileana Horvath, presedintele UNIQA Asigurari.

BH: Care este potentialul de dezvoltare al pietei de asigurari in Romania, comparativ cu alte piete din regiune?

Ileana Horvath: Potentialul de dezvoltare al pietei de asigurari din Romania este foarte mare comparativ cu celelalte piete de asigurari din regiune. Piata de asigurari din Romania a scazut in primul trimestru cu 5,29% fata de aceeasi perioada a anului trecut.

Inundatiile care au avut loc in ultima vreme in Polonia, Cehia, Ungaria, Slovenia ar trebui sa traga un semnal de alarma si pentru romani, care ar trebui sa inceapa sa isi faca asigurari. Polonezii, care s-au confruntat anul acesta cu cele mai mari inundatii din ultimii 160 de ani, in care au murit peste 100 de persoane, au asigurari. Tocmai de aceea companiile de asigurari au pierderi uriase, dar oamenii isi recupereaza pagubele. In Romania, in mod contrar, oamenii nu sunt asigurati in mare lor majoritate si asiguratorii nu au pierderi in cazul unor astfel de calamitati. Doar cateva masini din cele luate de apa in timpul inundatiilor din ultimii ani au fost asigurate CASCO, dar in niciun caz locuintele si bunurile din ele. Cu toate ca am avut si avem inundatii an de an, iar despre cutremur se vorbeste in toate emisiunile de televiziune, oamenii nu se sperie si nu isi schimba mentalitatea. Un alt motiv pentru care nu se intampla acest lucru este lipsa de resurse financiare. Saracia accentuata ii face pe romani sa astepte ajutor numai

din parte statului.

BH: In ce stadiu se afla proiectul asigurarilor obligatorii pentru locuinte si cand va incepe vanzarea acestor asigurari?

Ileana Horvath: In cazul asigurarilor de locuinte vanzarea inca asteapta. Nu este gata inca programul bazei de date: autoritatile locale nu au posibilitatea sa identifice toate locuintele proprietate personala pentru ca sunt foarte multe locuinte care nu au fost declarate la autoritatile fiscale. Sunt multe locuinte in Moldova care nu sunt intabulate. Locuintele noi, aparute peste noapte, nu figureaza la administratia financiara. Toate locuintele construite fara autorizatie, in albia raurilor, in zone supuse alunecarilor de teren nu sunt asigurabile. Se vorbeste despre 8- 8,5 milioane de locuinte proprietate personala. Speram ca in toamna sa se poata vanda prima polita de asigurare obligatorie a locuintei."

BH: Care va fi evolutia pietei anul acesta si care sunt motoarele de crestere?

Ileana Horvath: Cred ca piata asigurarilor va scadea intre 7% si 10% anul acesta si poate chiar mai mult, dar in niciun caz nu va fi vorba de o stagnare. Nu vad niciun motor de crestere a activitatii de asigurari.

Structura parcului auto s-a schimbat. Pana in 2009 mai mult de 80% din parcul auto era compus din masini noi. Acum a inceput sa creasca numarul de masini second hand si situatia e mai grava, pentru ca valoarea autoturismului scade, iar in caz de accident probabilitatea daunei se apropie de o valoare cat mai mare, poate chiar de valoarea totala a masinii. Multi transportatori si-au bagat in conservare parcul auto nu numai pt ca s-a scumpit carburantul, dar nu mai au contracte. Daca se vor face concedieri in masa, se va reduce si mai mult aria de potential asigurabil.

BH: Cum a procedat Uniqa Asigurari pentru a minimiza efectele declinului?

Ileana Horvath: Anul trecut UNIQA Asigurari a trecut printr-un amplu proces de re-branding si de organizare interna, de aliniere la standardele UNIQA Group, iar in urma unor cercetari de piata am constatat ca romanii, chiar daca nu stiu foarte multe lucruri despre asigurari, vor aceleasi lucruri pe care le vor si strainii: asigurari simple si pe care sa le inteleaga, cu tarife avantajoase.

O solutie inovatoare lansata de compania noastra inca de anul trecut a fost UNIQA MeteoAlert. Acesta este un beneficiu gratuit atasat oricarui produs de asigurare si este oferit suplimentar doar clientilor UNIQA Asigurari. Avertizarea UNIQA MeteoAlert consta in primirea unui mesaj pe telefonul mobil (sau pe adresa de e-mail) prin care clientului i se aduce la cunostinta ca va avea loc, la adresa sa de domiciliu, un fenomen meteo extrem: furtuna, zapada abundenta, grindina, etc. I se ofera si sfaturi despre masurile pe care trebuie sa le ia pentru a-si pune la adapost bunurile sau chiar sa se protejeze el insusi.

Am stabilit un parteneriat cu 500 de unitati reparatoare care asigura necesarul efectuarii unor

reparatii de calitate, iar clientii care apeleaza la aceste service-uri beneficiaza si de scutirea de fransiza la prima dauna. Toate aceste masuri au fluidizat foarte mult procesul de dauna.

BH: Care au fost rezultatele financiare ale lui 2009, pentru UNIQA Asigurari?

Ileana Horvath: In 2009 am avut un profit de 2,47 milioane de RON. A fost un an foarte fructuos, pentru ca in 2008, cand compania a fost preluata de grupul UNIQA, a inregistrat o pierdere de 143 de milioane de RON. In schimb, 2010 aduce mult mai multe constrangeri, consideram ca abia acum ne confruntam cu adevarat cu criza financiara. In primul trimestru al anului primele brute subscrise au fost inferioare primului trimestru al anului trecut. Am incheiat anul 2009 cu un volum de prime subscrise de 496, 7 milioane de RON. Am avut o scadere de 2% comparativ cu 2008 si ne-am propus o tinta de crestere de 10% pentru 2010, dar aceasta tinta poate fi modificata dupa ce vom face o rectificare bugetara.

Piata a scazut mai ales in cazul asigurarilor generale. Asigurarile RCA au ramas singurele care se mai pot vinde, pentru ca sunt obligatorii. Pentru asigurarile CASCO, scaderea general a fost de 25,62%, iar in cazul UNIQA Asigurari, scaderea pe segmentul CASCO in primul trimestru a fost de 10,5%.

BH: In acest moment piata asigurarilor este dominata de grupuri straine de asigurari. Aveti semnale referitoare la asiguratori noi care ar putea intra pe piata in 2010, eventual tot prin achizitii?

Ileana Horvath: Nu cred ca anul acesta vom asista la intrari pe piata de asigurari, pentru ca marile nume sunt deja prezente in Romania. Primii 10 jucatori detin mai mult de 90% din piata si in aceasta perioada nu cred ca mai sunt asiguratori interesati de Romania. De exemplu, exista deja societati de asigurari care si-au incheiat activitatea, iar portofoliul acestora este transferat altor companii. Dispar societati de asigurari si aceasta va fi tendinta pana in 2013, pentru ca in 2013 se va aplica noul principiu european de solvabilitate, Solvency II, care va impune o cerinta de capital foarte importanta, iar foarte multe societati mici nu vor purtea raspunde acestei cerinte.