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INTERVIEW

IEEE ComSoc Latin America Region

Interview with Yessica Sáez, IEEE ComSoc LA Region Director

by Stefano Bregni, Global Communications Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, IEEE Division III Director, and Yessica Sáez, IEEE ComSoc LA Region Director

This article continues the series of ten interviews with the Officers of the IEEE ComSoc Member and Global Activities (MGA) Council for the term 2024–2025, which will be published every month in the Global Communications Newsletter.

In this series of articles, I introduce the Vice-President and the six Directors on the MGA Council (namely: Member Services, Industry Outreach, and AP, NA, LA, and EMEA Regions), as well as the three Chairs of the Women in Communications Engineering (WICE), Young Professionals (YP), and Sister Societies Standing Committees. In each interview, one by one they present their sector activities and plans.

In this issue, I interview Yessica Sáez, IEEE ComSoc LA Region Director.

Yessica is an Electronics and Telecommunications Engineer, holding degrees from the Technological University of Panama and advanced certifications in higher education from the Isthmus University of Panama. She completed both her master's and doctoral degrees in Electrical Engineering at Texas A&M University in College Station, Texas, USA. Currently, Yessica serves as a Researcher Professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering at the Technological University of Panama and is the Research Coordinator at the Azuero Campus. She is also a member of Panama's National Research System (SNI), the Awards and Recognition Representative of the IEEE Panama Section, and the Regional Director for Latin America of the IEEE Communications Society (ComSoc), a member of the IEEE ComSoc Global Women in Communications Engineering Committee (WICE), and the Coordinator of the Research Group on Telecommunication Engineering and Intelligent Systems Applied to Society (ITSIAS).

Stefano: Hello Yessica! Would you like to begin by introducing the Latin America Region to our readers? What are its main characteristics?

Yessica: Hello Stefano and thank you for the opportunity. The Latin America Region is vibrant and diverse, encompassing over 600 million people across various countries, each with unique cultural and economic backgrounds. Major nations like Mexico and Brazil anchor the region's telecommunications landscape with well-developed markets. However, despite this development, there are significant disparities in telecommunications coverage throughout the region.

Latin America is characterized by its rapid technological adoption and a growing digital consumer base, making it an important area for telecommunications expansion and innovation. Yet, the challenge remains to bridge the digital divide and ensure more uniform access to technology across urban and rural areas. This is where organizations like ComSoc play a crucial role in fostering industry connections, advocating for technology access, and supporting professional growth in the telecommunications sector.

This is your first time serving as IEEE ComSoc LA Region Director. How was your first impression when you were appoint-

ed? And on the first days, after you started serving in your new position? What was the first difficulty you faced?

When I was first appointed as the IEEE ComSoc LA Region Director, I felt an immense sense of honor and responsibility. The opportunity to lead and contribute to the growth of the telecommunications community in such a diverse and dynamic region was both exciting and humbling. My initial days in this role were filled with enthusiasm and a strong desire to make a positive impact.

During those first days, I focused on understanding the unique needs and challenges of our region. One of the initial difficulties I faced was aligning the various initiatives and activities across different countries to ensure a cohesive strategy. Given the diversity and size of the Latin America Region, it was essential to establish strong communication channels with chapter chairs and members. This required a concerted effort to coordinate effectively, understand local issues, and tailor our programs to meet the specific needs of each area. Overcoming this challenge has been crucial in setting a solid foundation for our future initiatives.

The Distinguished Lecturer Program (DLP) and the Distinguished Speaker Program (DSP) are particularly appreciated by our members. What are the activities of your LA Region under these ComSoc Programs?

The Distinguished Lecturer Program (DLP) and the Distinguished Speaker Program (DSP) are highly valued by our members for their role in bringing expert knowledge and cutting-edge research to our region. In Latin America, we have been actively engaging with these programs to enhance the professional growth and technical knowledge of our members. The biennial 2022–2023 period was particularly successful, with numerous virtual and in-person lectures held across the region, including nine virtual lectures and several Distinguished Lecturer Tours in Brazil, Mexico, Colombia, and Ecuador. These events received excellent feedback and helped attract new members to ComSoc.

For 2024, our board intends to continue promoting the Distinguished Lecturer Program for IEEE ComSoc Latin America. We'll work closely with chapter chairs and members to organize these lectures. The website has been updated with the complete list of distinguished lecturers for 2024. We encourage our chapters to request DL sessions through the available form, coordinated with our DLT/DSP Coordinator, Fabricio Braga. To date, we have already approved four DL tours and received many other DL requests, reflecting the high interest and engagement from our members.

What are other membership activities in the LA Region, that you consider most significant, and you would like to highlight in particular?

In addition to the Distinguished Lecturer Program (DLP) and the Distinguished Speaker Program (DSP), we have several other significant membership activities in the Latin America Region that greatly benefit our members. One of the key activities is our regional conferences and workshops, which provide valuable opportunities for networking, knowledge sharing, and professional development. These events, such as the IEEE Latin America Conference on Communications (LATINCOM), bring together professionals, researchers, and students to discuss the latest advancements in telecommunications and related fields.

Furthermore, we have been actively promoting student engagement through various initiatives, including the Student Branch Chapters and the IEEE ComSoc Student Competitions. These activities encourage students to participate in technical challenges, develop their skills,



Stefano Bregni



Yessica Sáez

and connect with professionals in the industry. Additionally, we focus on industry collaborations and partnerships to bridge the gap between academia and industry, providing our members with insights into practical applications and emerging trends in telecommunications.

Thank you for mentioning LATINCOM, which is the IEEE ComSoc flagship conference in the Latin America Region! As you know, I have been involved in many editions of LATINCOM over its 15 years of history begun in Medellín, Colombia, in 2009. Currently, I am the Chair of the LATINCOM Steering Committee.

This year, IEEE LATINCOM will be back to its origin in Medellín, Colombia (6-8 November 2024). As LA Region Director, you are going to organize an LA Region Chapter Chair Congress in conjunction with IEEE LATINCOM 2024 in Medellín. Might you anticipate something of what you and your Board are preparing?

Thank you for bringing up LATINCOM, which indeed holds a special place as IEEE ComSoc's flagship conference in the Latin America Region. I appreciate your long-standing involvement and leadership in this significant event. This year, as we bring IEEE LATINCOM back to its origin in Medellín, Colombia, from November 6-8, 2024, we are filled with excitement and anticipation.

As the LA Region Director, I am thrilled to announce that we will be organizing an LA Region Chapter Chair Congress in conjunction with IEEE LATINCOM 2024. This congress will serve as a platform for our chapter chairs to come together, share insights, and collaborate on strategies to enhance our region's impact. We are preparing a series of workshops, panel discussions, and interactive sessions focused on best practices in chapter management, membership engagement, and industry collaboration. Additionally, we will introduce new initiatives aimed at fostering innovation and professional development within our chapters. Our goal is to empower our chapter leaders with the tools and knowledge they need to drive growth and make a significant impact in their local communities. We are confident that this congress, held alongside the esteemed LATINCOM conference, will be a milestone event for our region.

What are the most difficult challenges to face in the LA Region?

One of the most difficult challenges we face in the Latin America Region is bridging the digital divide. While countries like Brazil and Mexico have well-developed telecommunications markets, many areas still suffer from inadequate coverage and limited access to high-speed internet. This disparity creates significant barriers to ensuring that all members can fully participate in and benefit from IEEE ComSoc activities.

As LA Region Director, a major challenge I struggle with is attempting to increase our membership and engagement across the region. Despite the region's large population, we currently represent only about 4% of the global ComSoc membership. There is substantial potential for growth, especially in countries with strong telecommunications industries like Brazil. However, this requires concerted efforts in outreach, demonstrating the value of membership, and fostering stronger connections with both academic institutions and the industry.

In conclusion, some of the most serious challenges we are coping with in the Latin America Region involve membership retention

and the engagement of young professionals. While we have been successful in attracting new members, retaining them remains a significant challenge. We need to continuously demonstrate the value of IEEE ComSoc membership by providing relevant and impactful activities, resources, and networking opportunities.

Engaging young professionals is another critical area. As they transition from student life to their professional careers, we must ensure that they see the continued value in remaining active members of IEEE ComSoc. This involves creating targeted programs and events that address their specific needs and interests, such as career development workshops, mentorship programs, and opportunities for professional growth and leadership within the organization. By focusing on these areas, we aim to build a vibrant, sustainable community that supports members throughout their careers.

And what about Students? Do you organize regularly any specific activities for them?

Students are a vital part of our community in the Latin America Region, and we organize several activities specifically tailored for them. One of our key initiatives is the IEEE ComSoc Student Competitions, which provide students with opportunities to engage in technical challenges, showcase their innovative projects, and gain recognition for their work. These competitions not only enhance their technical skills but also encourage teamwork and creativity.

Additionally, we regularly support and promote Student Branch Chapters across the region. These chapters host various events, such as technical workshops, guest lectures, and networking sessions, enabling students to connect with professionals and peers, learn about the latest developments in telecommunications, and develop their professional networks.

Looking ahead, we are excited to announce plans for a student regional congress, which we aim to hold either this year or next. This congress will be a significant event, bringing together students from across the region to participate in workshops, discussions, and collaborative projects. It will provide an excellent platform for students to share their ideas, gain insights from experts, and build lasting connections within the IEEE ComSoc community.

Let us conclude with some happy news. What is the best news in Latin America of this year?

To conclude with some happy news, we have several exciting developments to share from the Latin America Region this year. One of the highlights is the success of the DLT program.

Additionally, we are proud to announce the increasing recognition of our members' contributions to the field of telecommunications. Several members have received prestigious awards and honors for their innovative research and professional achievements. Furthermore, we are excited about the upcoming RCCC and the IEEE LATINCOM 2024, which will be held in Medellín, Colombia, and promises to be a significant event for our region. These successes highlight the strength and potential of the IEEE ComSoc community in Latin America, and we look forward to building on these achievements in the coming year."

COMSOC CONFERENCE

Highlights of IEEE/IFIP Network Operations and Management Symposium (NOMS 2024), Seoul, Korea

by James Won-Ki Hong, Pohang University of Science and Technology, South Korea (General Chair), Myung-Sup Kim, Korea University, South Korea, Baek-Young Choi, UMKC, USA, and Roberto Riggio, Polytech Univ. of Marche, Italy (TPC Co-Chairs)

The 2024 IEEE/IFIP Network Operations and Management Symposium (NOMS 2024) was held at the K-Hotel Seoul during May 6-10, 2024, in the vibrant city of Seoul, Korea. It was a momentous occasion as NOMS returned to Korea after 20 years, following the successful NOMS 2004. The conference theme for NOMS 2024 was "Towards intelligent, reliable, and sustainable network and service management." As technology evolves, we witness the rapid deployment of 5G networks worldwide and the emergence of 6G on the

horizon. Backbone networks, optical networks, and their convergence play pivotal roles in supporting mobile/wireless networks, the Internet of Things (IoT), metaverse applications, smart cities, autonomous vehicles, healthcare, and network twins. Exciting advancements like generative AI and large language models (LLMs) are reshaping the landscape of network operations and management.

KEYNOTES

The conference featured six keynote addresses by distinguished experts from academia, industry, and government. Jinbae Hong, President of IITP, Korea, gave the first keynote titled "Network Innovation and the Future of Digital Transformation in Korea." The second keynote was delivered by the Head of Network R&D Lab at KT (Korea Telecom), Jongsik Lee, and the title of "AI-Driven Evolution of Cloud-Native Networks." The third keynote was given by Deep Medhi, Program Director at NSF, USA. Deep gave a talk on "Networking, Distributed Computing and Systems due to Huge Scientific Workflows with Implications for Monitoring and Management." The fourth keynote speech was given by Prof. Hanna Bogucka from Poznan University of Technology, Hungary with the title of "Security of Open Radio Access Networks." The fifth keynote was deliv-

ered by Charlie Zhang, EVP, of Samsung Electronics, with the title of “6G: Future Telecom for the AI Era.” The sixth and last keynote was delivered by Laurent Ciavaglia, Head of Network Management Data and Intelligence, Nokia with the title of “What if Networking,” giving a visionary exploration of the future networking, integrating network digital twins, AI advancements, and sustainable practices.

DISTINGUISHED EXPERT PANEL

A Distinguished Expert Panel titled “Securing Critical Infrastructure: Navigating IoT Challenges and Ensuring Systematic Visibility” was held as the last session on the fourth day of the symposium to explore cloudification, AI/ML integration, and advancements in mobile networks towards 6G. The DEP panelists were Hanna Bogucka (PUT, Poland), Laurent Ciavaglia (Nokia, France), Hyungoo Lee (Ericsson-LG, Korea), and Alberto Leon-Garcia (U. of Toronto, Canada).

PANEL SESSIONS

The conference included five-panel sessions covering various hot and timely topics:

Panel 1, Securing Critical Infrastructure: Navigating IoT Challenges and Ensuring Systematic Visibility — discussed the challenges and importance of enhancing visibility to manage cybersecurity risks in critical infrastructure, with a focus on the Internet of Things (IoT).

Panel 2, Advances and Impacts of SmartNICs in Modern Data Centers — reviewed recent advances and research challenges in SmartNICs, exploring their rapid evolution and significant impact on network processing and data center operations in the era of Artificial General Intelligence.

Panel 3, Global Insights: Exploring International Research Funding Opportunities — illuminated international funding opportunities for research across various disciplines, covering strategies for building partnerships and understanding successful application criteria, thereby helping attendees better leverage grants and navigate collaborative projects to advance their research.

Panel 4, Digital Network Twins for Network Management — aimed to unite researchers, experts, and practitioners to share insights and discoveries, fostering collaboration and innovation to address the challenges and opportunities in the evolving field of network digital twins.

Panel 5, Generative AI for Network Management — highlighted the strategic application of data-driven AI to enhance efficiency and innovation in managing complex network systems, previewing discussions for the GAIN Workshop and offering thought leaders a platform to share visions, debate challenges, and explore the integration of Generative AI into network management for greater automation and sustainability.

TUTORIALS

Eight tutorials on hot and timely topics were offered to the attendees to provide in-depth knowledge and use cases on the first day and last day.

Tutorial 1: Optimization for Network Digital Twins

Tutorial 2: QUIC Protocol Security

Tutorial 3: Reinforcement Learning in Network Protection

Tutorial 4: Greening Networks for Sustainability

Tutorial 5: Reputation Systems in 5G/6G Networks

Tutorial 6: Adaptive Video Streaming

Tutorial 7: Multi-5G/6G Autonomous Networks Federation

Tutorial 8: Integrity Attestation in Distributed Infrastructures

FULL PAPER TECHNICAL SESSIONS

50 full papers in 13 technical sessions were scheduled and presented throughout the conference, focusing on critical areas like network security, generative AI for network management, AI for SDN/NFV, monitoring, traffic management, IP networks, AI applications, performance management, cloud management, and edge networks. AI was a hot enabling technology that was being used in many aspects of network and service operations and management this year.

MINI-CONFERENCE SESSIONS

33 short papers were presented in eight mini-conference sessions on the first day and last day and covered emerging research in 5G/6G technologies, federated learning, blockchain, IoT, security, communication protocols, AI, and performance management. Each session was chaired by experts from leading academic and research institutions.



Demo session.



Best paper awards ceremony



K-Pop performance at the banquet

EXPERIENCE SESSIONS

Experience sessions presented papers that dealt with various experiences in actual operations and management by various telcos and service providers. This year they focused on network monitoring, orchestration, and security. AI/ML network services, RAN energy consumption, and SDN-based network slicing.

POSTER SESSIONS

Six poster sessions provided a platform for presenting cutting-edge research on network technologies, security, AI/ML, IoT applications, cloud computing, and data analytics.

DOCTORAL SYMPOSIUM

The doctoral symposium offered a venue for Ph.D. students to present their research on networks, softwarization, and security. Sessions were chaired by leading researchers, providing valuable feedback and networking opportunities.

DEMO SESSIONS

There were 15 demos for three days of the conference, each day with 5 demos. The demos included demonstrations of research prototypes on the following topics:

1. Dynamic management of Bluetooth Mesh Networks using Digital Twin technology.
2. Preparations for the 6G era with the Internet of Edges.
3. Orchestration of multi-tenant code updates across programmable switches.
4. Verification of telecom service fulfillment procedures using

Digital Twin.

5. Hierarchical software-defined control for coordinated RAN and PON-based transport scaling.
6. Detection of silent network failures.
7. AI/ML proactive network service relocation for multi-admin domain scenarios.
8. Energy consumption demonstrations of radio access networks in container clouds.
9. Reliable cloud-native 5G and beyond networks using in-network computing.
10. An adaptable AI assistant for network management.
11. Rapid prototyping of network-slicing solutions in SDNs.
12. Virtual lab frameworks for teaching network automation and SDN.
13. SDN-based mitigation of synchronization attacks on microgrids.
14. Dynamic QoS for high-quality SD-WAN overlays.
15. Network security automation with a demo playbook for posture assessment.

WORKSHOPS

There were six co-located workshops on Monday and Friday. The following were the workshops and the latest hot topics they focused on:

1. AnNet 2024: Focused on AI and data analytics for network services.
2. MFI5.0 2024: Discussed on Industrial AI and cyber-physical production systems.
3. Manage-IoT 2024: Addressed IoT management in the compute continuum.
4. IPSN 2024: Explored AI/ML for networking with programmable data planes.
5. ANMS-TNT-QoDaNet 2024: Discussed autonomous network management, network digital twins, and data analytics.
6. GAIN 2024: Explored generative AI for network management.

EXHIBITIONS

Leading companies and institutions like KT, Chunghwa Telecom, Arista Networks, Nokia, and INSoft exhibited their latest technologies and solutions in the network and service management space.

BANQUET

The conference Banquet was held on the evening of the third day and featured a buffet of Korean food including Kalbi, raw fish, a variety of vegetables, kimbap, japchae, chicken, pork, beef, seafood, and an assortment of desserts that can be enjoyed by everyone including vegetarians and vegans. We had an exciting K-Pop girl group performance by 1CHU. They sang and danced four of their popular songs and got the attendees on their feet to watch and take videos and photos. We then had a brief memorial presentation of the late Dr. Masayoshi Ejiri who passed away last year,

Dr. Ejiri was a father of network operations and management from Japan and is remembered by colleagues from around the world. We also had a publicity announcement of video clips of CNSM 2024 which will be held in Prague, Czech Republic this fall, and NOMS 2025 in Hawaii in May 2025.

CONFERENCE STATISTICS

In this year's edition of NOMS 2024, we have received 170 paper submissions, which have been contributed to by 461 authors from 31 countries. In addition, eight workshops had been co-located with the main conference. Out of these overall submissions, about 38.2% were from Asia/pacific, 37.1% from Europe, 22.4% were from America, and 2.4% from Oceania. While each paper had received at least three reviews, including 67% with 4 or more reviews, from the technical program committee consisting of 204 experts in total, overall, 221 papers (including workshops, experience, demo, doctoral symposium, and excluding 1 No-show paper) were retained to appear in the proceedings in its different categories.

Through this rigorous process, the program compiled shows a very high quality: only 50 full papers have been selected for the 13 technical sessions, corresponding to a competitive acceptance rate of 29.4%. Selected NOMS 2024 best papers were invited to submit an extended version of their papers to Wiley's International Journal of Network Management with a fast-track review process. Additionally, 33 mini-conference papers, 48 poster papers, and 8 experience papers have been accepted to the conference program. Moreover, 15 demo papers and 12 doctoral symposium papers were accepted.

The Best Paper Award was presented to Nils Rodday, Gabi Dreö Rodosek, Aiko Pras, and Roland van Rijswijk-Deij from Research Institute CODE, Universität der Bundeswehr München, Germany, and University of Twente, Netherlands for their paper entitled, "Exploring the Benefit of Path Plausibility Algorithms in BGP." The Best Student Paper Award was presented to Jesutofunmi Ajayi, Antonio Di Maio, and Torsten Braun from the Institute of Computer Science, University of Bern, Switzerland for their paper entitled "Drift-Aware Policy Selection for Slice Admission Control."

CONCLUSION

NOMS 2024 was a big success in a number of ways. We had 350 people attending from 31 countries, one of the largest in recent years of NOMS. We had 98 organizing committee members from around the world performing various duties for the success of the conference. Participants engaged in insightful keynotes, detailed technical sessions, and had opportunities to interact with cutting-edge research and industry developments. The participants enjoyed the conference not only with excellent technical programs but also with a variety of sumptuous Korean food and Korean culture via the K-Pop girl group performance. Many said that NOMS 2024 was the best conference they ever attended.

COMSOC CONFERENCE

Memories from IEEE MeditCom 2024, Madrid, Spain

by Ana García Armada, IEEE MeditCom 2024 General Chair, Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain

I had the honor to be the General Chair of the 4th edition of the IEEE International Mediterranean Conference on Communications and Networking (MeditCom), which was held in Madrid (Spain) from, 8th to 11th July. From the moment I saw all the final manuscripts uploaded right before the deadline, I was foreseeing a very special conference, with not only a committed organizing committee but also committed authors and speakers. And it was indeed the case!

The conference was held at Hotel Emperador, conveniently located in the Gran Vía, at the center of the beautiful, historic and vibrant city of Madrid. Madrid is a lively cosmopolitan and friendly city where everyone feels at home. The attendees were welcomed on Monday with a reception at the sky-bar on the terrace of the hotel, with a roof-top scenery overseeing the city landmarks, including the cathedral and the Royal Palace. That was for many attendees



Attendees showing their colorful Spanish fans, and a conference gift, at the welcome reception

the first occasion to taste a bit of the Spanish cuisine, as well as our renowned hospitality, and enjoy the nice company after well beyond the sunset in this 1,200 square meter terrace that offers spectacular 360°-views of the Madrid skyline. It was also a perfect occasion to try the colorful Spanish fans that every attendee received.

From the same conference venue, the attendees were invited to enjoy a complimentary guided tour on Tuesday to discover some emblematic spots such as Plaza de España, Puerta del Sol, Plaza Mayor, the Royal Palace, and the cathedral. The conference attendees enjoyed the nice stories and explanations of the official tourism guides and took many group photos, even a “feet selfie” that is a must in the “Km 0” of Madrid (the departing point at Puerta del Sol from where kilometers are counted in every road in Spain) if you would like to ever come back to Madrid.

The social program reached its peak on Wednesday, with the conference banquet organized at the Real Casino de Madrid. A historical palace and a piece of art in itself, it was founded in 1836 and it is recognized as an outstanding monument with special protection by the Spanish government since 1993. The attendees were offered a menu designed by the prestigious Spanish chef Paco Roncero, that holds two Michelin Stars. In 2020, he was recognized for the first time as one of the 100 best Chefs in the world by the prestigious international list The Best Chef Awards. During the dinner, we enjoyed a Flamenco show, with Spanish guitars and dancers.

The conference was remarkably well attended with over 160 registrations. The IEEE MeditCom 2024 program featured five outstanding keynotes and one panel, in which industry leaders and prominent academics shared their vision of the future of wireless communications and networks. The 15 technical sessions and five workshops presenting research results were complemented by tutorials on hot topics in communications and a special event organized by IEEE ComSoc WICE and YP.

All in all, the IEEE MeditCom 2024 in Madrid has been an unforgettable experience. We discussed, learned, and made new friends that we hope to see next year in another successful MeditCom, bringing together researchers and visionaries in academia, research labs, and industry from all over the world to the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. I am very grateful to IEEE ComSoc for entrusting us with the task of organizing this conference, to the amazing team of organizers and volunteers, the speakers who shared their knowledge, our patrons (Huawei, Viavi, and UC3M), and the attendees that chose to spend these nice days with us. You all have made IEEE MeditCom 2024 a memorable conference.



The conference banquet at the Real Casino de Madrid.



Flamenco at the conference banquet.



Sunset at the welcome reception overseeing the Royal Palace.



One of the guided tour groups visiting la Plaza de la Villa.

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