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INTERVIEW

Member and Global Activities: Improving Service and Diversity

Interview with Ana Garcia Armada, IEEE ComSoc Vice President for MGA

by Stefano Bregni, Global Communications Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, Director Conference Operations and Ana Garcia Armada, Vice President for Member and Global Activities

This article continues the series of nine interviews to the Officers of the IEEE ComSoc Member and Global Activities (MGA) Council, which is published every month on 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, EMEA Regions), as well as the two Chairs of the Women in Communications Engineering (WICE) and Young Professionals (YP) Standing Committees. In each interview, one by one they present their sector activities and plans.

In this issue, I interview Ana Garcia Armada, Vice President for Member and Global Activities. This is the second time I interview Ana. I have interviewed her also in 2019, when she was serving as Chair of the IEEE ComSoc Standing Committee on Women in Communications Engineering (WICE).

Stefano Bregni

Ana Garcia Armada

Ana received her Ph.D. degree in electrical engineering from the Polytechnic University of Madrid in February 1998. She is currently Professor at University Carlos III of Madrid, Spain, where she is leading the Communications Research Group. She has been visiting scholar at Stanford University, Bell Labs and University of Southampton. She has coordinated more than 40 national and international research projects as well as 20 contracts with the industry. She has published around 200 papers in international journals and conference proceedings and she holds four patents. She has served on the TPC of more than 40 conferences and she has been part of the organizing committee of IEEE Globecom 2019, IEEE Vehicular Technology Conference (VTC) Spring 2019, Fall 2018, and Spring 2018, among others. Most recently, she has been General Co-Chair of IEEE GLOBECOM 2021, Madrid, Spain.

Stefano: Hello Ana! Your term as VP MGA has just begun few months ago. Would you like to summarize your plans for this two-year term in a nutshell?

Ana: It is a great pleasure and honour to serve as the Vice-President of MGA of IEEE ComSoc in 2022-2023. We have set an ambitious strategic plan for the MGA team with focus on the following four key aspects:

- Improving our services to ComSoc Members and the perceived value of belonging to ComSoc
- Improving and leveraging diversity in ComSoc
- Increasing membership and retention rates
- Empowering chapters by improving funding and support

To gain a better understanding on how to best serve our members in both academia and industry, we will take advantage of information technology tools (for example, to extract relevant information from how our members explore the various services and content in the ComSoc website).

In addition, we will work more closely with our Chapter leadership and their membership to identify their needs and support their work. Our team will closely examine the available data to understand the strengths and weaknesses in different regions, and focus on actions in those regions where there is a higher potential for growth.

Stefano: It sounds good. Let us present those goals in some more detail. What about better and new services for Members?

Ana: The first Membership Value Research Conference (MVRC), a 6-month long research project that culminated in December 2021 with a meeting at Globecom, has provided some initial ideas to improve existing services and start new ones.

We are now defining how to capitalize on this work and begin implementation. There are very interesting ideas that came from the MRVC and have been reinforced with discussion in the ComSoc management retreat. Many of them are focused on students and young professionals, and we are defining a student portal, student ambassadors to enhance ComSoc's presence at universities and a career center to provide job opportunities and training. Also very relevant are mentoring activities.

Recognizing that our content, and in particular video, is a key asset to engage with young engineers working in the communications industry, we hope to use video and virtual offerings to reach new audiences of engineers. We are closely working with the Online Content Board to define a content strategy for the Media Center and continue with the following phases of its implementation.

Stefano: You mentioned diversity. Would you be more specific about that?

Ana: ComSoc should seek to achieve a better balance in terms of gender, geographical region, working sector, age, and several other dimensions. We are preparing an action plan to improve diversity, by creating a welcoming environment and providing guidance and opportunities for these groups to thrive. We will support and work closely with the Women in Communications Engineering (WICE) and Young Professionals (YP) standing committees to achieve this crucial goal.

Stefano: Chapters are the local units of ComSoc, where Members can meet and which organize activities to meet the needs of Members locally. What is your plan for empowering Chapters?

Ana: ComSoc Chapters are our best instrument to understand and better serve our members. We will ease and potentiate their role by understanding their needs with help of the Regional Directors, providing fora for sharing ideas and best practices, and facilitating less complex procedures for funding and recognition.

We will provide them training and we have placed the communication and support to Chapters in a prominent place in our plans.

Therefore, to emphasize our effort, we like to name this year as "the Year of the Chapter." We are also working to ease the procedures involved in the Distinguished Lecturer Program (DLP) that connects renowned communications technology experts with ComSoc Chapters.

Stefano: Would you like to mention the team of Volunteers and Staff that will work on such ambitious plans?

Ana: We have a wonderful team of ComSoc volunteers and staff who are excited with the opportunity to advance towards these goals.

Our regional leadership consists of Tomoaki Otsuki as the Director of the Asia/Pacific Region, Luca Foschini as the Director of the Europe, Middle-East & Africa Region, Andres Navarro as the Director of the Latin-America Region, and Fawzi Behmann as the Director of the North-America Region. Moreover, Peiying Zhu is serving as the Director of Industry Outreach, Ricardo Veiga as the Director of Member Services, Nury Gabriela Ramirez Cely as the Chair of the WICE standing committee and Periklis Chatzimisios as the Chair of the YP standing committee. I am grateful to all of them.

Among ComSoc Staff, I wish to mention Trish Jaraicie, Marketing & Membership Director, and Cindy Tiritilli, Membership Manager.

Stefano: Excellent! How shall we conclude our conversation?

Ana: I am deeply honoured to serve the ComSoc community and committed to listen to anybody with ideas on how we can improve the service to our members. Thank you for the opportunity to tell you about our plans.

CHAPTER REPORT

IEEE ComSoc Iraq Chapter

Scientific Activities Through Year 2021

by Prof. Sattar B. Sadkhan, Chair of IEEE ComSoc Iraq Chapter, University of Babylon, Iraq

During the year 2021, the chapter participated in technically support (with IEEE Iraq section) and enhancing the organization of 8 International conferences (technically sponsored by IEEE). These conferences are hold inside (8) Iraqi universities. Most of these conferences were held virtually, due to the existence of the COVID-19, and the existence of critical status in some Iraqi cities.

The main tasks of IEEE ComSoc Iraq chapter were working as volunteers to scientifically enhance the goodness of scientific and technical organization, and attracting academics (from Iraqi universities and from outside Iraq) for enhancing and participation in these conferences. One of these conferences hold in Kurdistan region in North of Iraq.

1. 7thIEC-2021: The 7th International Engineering conference sustainable Technology and development (IEC2021) in February 24–25, 2021 at Ishik International university — Erbil city (Kurdistan Region).
2. BICIT2021: 1st. Babylon International Conference on Information Technology and Science 2021, April 30–May 1, 2021, at University of Babylon- Information Technology College.
3. ICICT2021: International conference on Communication & Information Technology (ICICT2021), June 5-6, 2021, at Iraqi University College in Basra City , south of Iraq.
4. ACA2021: International Conference on Advanced Computer applications. July 25–26, 2021 , at Imam Alkadhum university College in Misan city , south of Iraq.
5. ICCITM-2021: 7th international conference on contemparory Information Technology and mathematics 2021, August 18–19, 2021 at Mosul university, College of computer and Information technology, in Mosul City, North of Iraq.
6. 4thiiceta2021: 4th International Conference on engineering Technology and its Applications 2021, September 1–2, 2021, at Islamic university, Al-Najaf City.
7. ICASEA'21: International Conference on Advances in Sustainable Engineering and Applications 2021. (13–14 October 2021), held at Wasit University, engineering College in Wasit City.
8. 2nd IT-ELA2021: 2nd International Conference of Information Technology to enhance E-Learning and other applications –2021, (December 28–29, 2021), at Baghdad University College, Baghdad City.

The main voluntaries tasks of the members of IEEE Iraq section and IEEE Comsoc Iraq chapter were concentrated to enhance (Scientifically) the holding and choosing the best suitable (with very good quality) of the pre-accepted papers to be upload to IEEE digital explore library. And also, to encourage the universities to go a head in organizing (yearly) such important scientific conferences. And we visited these universities many times and discussed with their conferences organizers the importance of going a head in establishing such conferences (with the existence of critical health status, and other difficulty states in some Iraqi cities).

The Committee of the ICICT2021 Conference and the IEEE ComSoc Iraq Chapter

Signing the local MoU of the Conference 7th-IEC2021 in Ishik International conference

The welcoming for the participants in the conference ICASEA21 in Wasit University

Also, the IEEE Iraq Comsoc Chapter signed two local MoU with two universities to hold their International conferences in 2022. These are:

1. With the Al-Muthana University Engineering College: MICEST-2022 — 2022 Muthanna International Conference on Engineering Science and Technology, March 16–17 2022. This conference will be hold in Al-Muthana city — South of Iraq

2. With Basra University, Computer and Information Technology, ICCIT'2022: 2022 International Conference on Communication & Information Technologies (ICCIT), September 7-8, 2022. This conference will be hold in Basra City , South of Iraq.
3. HICNAS2022: 1st AL-Hikma International Conference on Natural and Applied Sciences 2022, May 14, 2022. This conference will be hold in Baghdad City

There are other 7 conferences will be signing their local MoU in the nearest time, after finishing all the requested aspects.

This means that in this year (2022) we have 10 International Conference supported by IEEE, this will be clear and good message to the world that Iraqi academics have good results through what what they surrounding them.

Some of the participants in the Conference ACA2021 in Al-Kadhum university college-in Misan

Poster session in the conference ICICTM-2021 in Mosul University

4thiiceta2021: 4th International Conference on engineering Technology and its Applications 2021

Signing Local MoU with al-Hikma University College

CHAPTER REPORT

IEEE ComSoc Bangalore Chapter

Winner of the 2021 Chapter of the Year Award

by Aloknath De, IEEE ComSoc Bangalore Chapter Chair 2021, India

A joyous moment for IEEE ComSoc Bangalore chapter to celebrate the winning of 2021 Chapter of the Year Award (CoYA) amidst 200+ ComSoc chapters globally. Also, it marks a three-years-in-a-row win of Chapter Achievement Award (CAA) at the Asia-Pacific (APAC) region. As Chair 2021 and 2020 as well as Chair-Elect 2019, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the execom members, industry captains, academic community, young professionals and the student volunteers for making these happen. To the Team: my sincere appreciation on your wonderful dedication and contribution, even during the challenging pandemic time. Let me scribe here some of our actions in 2021 for our society and her members.

One of our goals has been to ensure that the students and young professionals continually learn new technologies and relevant skills during the lockdown and home-operation period. In 2021, we conducted a global summer school on "Beyond-5G and IoT: Human-Machine Communication." This three-day program with 125 student registrants from 25+ countries has been a hallmark initiative for the year. The summer school covered the convergence of long and short-range communications as well as dimensions pertaining to human-machine interaction and collaboration. As Program Chair, I am indebted to the organizing team for meticulous planning and 15+ expert speakers for volunteering their time.

For the last decade or so, many of our member companies and academia have been researching for 5G wireless communication system: from device to network. New applications are emerging with the true power of high speed for faster communication, low latency for interactive communication and novel protocols for machine communication. Through workshops and forum, we have deliberated on the system architecture, security nuances, interactive applications and deployment intricacies of 5G. We conducted an exclusive 10-hour tutorial on 5G for our student branches. We also had a detailed seminar on Indian academia-developed 5Gi features those recently got absorbed in the global 3GPP standard.

In early-2021, along with IEEE Kharagpur Section, we organized a workshop on 6G requirements and plausible use cases. With my then-recent experience of co-editing world's first 6G book with Springer, I could initiate a series of exploratory seminars and symposia on advanced topics. The themes cover intelligent reflecting surface, blockchain and security, quantum communication, synthetic-aperture radar imaging, low-power sustainable technologies, some organized with other sections. Recently, an IISc-IEEE monthly seminar series is instituted under able guidance of the chair-elect 2021to celebrate IISc ECE department 75 years. All these have facilitated the Bangalore ComSoc chapter to be in tune with the latest developments in the world and has equipped to embark on new initiatives towards 6G at the international level.

We also realized that our members are quite keen to enhance their ability of research and innovation. The Research Methodology workshop with authorship lab has provided benefit to numerous researchers. We had a very stimulating session with young professionals on 'How to Create a Research Mindset.' A presentation by me on 'Intellectual Property: Why, What and How' drew 500+ participants in India Council forum. And as part of our Open Innovation promotion, in partnership with Samsung, we conducted second edition of Open Source mini-conference with themes around 5G, IoT and Edge Computing where IEEE-SA, Linux Foundation, Red Hat, Nokia and many others actively participated.

We value professional growth and accordingly, we were happy to see member strength crossing 500 as on 31st Dec. 2021. We focused on membership upgrade qualifications and membership benefit package including India medical insurance. We invited members to join an "Ask Us Anything" session addressed by leaders from industry and academia. Nine of our student branches have been organizing training and awareness sessions in their campuses or online. In May 2020 newsletter, I highlighted how Graduate theses presentations in 7-minutes (Grate-7) and PhD Ethically Driven Innovation and Technology for Society (EDITS) have become two popular programs among the graduate students. In 2021, we launched a new scheme — "Protsahan" (meaning "encouragement") with 15 awards to first authors for good research publication in any established conference or journal. It has made appeal to non-members, some of whom are becoming ComSoc member.

Bangalore is 'silicon valley' of India and our chapter has a rich representation from industry, startup and academia. Alongside People and Technology, 2021 witnessed a great deal of thrust on Process. A landmark achievement has been to have a written Bye-Law (approved on 12th Sept) for the society. On the other side, our finance base has grown 3X in the last two years, giving a comfortable position for initiating new programs. More women members have joined in our Execom. The event flow from organizing events to capturing details in vTools has been system-automated by our volunteers. This, in turn, has resulted in a prompt and accurate reporting of activities. The social media has been effectively leveraged with LinkedIn promoting our events and YouTube sharing video presentations. And, finally, the chapter website sums up all the information for easy access by members.

The zeal and dedication of the Execom Team and Volunteers that made this achievement happen!

IEEE GLOBECOM
CHAPTER OF THE YEAR AWARD
BANGALORE CHAPTER
Asia/Pacific Region
Aloknath De, Chapter Chair
IEEE
IEEE ComSoc
WELCOME TO IEEE GLOBECOM 2021

The joyous moment for the Bangalore Chapter announced winner of the Chapter of the Year Award

As we progress in 2022 and the pandemic wanes, I am confident that the new Execom team will consider adding Distinguished International Lecture series as well as introducing social impact programs in Bangalore vicinity. There is room for kick-starting student hackathon program for Karnataka colleges. Additionally, we can steadily grow D&I engagements, ESG initiatives and ensure that the regions 'Beyond Bengaluru' are well-covered in all of our programs. I wish the new team to take our beloved chapter to a greater height! And I sign off with a great sense of resilience, accomplishment and gratitude. It is time for me to take up the responsibility of Bangalore Section as 2022 Chair-Elect and 2023 Chair.

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STEFANO BREGNI
Editor-in-Chief
Politecnico di Milano, Italy
Email: bregni@elet.polimi.it

FABRIZIO GRANELLI
Associate Editor
University of Trento, Italy
Email: fabrizio.granelli@unitn.it

IEEE COMMUNICATIONS SOCIETY — MEMBER AND GLOBAL ACTIVITIES
Ana Garcia-Armada, Vice-President for Member and Global Activities
Ricardo Veiga, Director for Member Services
Andres Navarro, Director of LA Region
Fawzi Behmann, Director of NA Region
Luca Foschini, Director of EMEA Region
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Nury Gabriela Ramirez Cely, Chair of the WICE Standing Committee
Periklis Chatzimisios, Chair of the YP Standing Committee

REGIONAL CORRESPONDENTS WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS ISSUE
Ewell Tan, Singapore (ewell.tan@ieee.org)

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