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INTERVIEW

## Member Services Board: More Services for ComSoc Members! Interview with Ricardo Veiga, Director of Member Services

by Stefano Bregni, Global Communications Newsletter Editor-in-Chief, Director Conference Operations, and Ricardo Veiga, Director of Member Services

This is the first article in a series of eight, which will be published monthly in the IEEE ComSoc *Global Communications Newsletter* and will cover all areas of IEEE ComSoc Member and Global Activities (MGA). In this series of articles, I introduce and interview the Vice-President and the five Directors on the MGA Council, namely Member Services (MS), 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 will present their sector's activities and plans.

In this issue, I interview Ricardo Veiga, Member of the ComSoc Board of Governors (BoG) as Director of Member Services. I also interviewed Ricardo in 2020, as this is his second term as Director of MS. I feel thrilled to hear what news he will report, because he is a very active Director and is known to be very prolific in new ideas to develop ComSoc membership.

I must add that this interview is also a big personal pleasure for me. I met Ricardo for the first time almost 20 years ago, when he was serving as ComSoc Director of the Latin American Region (2004–2005) and I was preparing one of my first Distinguished Lecturer Tours. For my first experience as ComSoc Distinguished Lecturer, I chose Latin America. It is a memory that will never fade away.

Ricardo is an associate professor at Universidad de Buenos Aires and responsible for Planning and Management Control in the Faculty of Engineering. He has also been working in the communications industry for 25 years, participating in several startup companies.

He was a member of the ComSoc BoG as Member-at-Large, and Regional Director. He also served as Chair of the ComSoc Argentina Chapter, and under his leadership his chapter received the Chapter Achievement Award. He also received the ComSoc Latin America Region Distinguished Service Award, the IEEE RAB Achievement Award, and the IEEE Third Millennium Medal, among others.

**Stefano:** Hello Ricardo! This 2022–2023 is your second term as ComSoc Director for Member Services after your first in the previous two years. You have been serving during one of the most difficult times ever experienced not just by IEEE ComSoc, but by all of humanity in the last century if we exclude the World Wars.

Everything happened right after we began our previous term, 2020–2021. (I served as Vice President Conferences then.) I still remember our discussion at the ComSoc Management Retreat in January 2020, on how to improve ComSoc services to members, what to give more and better, what new initiatives to launch. However, the COVID pandemic disrupted all plans. Uncertainty became the rule.

**Ricardo:** As you have pointed out, we have to face uncertainty at

our best. Let me explain what we did and what we are planning to do.

During the last two years all of humanity was stressed by changing “do business as usual” to “think and do quickly in a different way.” Actually, I am used to living in an environment where uncertainty is the rule, not the exception. Perhaps it helped me to understand the situation more readily.

Our team adjusted as such and focused on fulfilling members' needs regardless of their location. We have strategized and then implemented specific programs within the scope of our mission, which finally allowed us to grow up to 30,000 ComSoc members last February 2022. With our new Member Services Board, we are planning the implementation of new programs that build on the success and lessons learned from those completed in 2020–2021.

**Stefano:** Would you please summarize what the Member Services Board is and what its activities are?

**Ricardo:** As stated in its Charter, the Member Services Board (MSB) is responsible for the oversight of all services and programs addressed to members and chapters, and oriented to membership retention and development all over the world. In particular, this Board is responsible for developing and providing individual-level membership services globally.

The MS Board is responsible for developing and offering programs, and member activities to:

- Promote community development and activities of common interest
- Engage young members and support leadership development
- Engage industry around the world in membership programs
- Develop and offer programs to serve the industry and academic institutions
- Promote professional development

All of these programs and activities are handled in collaboration with the four ComSoc Regional Directors from Asia/Pacific (AP), Tomoaki Ohtsuki; Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA), Luca Foschini; Latin America (LA), Andrés Navarro; and North America (NA), Fawzi Behmann. Of course, Trish Jaraicie, Cindy Tiritilli, Carol Cronin, and Bruce Worthman, among other members of ComSoc staff, are also key pillars for the success of these programs.

**Stefano:** What did you and the Board do during the past year?

**Ricardo:** In 2021 we worked in two main directions: a) consolidate the growth from the previous year, and b) analyze and design new products and services.

Although 2020 was challenging, we adapted very quickly to the new environment. We changed our excellent and long-standing Distinguished Lecturers Tour (DLT) program to a virtual one, for example. This program, aimed at giving lectures by a Distinguished Lecturer (DL) at three different chapters or locations at least during the tour, was changed to virtual lectures that were organized by the local chapters and shared with other members around the world. It was called the Virtual Distinguished Lecturers (VDL) program, and we developed more than 170+ sessions in both 2020 and 2021, being the largest VDL program across all of IEEE.

We also organized the Membership Value Research Congress to gain insights into essential products and services members and potential members need. More than 50 chapter chairs participated

*(Continued on next page)*



Stefano Bregni



Ricardo Veiga

in analyzing current products and potential ones, specifically for students, young professionals, industry members, and non-members. The outcome of this congress was a list of product and service outlines and blueprints. Specifically, the recommendations are: a Student Portal, a YP Mentor Program, a Career Center, and a Corporate Membership. Some of these products and services were already adopted for further analysis and implementation during the last ComSoc Board of Governors Management Retreat.

**Stefano:** What about the Chapter Awards and funding?

**Ricardo:** ComSoc has more than 220 chapters worldwide, and has established four Chapter Achievement Awards (CAAs) and one Chapter of the Year Award (CoYA). These awards recognize and reward the best chapters for outstanding achievements in providing to their members the highest quality of service. For 2021, the Achievements Awards Committee selected the Central Texas (NA), Bangalore (AP), Sweden (EMEA), and Peru (LA) Chapters for the CAA regional awards. Ultimately, the CoYA was the Bangalore Chapter for their outstanding recruitment and retention work.

In 2021, we launched a proof-of-concept competition titled “ComSoc Internet for All,” aimed at helping to solve the so-called “Digital Divide.” We received very good proposals from ComSoc members around the world, communications engineers and students, to help to solve this situation. There were first, second, and third place prizes, and up to five honorable mentions in each region. We also established a new discount program on ComSoc membership dues, using the selection criteria used by IEEE worldwide. It is expected to help promote membership of many colleagues around the world.

In order to support local recruitment, retention, and community building activities, ComSoc provides funding to the Chapters. Because of the pandemic, we added a second opportunity to gain funding, so the chapters could develop special strategies in order to fulfill their members’ needs.

**Stefano:** What’s next? Any new membership services that you are planning for in 2021?

**Ricardo:** We are analyzing with the VP-Publications Chengshan Xiao how to develop member options for (free) access to chosen pub-

lications. There are many researchers who already have access to most ComSoc publications through IEEE Xplore, paid for by their own organizations (universities, companies, etc.). However, many others don’t have the same possibility. In my opinion, this initiative will give our members the opportunity to get more value from their membership.

We will also be working on the implementation of a new initiative from IEEE to promote joining two or more societies at a discount. We expect to work closely with those societies where we share members to develop programming for continued engagement.

We are also launching two membership upgrade campaigns: a) *Become a Member* to promote among graduating students, and b) *Become a Senior Member/Fellow* for recognizing other members.

Within the MSB we are focusing on regional needs (existing and potential chapters), and especially on the promotion of women and young people in ComSoc’s activities and leadership. Although this Board has a good diversity balance between geographic, gender, age, and professional background (researchers, industry professionals), for example, we have additionally appointed new members in the MSB to strength women’s, young people’s, and industry professionals’ views, even including student members.

Finally, we hope to do more to connect and support our Student Branch Chapters with local chapters in their area as well as work with Eta Kappa Nu on helping transition their student members who plan to continue in communications technology to ComSoc members.

**Stefano:** Excellent! A final remark to conclude this interview?

**Ricardo:** Communications have played a key role during the pandemic. We have demonstrated that we were well prepared for that circumstance. However, we have to use our foresight to anticipate members’ future needs and act accordingly. New products and new ways of providing them are on our agenda thanks to the work at the Membership Value Research Congress. Many volunteers are also willing to help, and spend their time and effort for the benefit of the humanity. Hence, I am confident that all together we will do a great job.

Thank you, Stefano, for helping us to share our work and ideas, and also thanks to VP-MGA Ana Garcia Armada and PresidentXue-min (Sherman) Shen, for their strong support.

## CHAPTER REPORT

### Activities of the IEEE Comsoc Turkey Chapter By Tuncer Baykas, Mertcan Kuzan, Simge Tumkaya, Gokcenaz Ozel, Hüseyin Emre Akgüç, IEEE ComSoc Turkey Chapter

The coronavirus pandemic, which started in 2020, has brought significant restrictions in Turkey as it did all over the world. One such restriction was that universities had to switch to online learning. Because of this, in 2021 both the IEEE ComSoc Turkey Chapter and the IEEE ComSoc Student Branches had to organize their events, tutorials, workshops, and competitions online.

IEEE ComSoc Turkey organized competitions and events that could serve many young people. One such event, which was co-organized with IEEE Young Professionals Turkey, was the Scientific Paper Writing for Communications Engineer Workshop, taught by associate professor Ertugrul Basar of Koc University, who received the ComSoc Best Young Researcher in the Middle East, Europe and Africa Award in 2021 moderated by IEEE ComSoc Turkey Chair Tuncer Baykas and IEEE Young Professionals Turkey Chair Omer Melih Gul.

IEEE ComSoc Turkey Student Branches held numerous events in 2021, and the biggest one of these was the 4th ComSoc Turkey Boot Camp. Online lectures were given by renowned tech companies such as Huawei, Turk Telekom, Argela, and NetRD during the two-day event. Another event organized by IEEE Turkey ComSoc in 2021 was the IoT Webinar. The webinar was given by Ericsson Turkey’s Deputy General Manager. The last event of the year, Radiothon, was co-organized with IEEE Manisa Celal Bayar University.

Meanwhile, the Student Branches continued to organize their own events. Besides two panels and two conferences, many tutorials and workshops were organized by Istanbul Technical University.



Comsoc Turkey IoT Webinar.

One of the conferences held this year was the 12th annual Communications Week, which aims to introduce students to ComSoc and inform students about the communications industry. Another conference held by the IEEE ITU ComSoc Chapter was TECH, an event co-organized with WIE, which was about gender equality and recent developments in the communications industry. Another event, Future on The Line, was held online from May 22–23. In the event, topics such as 5G VoIP and Vehicle to Everything were covered. The last event organized by the IEEE ITU ComSoc Chapter in 2021 was the Electronics and Communications Panel, in which experts from both industries were invited to talk about their respective fields.

The newest ComSoc Student Chapter was founded at Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa in 2021. After its establishment, the chapter organized various workshops, such as Quantum Communications Workshop by associate professor Suayb Arslan. Another work-

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shop was given by Ilhan Bagoren, where ComSoc members were informed about 5G.

IEEE Cankaya University ComSoc Chapter also organized various events in 2021. Gokhan Kalem from Turkcell was interviewed about the development of 5G technology in Turkey and the world. Also, a MATLAB tutorial was given by Erkam Cankaya from Figes Engineering.

IEEE Gazi University ComSoc Chapter organized training on Linux and MATLAB besides organizing conferences. MATLAB training, co-organized with RAS, was given by Koc University research assistant Burak Ozpoyraz and was given via Zoom, and Linux training was broadcast live on YouTube. The Career Adventures conference was held on YouTube as well. Salih Atmaca from Ronensans Holding and Berkay Diril from Proline Bilisim Sistemleri shared their career experiences. Finally, the ComSensUs Konferansi (ComSensUs Conference) was held online due to COVID-19 restrictions and was about topics like amateur radio, 5G, IoT technology, and new trends.

IEEE Tekirdag Namik Kemal University Comsoc Chapter organized the 3rd COM101 event on YouTube. In this event, important organizations such as NASA, Ericsson and Turkcell were invited to talk about topics like 5G, smart search systems, cybersecurity, and space technologies.



Quantum Communications Workshop

## CONFERENCE REPORT

# IEEE ComSoc Young Professionals Standing Committee YP Panels at the 1st IEEE International Mediterranean Conference on Communications and Networking (IEEE MeditCom 2021)

by Periklis Chatzimisios, IEEE ComSoc Young Professionals Chair, Greece

### WHAT IS IEEE COMSOC YOUNG PROFESSIONALS?

The IEEE ComSoc Young Professionals (YP) group provides a “technical haven” within IEEE for graduate students and early to mid-career professionals who have received their first professional degree within the past 15 years.

It is an international community whose members are interested in elevating their professional image, expanding their global network, connecting with peers locally, and giving back to their community.

This includes professionals from various sectors of the communications engineering field such as academia, industry, governmental agencies, and the startup community. These groups of vibrant young minds, who are gearing up to shape and lead their organizations, actively contribute as members to both IEEE ComSoc and the IEEE Young Professionals (<http://yp.ieee.org>).



### YOUNG PROFESSIONALS AT IEEE MEDITCOM 2021

An exciting event was organized at the 1st IEEE International Mediterranean Conference on Communications and

Networking (IEEE MeditCom 2021) on 7 September 2021 in Athens, Greece. The event was co-organized by the Communications Chapter and Professional Activities of the IEEE Greece Section, IEEE ComSoc YP, and the IEEE ComSoc Technical Committee on Information Infrastructure and Networking (TCIIN). The program was supported by the IEEE Student Branch of International Hellenic University, Thessaloniki, and the Communications, Cybersecurity and Internet of Things (CCIoT) research group.

The event was aiming to inspire young professionals through interaction with industry professionals and academics on the benefits of getting involved in various IEEE volunteer, educational, and standardization activities. The two Young Professionals Sessions, “Exploring Exciting Career Paths for Young Professionals” and “5G



From left to right: Symeon Chatzinotas, Panelist of YP Panel Session 2 and Periklis Chatzimisios, the organizer of the YP Sessions

towards 6G: What Can We Expect?,” featured outstanding panels of speakers from academia, industry, and public administration.

A summary of the YP program is below. More information about both Panel Sessions can be found in the conference program (<https://meditcom2021.ieee-meditcom.org/program/young-professionals-session>).

### YP PANEL SESSION 1: “EXPLORING EXCITING CAREER PATHS FOR YOUNG PROFESSIONALS”

This Panel aimed to inspire young professionals by interacting with speakers from industry and academia, all of them successful professionals under than 40 years old.

The panel discussion mainly focused on topics such as “Industry Talks to Young Engineers & Scientists,” “The Long Journey through PhD to Research and Academia,” and “Involvement of Young Researchers with Research Activities.”

The five exceptional panelists were Diomidis Michalopoulos (Nokia, Germany), Charalampos Z. Patrikakis (University of West Attica, Greece), Georgios Z. Papadopoulos (IMT Atlantique in Rennes, France), Aggeliki Sgora (Ionian University, Greece), and Dionysis Xenakis (Fogus Innovations and Services P.C., Greece).

### YP PANEL SESSION 2: “5G TOWARDS 6G: WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?”

This Panel featured a discussion on the issues related to the current pitfalls of 5G as well as the expected challenges of the transition from 5G to 6G in the coming years. The Panel discussion mainly focused on the topics of current deployment of 5G networks, the pitfalls of 5G, as well as challenges and applications of 6G.

The five outstanding panelists were Bernard Barani, (European Commission), Symeon Chatzinotas (University of Luxembourg), Merouane Debbah (Technology Innovation Institute, Abu Dhabi), and Panagiotis Demestichas (WINGS ICT Solutions, Greece).

## IEEE ComSoc Panama Chapter's Initiative: Helping to Promote a Research Culture among Undergraduate Students!

by Yessica Sáez, Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá, IEEE ComSoc Panama Chapter Chair, and Edwin Collado, Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá, IEEE ComSoc Panama Chapter Member

The Scientific Initiation Day (Jornada de Iniciación Científica, JIC) is an initiative of the Universidad Tecnológica de Panamá that has been adopted by many universities in Panama. This initiative seeks to promote research among undergraduate students at the national level. It is based on a professor guiding a research project related to the course he/she is teaching.

The research projects are carried out in teams of two to four students, where they must write a scientific article, make a scientific poster and present it before a jury during the Scientific Initiation Day of every participant university. Each university organizes its own JIC and must select the projects that will represent them in the national competition.

The IEEE ComSoc Panama Chapter believes in promoting research among undergraduate students who are the future professionals in charge of finding solutions to problems in our society. That is why, by the end of 2021, the IEEE ComSoc Panama Section proposed the creation of awards for "The Best Three Telecommunications-Related Projects of the National JIC 2021."

The projects were first filtered according to keywords and the summaries of the scientific papers, and then ComSoc Panama's Board of Directors verified that they were focused on telecommunications-related areas. Then an external jury made up of volunteers from Panama and the Latin America Region evaluated the projects based on a pre-established rubric table. The winners were:

- First Place: Prototype of an intelligent system to introduce sign language to elementary school students using artificial vision. Students: Louis Aguilar, Omar Flores, and Elmer Jaen.
- Second Place: Prototype of a low-cost emergency mechanical ventilator (intermittent positive pressure-type) in response to the pandemic caused by COVID-19. Students: Adrián Jaramillo, Andrés Martínez, and Christian González.



Yessica Sáez and Liliana Henríquez, IEEE ComSoc Panama Chapter Director, with the winners of the First Place of the "The Best Telecommunications-related Projects of the National JIC 2021 Awards"

**SENACYT**  
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**JORNADA DE INICIACIÓN CIENTÍFICA 2021**  
**JIC VIRTUAL**

**Fecha límite para subir el artículo:**  
**24 de junio de 2021**

**Selección final - JIC UTP 2021**  
**11 de agosto de 2021**

**FECHAS PARA LA JIC 2021 en las Unidades Académicas**

**Lunes 5 de julio de 2021**  
Centro Regional de Chiriquí  
Centro Regional de Azuero

**Martes 6 de julio de 2021**  
Centro Regional de Bocas del Toro  
Centro Regional de Panamá Oeste

**Miércoles 7 de julio de 2021**  
Centro Regional de Veraguas  
Centro Regional de Coclé

**Jueves 8 de julio de 2021**  
Campus Metropolitano Dr. Victor Levi Sasso  
(Facultades de Ing. Civil, Eléctrica, Ciencias y Tecnología)  
Centro Regional de Colón

**Viernes 9 de julio de 2021**  
Campus Metropolitano Dr. Victor Levi Sasso  
(Facultades de Ing. Mecánica, Sistemas Computacionales e Industrial)

**¡Anímate! sé parte de esta experiencia.**

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**IEEE ComSoc**  
IEEE Communications Society

The Scientific Initiation Day (Jornada de Iniciación Científica, JIC) Event Flyer, including ComSoc Logo.

- Third Place: The challenge of connectivity and the strategies of telecommunications companies to meet the demand for Internet at the national level. Students: Jose Pineda, Jose Cedeno, and Daniel Gonzalez.

In a small but significant virtual ceremony, held in parallel during the Scientific Gala 2021 of the Technological University of Panama (UTP) on November 19, 2021, ComSoc Panama awarded the winners, who received a certificate of recognition from ComSoc Panama, one year of IEEE and ComSoc membership, cash, and the admiration and respect of the technical and general community of Panama.

## GCN GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS NEWSLETTER

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