

MEMBER AND GLOBAL ACTIVITIES

Membership development is a main pillar to better serve our members and to make IEEE Communications Society stronger. In this issue of *IEEE Communications Magazine*, I am pleased to introduce Ana Garcia Armada, Vice-President for Member and Global Activities (MGA), who will share with us her plans for attracting new members and retaining existing ones through the development of value-added programs and new services, and for enhancing member benefits as well.

Ana Garcia Armada is a professor at Universidad Carlos III de Madrid, Spain, where she has held many management positions (Head of Signal Theory and Communications Department, Vice Dean of Electrical Engineering, Deputy Vice Chancellor of International Relations). She serves on the Editorial Boards of *IEEE Transactions on Communications* and the *IEEE Open Journal of the Communications Society*. She has participated in the organization of many conferences and was the General Chair of IEEE GLOBE-COM 2021. She has been the Secretary and Chair of the IEEE ComSoc Women in Communications Engineering Standing Committee (WICE), and served as a Member-at-Large of the Board of Governors and Director of Online Content for IEEE ComSoc. She has published around 200 papers in journals and conferences, and she holds four patents. She received Outstanding Service Awards from IEEE ComSoc Signal Processing & Communications Electronics Technical Committee, and from IEEE ComSoc WICE.

It is a great pleasure and honor to serve as the Vice-President of MGA of IEEE ComSoc in 2022–2023. ComSoc is one of the largest societies in IEEE, with close to 30,000 members, a number that has been maintained despite the various challenges caused by the pandemic. Service to our members is the main goal of ComSoc, so maintaining and fostering a vibrant community and creating value in each service we provide is vital to the health of our membership base. Furthermore, we are working hard each day to foster a more inclusive community that attracts, welcomes, and celebrates the contributions from communications engineers from all geographic regions, career points, gender, and areas of practice including industry practitioners. Leveraging the benefits that diversity and inclusion bring to our membership, we aim to strengthen and enhance our community.

In the next two years, the MGA team will focus on the following four key aspects.

Improving our members' service and the perceived value of belonging to ComSoc. First, we will gain a better understanding on how to best serve our members in both academia and industry. We will take advantage of information technology tools (e.g., to extract relevant information from how our members explore the various services and content on 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. The first Membership Value Research Congress, a six-month-long research project that culminated in December 2021, has provided us strategies to improve existing services while also providing blueprints for new services. Building on this, we will now work with the ComSoc leadership and community to capitalize on this work and begin implementation. The pandemic created challenges we had never seen before but also forced ComSoc to develop new



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capabilities. These will ultimately help us bring new opportunities to our members. Keeping the critical importance of our content in the minds of the entire communications industry, we hope to use video and virtual offerings to reach new audiences of engineers while maintaining the incredible conferences, publications, and other content sources that have served our membership well over the last 70 years.

Improving and leveraging diversity in ComSoc. From the membership profiles, there is room for improvement to achieve a better balance in terms of gender, geographical region, working sector, age, and several other dimensions. We will examine the available data and identify several main areas to improve. Then we will prepare and implement an action plan to improve diversity, by creating a welcoming environment from important communities such as our Chapters, and providing guidance and opportunities for these groups to thrive. We will work closely with the WICE and Young Professionals (YP) standing committees to achieve this crucial goal.

Increasing membership and retention rates. If we succeed in providing a more inclusive environment and better services and member satisfaction, naturally our membership base will grow. It is remarkable that even though the number of IEEE Society members was challenged in the past, this is not the case for ComSoc. It results from several measures that were put in place by the former MGA team and that, of course, we should continue. 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 higher potential for growth.

Empowering Chapters by improving funding and support. ComSoc Chapters are the best instrument to help in the three preceding key aspects. 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 and funding when needed. We will also enhance the Distinguished Lecturer Program (DLP) that connects renowned communications technology experts with ComSoc Chapters.

We have a wonderful team of ComSoc volunteers and staff who are excited by the opportunity to advance toward 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. Our team is rounded out with representation for key groups critical to ComSoc's growth efforts. These include Peiying Zhu 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.

We are honored to serve you, and committed to listen and do our best to enhance our community. We will be devoted to services and benefits that are significant to improve the member experience. Please feel free to drop us a note anytime if you have any ideas, comments, and suggestions. Thank you!