

Croatia Section

Maja Matijasevic

What activities/programs/initiatives work well in your Section to foster Industry Relations? What changes would be required by IEEE/the Region/your Section to improve Industry Relations? What were major successes since the last meeting in terms of Industry Relations? How are you going to continue to foster Industry Relations?

- Industry professionals were interested in IEEE activities that provided opportunities to share achievements, learn about other business success stories, and to learn about top students and their projects. However, that alone did not contribute to the increase in number of Section's members from the industry. Therefore, a new kind of approach is apparently needed.
- We could benefit from other Section's experiences regarding attraction of industry professionals. Although the problem can be related to many specific local circumstances (please see our analysis below), information about any successfully applied policy towards this target group would provide useful insights for any Section faced with similar issues.
- Section should encourage establishing a team of IEEE volunteers dedicated to the goal of identifying and implementing projects that benefit IEEE and the local industry. IEEE and the Region should support these efforts by dedicating budgets for Industry Relations projects and providing a platform for sharing ideas and success stories between coordinators.
- There were no significant changes in membership share of industry professionals and their involvement in IEEE activities. During 2017, we analyzed the reasons for relatively modest share of industry professionals in total membership.
- The main motivation for entering the IEEE typically during the study, and leaving it soon after completion of doctorate, is the access to high quality literature. Moreover, the access to IEEE Xplore base is often perceived as the only benefit an individual member can have from the IEEE membership. Since the scientific literature is naturally not in the primary focus of industry professionals, it is not surprising that an average student member would probably leave the Section soon.
- Next, the members informed us that the companies they work for become more and more reluctant to cover costs of any professional activities not related directly to the job. Combined with high IEEE fees, it motivates the members to leave.
- Some Croatian companies are traditionally oriented more to other professional organizations, either the ones with global presence (e.g. Cigr), or local professional societies. These organizations, which can be viewed as a sort of competition to IEEE as regards membership attraction, usually have regular local annual conferences that gather many industry professionals and serve as a sort of platform for networking and practical experience exchange. In some cases, such events have been going on for decades now, which over time built a strong tradition.
- In spite of being rooted so well in industry communities, they, too, experience decreasing willingness of companies to cover costs. However, usual annual fees such organization charge to individual members are very low, typically between 15 and 30 euros, so that the members do not leave because of them.
- Another relevant specific circumstance in Croatia is that there is not really much industry in technological sector in the country, so the base of potential industry members is not too big, either.
- Based on our analysis, we believe the main problem with development of IEEE membership among industry professionals in our country is the existence of vivid local 'competition' that is more flexible and deeply rooted in the industry communities, whereas IEEE has never been significantly present outside academia, except for some notable exemptions.
- We will continue improving IEEE visibility through collaboration with local industry associations and develop connections with local start-up ecosystem to attract young companies in technological sector that can benefit from access to international IEEE network and knowledge. We believe that the new industry players that are more globally oriented business-wise can be attracted with more success than the traditional industry players that already have their stable long time relations with other professional organizations.

What activities/programs/initiatives work well in your Section to Attract and Support Future Members, e.g., Students and Young Professionals? What changes would be required by IEEE/the Region/your Section to better Attract and Support Future Members? What were major successes since the last meeting in terms of Attracting and Supporting Future Members? How are you going to continue to support Students and Young Professionals?

- Student branches organize lectures that present 'success stories' from local companies. Such lectures give both students and Young Professionals the opportunity to informally network with industry representatives and learn about future employment opportunities.
- Similar activities are organized on a regular basis by the Croatia Section Young Professionals (YP) affinity group through the IEEE Elevate program, which was designed and launched in 2013 IEEE Elevate consists of informative events, featuring guest speakers who share their views, experiences and success stories in various IEEE-related areas of interest, with focus on novel and upcoming technologies, aiming to inspire and motivate students and young engineers to advance their careers. Elevate events are organized in an informal environment (such as local cafes), and they present a great opportunity for networking.
- The annual Students and Young Professionals (SYP) congresses are great opportunity for team building, which enables smooth transition from Student to YP status for volunteers and motivates them for further work in their student branches. The Croatian Student and Young Professionals congress (CroSYP) is organized in a different city each year, with the support of the Croatia Section, the local student branch, and the local university. CroSYP events encourage networking among student members, and provide a great venue for the exchange of best practices and ideas. This event is also attended by representatives of the industry, who through their professional lectures and workshops promote their companies and employment opportunities.
- There is a lack of knowledge for current members how IEEE operates on Regional and higher levels. Communication between regional committees and section committee could be better. Information that comes from various committees are not displayed in appropriate way. It is hard to find relevant information on committee website, which is why additional

effort is required to obtain information about events/actions/promotions/funding that are active within IEEE. It seems that committees are too often relying on social media and other platforms rather than their website, that are, in our opinion, not suitable for such purposes. Only event that Student and Young Professionals members can connect with Region are Regional SYPs.

- Since the last meeting University of Zagreb Student Branch organized CroSYP (Croatia Student and Young Professionals Congress) with support from both Croatia Section and Young Professionals AG. Congress provided opportunity for networking between students, Young Professionals and industry representatives. The main part of the congress consisted of several social skills workshops and lecture ""History of the Croatia Section"" by Aleksandar Szabo. The benefits of student membership and the responsibilities of student branch leaderships were presented. All student branches and YP AG presented their activities during previous academic year and took part in the debate on the future events and the problems they encounter.
- IEEE Day celebration was organized throughout Croatia by the student branches and YP AG. In all three cities (Zagreb, Osijek and Rijeka) student branches promoted IEEE and their local activities to their fellow students through workshops (e.g. ""Become a Member"" and ""Social skills and competences"" workshops), lectures and promotional activities.
- YP AG organized the lecture entitled ""IEEE Elevate: Dark Times"", presented by Ale de la Puente, an independent artist from Mexico who works with the National Institute of Astronomy and the National Institute of Nuclear Science. This lecture was organized as a part of IEEE Day celebration.
- IEEE ZEC (Zagreb Energy Congress) was organized by University of Zagreb SB with support from Croatia Section and PES Chapter. During the Congress, a number of speakers presented their work or recent scientific advances in the field of power and energy science. The Congress program also included three professional visits in nearby companies. The event was well-attended, with 50-70 participants, members of IEEE.
- Students from Croatia participated in IEEEExtreme 11.0 programming competition.

In the next period we are planning to organize following events:

- IEEE Promotional activities by student branches during March 2018 at the start of the summer semester. The goal of these promotional activities is to motivate existing student members to continue their membership and attract new members.
- IEEE TOPWeek (Technical Opportunities Week) which will be co-organized by IAS chapter, PES chapter and YP AG in cooperation with local university, innovation center and alumni organization.
- IEEE Step lecture organized by YP AG

Croatia Section offers a great support to Students and Young Professionals with their activities. Section supports student branches financially in their activities and provides lecturers if necessary. Continuous cooperation between Croatia Section SAC, YP AG and student branches results in multiple activities throughout the year.

What activities/programs/initiatives work well to drive the vitality and sustainability in your Section? What changes would be required by IEEE/the Region/your Section to improve Section vitality and sustainability? What were major successes since the last meeting in terms of Section Vitality? How are you going to continue to foster Section Vitality?

Our success is the result of the continuous work of our Section officers/coordinators as well as the vitality of our chapters, affinity groups and student branches. We take special care of timely annual reporting of officers, meetings and finances to be eligible for the bonus.

The activities / programs / initiatives that work well to drive the vitality and sustainability in our Section include:

- meetings, workshops and conferences;
- cooperation of students and young professionals;
- Pre-University education and STEM programs;
- Section awards;
- Section annual meeting/dinner.

To improve Section vitality and sustainability volunteers train themselves using the IEEE supporting material and programs. From the Region we expect help/guidelines and workshops for Section volunteers to improve Section operation and vitality. To foster Section vitality in our Section we will follow our current best practices:

- taking care of members;
- member retention and recruitment (we received ""2017 Outstanding Section Membership Retention Performance"" Award);
- recruitment and training of new volunteers;
- cooperation of Section units;
- organizing meetings and workshops;
- inviting Distinguished Lecturers;
- celebrating the IEEE Day;
- organizing IEEE conferences;
- sponsoring local conferences;
- Section awards;
- organizing Pre-University education and STEM programs;
- involving members from industry;
- organizing lectures/talks with renowned people from industry;
- launching local IEEE Senior Member initiatives - personal invitations to outstanding members to be nominated by Section.

What are your recommendations to IEEE Region 8 and the Africa Area Chair Gloria Chuckwudebe to foster IEEE in Africa? How does your Section support IEEE Activities in Africa?

Aside from best practices described above, we have no specific recommendations for fostering IEEE in Africa. We would be happy to provide more information on any specific event or practice that the Africa Area Chair, Ms. Chuckwudebe, finds interesting for the Africa Area, or potentially applicable there.

What services and which kind of support would you expect for Region 8 and/or your section out of the new IEEE office in Vienna, Austria? How has the existence of this office influenced your section since its inauguration last year?

- The Croatia Section currently has no need for staff support from the new IEEE office in Vienna.
- We expect administrative and financial support to be provided for the Region 8.
- We propose that the new office serve as an EU-based distribution point for IEEE membership development and promotional material (such as MD Meeting and Event Kit), as well as IEEE products (such as stationery, banners, plaques, pins and certificates), which are currently shipped all the way from the USA. Shipping these products to Europe by sea, and customizing them locally, would significantly reduce the delivery time and cost for Sections based in Europe (and, possibly, other geographically close countries). Further on, for the EU-countries, distribution from Vienna would also obviate the additional delay (and, sometimes, hassle) related to standard customs clearance procedures required for international shipments from non-EU countries.
- So far the existence of this office has not influenced our Section.

Outstanding new initiatives, Special Achievements, Anniversaries.

Special achievements include:

- Croatia Section received 2017 Outstanding Section Membership Retention Performance Award
- IEEEemadC organizational team received 2017 IEEE MGA Innovation Award
- University of Zagreb IEEE Student Branch received the 2017 Darrel Chong Student Activity Award (Silver Medal)
- University of Rijeka IEEE Student Branch received the 2017 IEEE Exemplary Student Branch Award
- Prof. Mislav Grgi?, SM, received 2017 IEEE Member Recruitment and Recovery Committee certificate of recognition for outstanding achievement for the Croatia Section during the 2017 membership year

Anniversaries:

- In 2017, the Croatia Section celebrated 46 years of existence and 25th anniversary of operation