

## Young Professionals Subcommittee

Vinko Lesic

### Goals

The main goals of the Region 8 Young Professionals team for 2018 are to:

- 1) Improve the status of Young Professionals Affinity Groups in Region 8, consisting of:
  - no inactive or dormant Young Professionals Affinity Groups in the Region;
  - reporting their activities on vTools in a timely manner, and they all having the minimum required 2 activity reports before the end of the year;
  - having their chairs in good standing, i.e., IEEE members and not chairing for more than 2 years without elections;
  - create at least 1 new Young Professionals Affinity Group in the Region;
- 2) Facilitate the implementation of Young Professionals programs, both existing ones: STEP (500\$), Meet-Up (1500\$) and Local Activity Funding (750\$, former Seed Funding);
- 3) Bridge the gap between the 3 main segments of Young Professionals by:
  - Supporting Young Professionals Affinity Groups to organize more STEP events and work closer with students in their Section;
  - Supporting Young Professionals Affinity Groups to organize more Meet-ups events and work closer with industry in their Section;
  - Supporting and encourage Young Professionals Affinity Groups to allocate resources to entrepreneurship activities;
- 4) Encourage and ensure the activities' visibility and recognition of Young Professionals Affinity Groups in the Region by Region 8 Young Professionals Newsletter and social media, Young Professionals Impact Blog, Region 8 News and IEEE Region 8 Today;
- 5) Cooperate with SAC for the continuous success of Cross-Sectional SYP Congresses and the Region 8 SYP Congress;
- 6) Cooperate with the other MA subcommittees and take advantage of each others' strengths to achieve our goals, particularly with PA, WiE and HuAC;
- 7) Create, update and share support material and manuals relevant for Young Professionals, focusing on strategies for getting funding and sponsorship for events and how to increase the publicity and visibility of their activities;
- 8) Focus not only on supporting active Young Professionals volunteers, but also on the development of programs that directly aim at increasing Young Professionals members satisfaction based on segmentation studies.

### Progress reports for next xSYPs or SYP

Last year, we continued pursuing the 2-year term goals defined in the beginning of 2017. For a complete overview of our strategy, please refer to the reports submitted during the previous year.

- 1) Currently, there are 52 Young Professionals Affinity Groups in Region 8, a steadily increasing number in the last couple of years and closing to the number of sections and subsections. From these groups, all are active and with their reporting up to date, for the exception of a minority with whom we are closely working to ensure revitalization. In order to maintain our close relationship with the local volunteers, we kept the Affinity Groups equally divided by the R8YP team members, method that has been proven successful in the past. Email is the communication mean of choice, though Skype calls are frequently held with Affinity Groups facing more serious issues, on the process of being revitalized or with brand new committees.
- 2) Region 8 Affinity Groups maintain the success and visibility of the Region 8, delivering a high number of activities with exemplary quality. This is reflected on the usage of funding provided by IEEE YP and on the continued presence of Region 8 volunteers receiving recognition awards.
- 3) Last year, the Region 8 SYP Congress took place in Porto, Portugal. Tighter reimbursement measures and attendance criteria were implemented with good results. For further details on this matter, please refer to the SAC report.
- 4) Collaboration with the fellow subcommittees under Member Activities as so far been successful with:
  - PA - joint efforts on the delivery of content and presence at IEEE Flagship conferences;
  - SIGHT - by foresting the delivery of soft-skills training by local Young Professionals to newly formed SIGHT groups, by carrying the word of the humanitarian cause as part of the Young Professionals message and mission, by working on a joint presentation during the European Microwave Week 2018;
  - LM - by encouraging the subcommittee to be involved in the SYP Congress through the delivery of talks and experience sharing.
- 5) Based on the results from the segmentation study, two main programs and one visibility strategy were designed, focusing on reaching out directly to the Young Professional members:
  - Company Branch Program, now re-branded to "IEEE, Connecting Experts"; after the positive outcome of the survey (in 2017 and repeated in 2018), showing that the YP members in Region 8 consider such an initiative added value, a couple of companies and societies have been contacted, in order to establish a pilot program. The response is positive and supportive, opening way to the next steps and attracting more collaboration possibilities.
  - The YPitch competition has also been re-branded in to a broader program called "Region 8 Entrepreneurship Initiative". The new scope includes not only the competition, but also a mentorship platform, which could be supported by the Action for Industry Subcommittee's network. Up to this point, the focus has been on creating a strong standing of the entrepreneurship pillar within Region 8, increase the visibility of the initiative, fostering relations with suitable submits and constructing the database of mentors (which can double as judges for the competition). Official launch occurred during the Region 8 SYP Congress.

- Several meet-up events have been organized across Region. The R8 YP team has focused their efforts in 2: the Young Professionals in Space, which took place in July, in Barcelona, and the European Microwave Week, which took place in September, in Madrid. Both events aimed at exposing IEEE Young Professionals and its mission inside and outside the IEEE community, while at the same time providing the participants with opportunities of professional growth and networking environments. The efforts have shown to deliver positive results and been highly appreciated by the participants involved.
- 6) Increase of the visibility of Young Professionals in Region 8 has been achieved by participation and delivery of workshops in the Region 8 SYP Congress, support of Meet-up events at technical conferences, redaction and publishing of the YP Newsletter, launch of the Region 8 Entrepreneurship initiative and other online media campaigns. During the past year, we recorded a 20% increase in the number of likes of our Facebook page, maintaining the growth trend of the Young Professionals community and its engagement with the Region 8 team.
- 7) The overall status of Young Professionals Affinity Groups and Region 8 Young Professionals Programs at the end of 2018 has been recorded and the smooth transition is performed for the new Subcommittee, which has readily continued the work and coordination of the activities.

### Progress reports for next xSYPs or SYP

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1fwkHuvtlnlC9xIqR8wJzUSwYvAJBkH5x>

### xSYPs approved since last meeting

This is a year of cross sectional congresses (XS SYPs) we organize together with R8SAC:

- WESYP, Glasgow, UK, Sep 19-21, together with HISTELCON (collaboration with HA)
- NSYP, Stockholm, Sweden, and Helsinki, Finland, Oct 25-27, as a collaborative effort of two sections and YPAGs
- HSYP, Xanthi, Greece, Nov 8-10,
- CEuSYP, Novi Sad, Serbia, July 2-4, together with EUROCON (collaboration with R8WiE, Serbia and Montenegro Section, IEEE societies and more)
- GCC SYP, Kuwait, Kuwait, April 19-20, together with 10th GCC Conference

### YP activities planned

The new team has made a successful and continuous transition and maintained the tradition from former subcommittees, including established and proved operation strategy and already established collaboration contacts. For a complete overview of our strategy, please refer to the reports submitted during the previous year. Built on the firm foundations, this year we managed to significantly expand collaboration within IEEE Region 8 and globally, among Young Professionals and societies, bringing a stronger technical component to Young Professionals.

- Currently, there are 53 Young Professionals Affinity Groups in Region 8 with newly formed one in Denmark Section, and with a steadily increasing number in the last couple of years and closing to the number of sections and subsections. From these groups, all are active and with their reporting up to date, for the exception of a minority with whom we are closely working to ensure revitalization. In order to maintain our close relationship with the local volunteers, we kept the Affinity Groups equally divided by the R8YP team members, method that has been proven successful in the past. Email is the communication mean of choice, though Skype calls are frequently held with Affinity Groups facing more serious issues, on the process of being revitalized or with brand new committees.
- Region 8 Affinity Groups maintain the success and visibility of the Region 8, delivering a high number of activities with exemplary quality. This is reflected on the usage of funding provided by IEEE YP and on the continued presence of Region 8 volunteers receiving recognition awards.
- Collaboration with the fellow subcommittees under Member Activities, Technical Activities or societies as so far been successful with:
  - WiE - exchanged liaison and joint conference session at EUROCON, Power Africa and WiE Leadership Summit
  - PEA (former PA) - co-founded a new program IEEE Region 8 Entrepreneurship Initiative
  - ComSoc YP - organizing two Meet Up events at flagship conferences INFOCOM 2019 and IEEE WCNC 2019
  - MTTs YP - organizing two Meet Ups at European Microwave Week 2019 and Young Professionals in Space 2019
  - CSS YP - collaborative effort in organizing YP content at flagship conference CDC 2019
  - HA - organizing joint reception of HISTELCON / WESYP
  - IEEE Africa Ad Hoc - exchanging liaisons, organizing joint industry panel event at Power Africa conference
  - IEC - co-founded a new program IEEE Connecting Experts
  - AfI - incorporating their experience and volunteers in new program Region 8 Entrepreneurship Initiative

### YP Activities developed

Based on the results from the segmentation study, two main programs and one visibility strategy that were designed previously, focusing on reaching out directly to the Young Professional members, have now been kick off:

- Company Branch Program, now re-branded to "IEEE, Connecting Experts"; after the positive outcome of the survey (in 2017 and repeated in 2018), showing that the YP members in Region 8 consider such an initiative added value, a couple of companies and societies have been contacted, in order to establish a pilot program. Support of Industry Engagement Committee made possible to hold 2 pilots in 2019, focusing on industry and followed by academia in Germany and Italy sections (scheduled 3 visits in 3 cities in each country by the end of the year).

- The YPitch competition has also been re-branded in to a broader program called "Region 8 Entrepreneurship Initiative". The new scope includes not only the competition, but also a mentorship platform. The program is kicked off in August and showed great initial results of attracting 110 ambassadors from 33 IEEE sections who will organize tech-entrepreneurship-focused event together with pitching competitions in their sections during Global Entrepreneurship Week in November. Two winners from each section will be put to an international pool of competitors to enter mentorship stage, with finals envisioned to take place at SYP congress 2020.

In parallel, a project proposal for IEEE Foundation grant was put together by our Subcommittee and PEA, with help of Afl and SAC. The project aims at taking the knowledge and success of program pilot in 2019 to the next level within Region 8, that also aims to bring whole new aspect (and increase) of membership. Results will be announced in December 2019.

- A stronger technical aspect of YP is being introduced, with new societies forming and supporting their own programs. Early success has been proved in co-organizing YP content at conferences with society YPs facilitating communication with conference chairs and R8YP facilitating communication with local AGs and bridging cultural and language barriers. The events aim at exposing IEEE Young Professionals and its mission inside and outside the IEEE community, while at the same time providing the participants with opportunities of professional growth and networking environments. The efforts have shown to deliver positive results and been highly appreciated by the participants involved.
- Increase of the visibility of Young Professionals in Region 8 has been achieved by participation and delivery of workshops in the Region 8 XS SYP Congresses, support of Meet-up events at technical conferences, redaction and publishing of articles in R8 Today and YP Impact Blog, launch of the Region 8 Entrepreneurship initiative and other online media campaigns, using mostly social media and e-notice as way of distributing the information. During the past year, we recorded a 20% increase in the number of likes of our Facebook page, maintaining the growth trend of the Young Professionals community and its engagement with the Region 8 team.

### Proposals for improvements

This year's plan to attain the goals listed in the beginning of this report is given under the same order below:

- 1) Given its success, the AGs division strategy within the team will be carried on. As most of the existing Young Professionals Affinity Groups are currently in good standing or guided towards it, efforts will be directed mainly to revitalization and initialization. This requires constant collaboration with the parent Sections and even local Student Branches, who often have the manpower or connections to older volunteers fit to transition into the Young Professionals world. A new "group call" concept will be employed among neighboring Young Professionals Affinity Groups. The 53 groups have been split into 8 smaller groups based on their geographical location and standing (sensitive communication is maintained by Chair and Past-Chair). This will enable the Affinity Groups to share their practices and learn from each others' challenges on a regular basis. By getting acquainted with the surrounding Young Professionals Affinity Groups experiences, each group should feel less lonely in their struggles and learn new tricks on how to overcome them. In return, motivation and engagement should go up and the number of dormant groups should remain low or null. An increase of Cross-Sectional activities and cooperation beyond the SYP Congresses is also expected.
- 2) The information is set to be facilitated by active and regular communication with affinity groups and by sharing with them the latest information about the incoming and existing programs through e-mails, social media, Skype calls and the Newsletter. Region 8 meetings will be used as a mean to share the information and raise awareness of young professionals programs in front of Section chairs, especially important for the spring meeting since the lot of chairs are newly elected.
- 3) This year, the main focus will be on the implementation of initiatives and support of activities that aim to serve the Region 8 Young Professionals members in industry and tie them closer to academia, all the way from the ones at big well sustained companies to the ones that just started their own small business. This will be handled in 3 fronts:
  - Connecting Experts Program aims at reaching out to industry young professionals by bringing distinguished lecturers and R8PA Speaker Program lecturers to companies to show them significance and benefits of knowledge sharing, life-long learning and network of contacts and thereby the importance of IEEE membership. In 2017 and 2018 the surveys among all IEEE Young Professional members in Region 8 resulted in bringing focus on the power and energy sector, large companies and young professionals that have about 5 years of experience to lead the organization from the company side to host a lecture. Countries (sections) chosen for the pilot program are Germany and Italy as they showed the highest motivation in the responses.
  - The IEEE Region 8 Entrepreneurship Initiative aims at the segment of members that habit the Entrepreneurship ecosystem. The end-goal of this Initiative is three-folded: to strengthen the knowledge of our young entrepreneurs by providing them mentorship, boosting their network by putting them in contact with the relevant stakeholders and getting them global exposure by sponsoring their participation in Summits and other Entrepreneurship events of the kind. This transversal vision is achieved through two main platforms: a mentorship platform and a competition platform. There is currently no support or entrepreneur-aimed program in Region 8 and wider. On the other hand, this segment of young professionals is constantly growing and this is identified as one of significant reasons of losing members.
  - Meet-ups, new funding opportunity from IEEE Young Professionals. The Young Professionals Affinity Groups have now the chance to apply for up to 1500\$ to support the organization of meet-ups at relevant IEEE technical conferences in their Section. Since the relevant conferences are often globally renowned and are annually changing locations, the Region 8 Young Professionals team has put together a list of relevant conferences in the Region and is encouraging the Young Professionals Affinity Groups in the hosting sections to introduce high quality content for the younger participants. This is beneficial in 2 ways: on one hand, it stimulates networking between Young

Professionals members and on-site training of essential technical and soft skills at their career stage; on the other hand, it increases the visibility of Young Professionals in Region 8 and attracts new (young industry) people to join IEEE. Since 2019, we are receiving lots of external initiatives from societies' YP programs, proving the significance of the events.

- 4) The information is also set to be facilitated by active and regular communication with affinity groups and encourage them to actively participate in the dissemination of their events within the Young Professionals and Region 8 communities. The dissemination is proved to provide the added gain for the motivation among the affinity groups and create the necessary momentum.
- 5) Parallel to selecting and guiding the organization of GCCSYP, CEuSYP, HSYP, WESYP and NSYP, SAC and YP teams are looking into possible hosts for MESYP, and African SYP Congress.
- 6) Bridging the gap between the 3 main segments of Young Professionals by implementation of programs is envisioned to continue our effort in joint collaboration with MA subcommittees (and also wider). The Connecting Experts Program is planned to be discussed and carried out together with the support of AfI and TA. IEEE Region 8 Entrepreneurship Initiative implementation is set as a joint activity with PEA. Meet Up encouragement is planned to be continued together with WIE and also carried out with HuAC.
- 7) During the remainder of this year, the following additional manuals will be prepared: IEEE YP and R8YP Programs brochure for existing and new programs, the OU Analytics for YPs manual as a guide to fetch the member list easily, update of the How to organize a Region 8 SYP Congress manual and update of the vTools Reporting Manual according to the new user interface.
- 8) Young Professionals are at the core of IEEE's strategy for 2025. Representing a considerable slack of the totality of IEEE members and active volunteers, this is the period in which the personal decision of committing to IEEE and its ideology or not is taken. Focusing on this membership segment and its community needs is vital. Region 8 is one of the largest and, without a doubt, most culturally diverse of all Regions 1 to 10. As so, the Region 8 Young Professionals team plans to share its vision and concrete near future plan by contributing to the pool of recommendations being collected to the IEEE Sections Congress. Furthermore, an efficient approach will be well-thought-out and beforehand defined to gain (and give) the most out of (to) the event on-site;

### Points of Concern

Young Professionals in Region 8 have grown immensely in the past few years and are now taking a new leap with societies recognizing the importance. Nevertheless, there is still room for improvement. This improvement is inherent to the successful development of programs focusing on Young Professionals in industry and connected to the entrepreneurship life; programs that are not only designed to be exploited by volunteers, but by members, which is expected to result in the highest return in form of retention. The Region 8 Young Professionals team has developed two programs to address the before mentioned point, but everlasting support of the Region 8 OpCom and other closely related subcommittees, as PEA and TA, is required, which may perhaps at some point even lead to stand-alone programs (e.g. IEEE Foundation Grant). Another point is related to Cross-Sectional and Region 8 SYP Congresses, which are drawing the most of energy out of the Subcommittee. This is additionally supported by slow and hesitating decisions due to sensitivity of host choosing process. It has been statistically seen that volunteering activity and member engagement has its peak right after these events. The success of these events has been substantial, which has led to unseen numbers of attendees and, in the case of the Region 8 SYP, volunteers fulfilling the funding criteria. With the increased number of congresses, additional effort is required from R8 SAC and YP. Deeper insight in the organizational process and necessary involvement of more experienced volunteers (Young Professionals category) as advisers is crucial to maintain the quality of the events since majority of them are facing the danger of losing participants. This has been emphasized in 2019 as never before, with most of the XS SYPs being organized or initiated by YPAGs. Financial support of these events by Region 8 might be required to maintain their quality and sustain the possibility of delivering training tracks to the participants by Region 8 Committee volunteers. Additional burden are last-minute decisions and often remote locations to maintain equal geographical diversity, which stresses the budget of the Subcommittee.

Additionally, new possibilities of further expanding of ASYP(s) is concluded in agreement with SAC to be additional challenge for funds, human resources (number of team members) and necessity of understanding of local climate. For this, collaboration within R8 and IEEE, and joint approaches to the topic seems to be mandatory.

Young Professionals have always represented a major fraction of the IEEE members, as one third of member, but only recently it has become undeniable their impact and contribution to the future of the institution. With retention and satisfaction rates steadily decreasing among young people during past years, IEEE is finally realizing that it is essential to adapt to this new changing world in order to remain a relevant engineering organization. Since 2019, the results are evident as this is the first year of registered increase in members in R8 and globally. As a result, the Young Professionals program is exponentially growing and becoming inherent to IEEE's strategy. We hope that Region 8 will continue to show its constant support as so far and enable the growth of this program to its full potential, in some cases hopefully even before IEEE as an institution is.

### Other Issues to report