

Lebanon Section

Bachar Elhassan

List the activities carried out to foster relations with Industry and the results obtained. List the initiatives planned during the next 6 months and their expected outcomes. How can the Region help your Section in your industry-related activities?

IEEE Lebanon Section continues its deep cooperation with industry and maintains its previous relations established during the last years with many Lebanese industrial entities: Alfa, Ericsson, Nokia, ZRE Lebanon, BDD, Foo, Arabnet and the order of engineers of Tripoli. The IEEE cooperation with Lebanese industry has a positive effect on IEEE Lebanon section:

- 1) Internships for IEEE student members
- 2) Support of IEEE Lebanon Section activities. IEEE Lebanon Section supported the "Huawei ICT Competition Middle East 2019-2020". That took place in November 2019. The goal of this competition was to develop ICT industry talent and a strong ecosystem. We are now working on a MoU with Huawei Lebanon.

In January 2020 we organized with the order of Engineers of Tripoli two events:

- 1) The first was a workshop in collaboration with CISCO. The main topic was IoT and its applications.
- 2) The second was a seminar about the Electricity in Lebanon and was presented by a former director at EDL (Electricity of Lebanon)

In addition, IEEE Lebanon section initiated a contact with the Order of Engineers of Beirut for a potential cooperation. An MoU is being discussed as part of this collaboration. During the coming months, a workshop on Virtual Reality and its applications is being prepared in collaboration with SAAB -RDS INC and the order of Engineers.

In addition for the 3rd consecutive year, IEEE Lebanon section will be a part of Arabnet 2020. Those events have two major outcomes:

- 1) Improve the knowledge of IEEE Members
- 2) Presentations about IEEE and its activities and benefit of being an IEEE Member are done. Thus big numbers of Lebanese Electrical engineers will have the opportunity to learn about IEEE.

It is worth mentioning that in order to improve the relation of all our affiliated chapters with the industry sector, a new subcommittee called the Industry Subcommittee was established. All chapters and affinity groups had a representative in this subcommittee and it is coordinated by the Section's industry Ambassador.

The Region can play a very important role in fostering industry connections by helping local sections and chapters in establishing a network of connections with different international companies and entities within the Region itself. Local sections are usually unaware of potential partnership with international companies due to lack of information. The Region can therefore maintain and share a database of potential companies working closely with IEEE and looking for new links with different local sections and chapters.

List the activities addressed to Students and/or Young Professionals and the results obtained. List the initiatives planned during the next 6 months and their expected outcomes. How can the Region help in your students and YP-related activities?

IEEE Lebanon Section introduced last year a National competition among all Electrical and Electronic Engineering Students. It will be repeated each year. Its goal is to maintain a connection between Electrical Engineering students from all institutes in Lebanon to IEEE. During this competition, presentations about IEEE and the benefits of being an IEEE member are clearly explained.

In addition, the SYP Congress Lebanon Section is also a yearly big event targeting students and Young professionals in Lebanon and attracting them to IEEE.

The IEEE National day is also a big gathering where always new students discover IEEE. Last year, IEEE Lebanon Section National Day took place in October at USEK. It was very successful and more than 300 students and young professional from different places in Lebanon were present.

On another note, the 18 student branches distributed within most Engineering Faculties in Lebanon constitute our permanent link with the students. During 2019, two of these students Branches (AUB student Branch and USEK Student Branch) received a distinction award from IEEE.

IEEE Lebanon section highly encourages Students and YP to participate the regional SYP congress and support part of the fees their participation.

During the next months, SYPC'20 Lebanon Section and the second IEEE Lebanon Section Student competition will be held. Those events have positive impact on students and Young professionals and tighten their attachment to IEEE.

List the activities carried out to retain and recruit members and the results obtained. List the initiatives planned during the next 6 months and their expected outcomes. How can the Region help in your membership-related activities?

It is worth mentioning that IEEE Lebanon Section got this year the 2019 Recognition Retention Award for being an outstanding Section in membership retention performance. This demonstrates the commitment of the section to retain and recruit new IEEE members.

Many visits to Lebanese Universities are done each year to introduce the staff and student to IEEE in general and the benefits of being an IEEE member in particular. In addition, the good relation with the order of engineers of Tripoli and Beirut help us keep a tight connection with professional engineers and attract many of them to the IEEE community.

List the activities intended to support chapters, affinity groups, and student branches and the results obtained. List the related initiatives planned during the next 6 months and their expected outcomes. How can the Region help in your support to chapters, affinity groups, and student branches?

IEEE Lebanon section technically sponsored the ACTEA'19 conference that took place in NDU university, Zouk Campus, Lebanon and The FLL International First Lego League that took place in LAU, Byblos, Lebanon in July 2019.

The EMBS Lebanon Chapter organized for the fifth time, its biannual conference ICABME 2019. It took place at the Doctoral School of Sciences and Technology (EDST) and the Faculty of Engineering Lebanese University (LU), Tripoli campus, Lebanon between October 17-19, 2019. More than 250 researchers from Lebanon, Middle east, Europe and all around the world attended this conference. There were 105 submitted papers from 26 different countries. Each paper was evaluated by at least two among 60 reviewers. 65 of these papers were accepted and were included in the final program. ICABME'2019 is delighted to have four keynote speakers and twenty invited speakers from France, USA, Canada, Finland, China, Turkey and Cairo.

During the next months, many events are planned by each chapter (workshops, Seminar, receiving DLTs, Grandtech, etc..).

In addition to all these events, the section will organize the second IEEE Lebanon Section Student Competition in June and its by annual Conference "IEEE IMCET 2020" in the coming month of November. The call for paper is under preparation and will be sent during February 2020.

IEEE Lebanon Section is always encouraging chapters, Affinity Groups and Student Branches to organize high level events and activities. To do so, Chapters are supported financially by 500 USD for each event of one day, and Student branches by 150 USD per day. The chairs of all chapters and representatives of affinity groups are always invited to the executive committee meetings and included in all exchanged emails. The executive committee has also invited all the Chapters along with the key representatives (advisor, chair, vice-chair) of all the student branches to the retreat in order to discuss ideas and strategies with the wider IEEE community. It is worth mentioning that each year 500 USD is distributed to the best chapter, best affinity group and best student branch. The Region can be of much help in this regards. Among others, contributions would be in promoting the Section's events, creating closer relation between chapters, affinity groups and students branches within the Region.



Challenges (with a focus on what support is required from Region 8)

The major challenge that we are facing is the actual non stable situation in Lebanon. We are afraid currently of not being able to maintain a proper membership renewal process, which would directly affect membership retention.

As it is known, IEEE Lebanon section has grown up quickly during the last years and has reached more than 1700 members in 2018 which lead to the reception of many membership retention awards.

During the last few months, the economic situation has reached an alarming level which pushed Lebanese people to start a revolution against corruption and the reigning sectarian political system on October 17, 2019. As a direct consequence, withdrawals in foreign currency (especially US Dollars) increased dramatically as people feared a collapse of the banking system and a devaluation of the Lebanese Lira. To reduce bank runs and prevent the default of Lebanese banks, several restrictions were enforced including:

- 1) Heavy limitations on cash withdrawals in foreign currency (small to none)
- 2) No exchange from Lebanese pound to US Dollar using the official rate of 1515 LBP/USD. In that case, people have to reply on exchange offices with rate a exceeding 2000 LBP/USD
- 3) Limitation or cancellation of the use of credit cards for online payments or payments outside Lebanon

We have received many request from IEEE members to find a solution for the payment of their membership renewal fees. Other members especially students asked to waive them or alternatively help them with a reduction of the fees. The IEEE Lebanon Section is seriously concerned about losing a big portion of its members due to the current crisis.

In addition, the IEEE executive committee decided to cancel or postpone all the events that have been set for the remainder of 2019, especially the General Assembly that was programmed on December 4, 2019. This was mainly due to security concerns and to the inability to withdraw enough money to finance the different activities.

An email was sent in December 2019 to the Region 8 Directors asking them to help us to find solutions regarding the membership renewal problems but no answer was received.

