

2 The later history of IEEE Region 8

2.1 The creation of IEEE Region 10 and the extension of Region 8

IEEE Region 8 was formed (as an IEEE Region after the IRE/AIEE merger) on 8th January 1963. At that time it comprised Europe, the Middle East and North Africa. The ‘rest of the world’ was all Region 9 at that time, until on 1 January 1967, Region 9 was limited to South America and the ‘rest of the world’ became Region 10, with Shigeo Shima as its first Director (1967–68). During its meeting on 13–14 November 1969, the Board of Directors agreed to change Bylaw 401.1 such that ‘Region 8 shall consist of Greenland, Europe, U.S.S.R. and the following countries in North Africa and the Near East: Aden Protectorate, Algeria, Bahrain, Chad, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Muscat, Oman, Niger, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Spanish Sahara, Sudan, Syria, Trucial Coast, Tunisia, Turkey, the United Arab Republic, and Yemen.’ Note that ‘United Arab Republic’ was at that time and until 1971 the official name for Egypt; between 1958 and 1961, it was the name of a union between Egypt and Syria.

South Africa Section (established 5 August 1977) and the Nigeria Section (established 12 January 1978) were part of IEEE Region 10 till 1981. At the 14 December 1979 meeting of the Regional Activities Board, Region 8 Director Dick C.J. Poortvliet and Region 10 Director S.Y. King announced that Region 8 will add the Continent of Africa to its territory in 1981 and that a proposal for revisions in the Bylaws would be presented at the February meeting. Said proposal was accepted unanimously at the 15 February 1980 RAB meeting, pending acceptance of the concerned sections (South Africa and Nigeria). In the 22 August 1980 RAB meeting, the motion to recommend to the Board of Directors adoption of the revision of Bylaw 401.2 passed. In its subsequent meeting of 24–25 August 1980, Vice President Larry K. Wilson (Regional Activities) moved for (1) adoption of revised Bylaw 401.2 which would assign the continent of Africa to Region 8, as recommended by the Region 8 and 10 Committee and RAB, this boundary change to become effective January 1, 1981, (2) approval to waive the 1981 Region 8 assessment for those members involved in the transfer from Region 10 to Region 8, and (3) approval to include in the 1981 RAB Budget the funding of travel expenses of the Nigeria and South Africa Section Chairmen to attend 1981 Region 8 Committee meetings. The motion passed, after which Bylaw 401.2 reads: ... Region 8 shall consist of Africa, Europe, Greenland, Iceland, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, and the Near and Middle East countries located west of Afghanistan and Pakistan. ...

2.2 The Eastward spread of Sections in Region 8 – Tony Davies

The transcript below is taken from the article “Some recollections of the Eastward spread of IEEE Sections in Region 8” by Tony Davies as it appears on the IEEE Region 8 web site.

In the days before the end of the Berlin Wall, and the associated political changes in Eastern and Central Europe, IEEE activity in the countries east of the ‘Iron Curtain’ was limited. There was a Poland Section in Region 8, formed in 1972, and occasional IEEE related conferences had taken place there. Other International Organisations such as IFAC and IFIP were rather more successful in organising conferences in this part of the world, because of the way that they had ‘representatives’ of each country in their management bodies.

The Hungary Section was formed in 1987, and the Region 8 Committee held a meeting in Budapest in April 1989.

After the changes, there was a rapid development of IEEE activity and formation of new Sections. A Region 8 Committee meeting was held in Warsaw, Poland, in Spring 1991 during what were still difficult economic times for Poland.

However, growth in membership numbers was (and still is) slow. The economic changes meant that IEEE membership was unaffordable for many professional engineers and academics. Senior members of national research institutes were often able to join using other than personal funds, but in a few cases, they regarded IEEE membership as something of a privilege which they were reluctant to share with junior colleagues.

Somewhat later, the R8 Committee held several more of its meetings in the Central and Eastern European areas: Prague, Czech Republic, in 1994, Berlin, Germany in 1999, in what had been East Berlin (part of the former GDR), then at Budapest, Hungary in 2002 and at Kraków, Poland in 2004. The Czechoslovakia Section was formed in 1992 and despite the split of Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovakian Republics, a single Section for both has been retained, although that may not be sustainable in the long term.

Russia was something of a special case – a huge country with many locations which have extensive Scientific and Engineering activity at a high level – where one might expect, in the long term, to see many IEEE activities develop. However after the IEEE Russia Section was formed in 1990, membership growth was very slow, mainly for economic reasons, although many Chapters were formed, partly with the aid of a financial support initiative from some IEEE Societies, especially from Electron Devices, and who paid for initial memberships so that Chapter formation petitions could be created, and there were a number of IEEE conferences held. Chapter Chairs meetings were held in various places in Region 8 with financial support from Societies in Division I and IV and from Region 8, generally alongside the major conferences of one of the Societies, and the support was enough to pay for the attendance of Chapter Chairs from many of the Central and Eastern European locations. The Microwave Theory and Techniques Society was also very active in this initiative and still is. This led to several similar Chapter Chairs meetings for other Societies being initiated by the Region 8 Committee (for example, one for Signal Processing Chapter Chairs alongside the ICASSP in Istanbul, Turkey in June 2000).

However, Chapters in parts of Russia remote from Moscow sometimes complained of lack of support from their Section, and after a while moves to provide some independence for activities in St. Petersburg and Siberia arose. After some suggestions to form a Russia Council were abandoned, there was finally agreement to form three Russia Sections, one to be called ‘North West’ and one ‘Siberia’ – while the original Russia Section retained responsibility for all other parts of the country. Existing Chapters were transferred to the newly formed Sections where the location of their principal activities justified it.

Another “problem” with some of the new Chapters was an unwillingness of the initial Chapter Chairs to hold elections and be replaced by other volunteers, resulting in some very long-serving Chairs. This also happened with a few of the new Sections. In the Ukraine Section, there were strong ‘differences of opinion’ between a Chapter in the East part and another in the West part!

When the three Baltic Republics (Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia) gained their independence from Russia, there was a suggestion from the Region 8 Committee management to try to form a single ‘Baltic’ IEEE Section, combining the three countries. There was a mistaken belief that they were all rather similar, with languages incorrectly assumed to be Slavic! It took some persuasion to convince some senior R8 IEEE volunteers that this was not the case, and that each had a very different language and culture.

An early step was the formation of a Chapter in Estonia, which was affiliated with Finland since there was no Estonia Section. I had the pleasure of announcing the formation of this Chapter to the Region 8 Committee when they met in Piscataway in Spring 1998. To the puzzlement of all except the IEEE Finland Chair, I preceded my announcement by asking the Committee to listen to some music played over the audio system – this was a recording of the Estonian National Anthem, to celebrate the formation of the first IEEE unit in Estonia. It was immediately recognised by the Finland Section Chair because both countries share the same tune for their National Anthems, even though the words are quite different. During the time of the Soviet Union, playing the Estonian National Anthem or showing the Estonian flag were serious offences. Some time passed before the three Baltic countries had their own Sections, with the Latvia Section having only recently been established (in 2008).

As mentioned in the September 1995 interview by Bob Winton (archived at the IEEE History Center at Rutgers University, with a link from the Region 8 website), initial attempts to form a Lithuania Section involved Prof. Raimundas Jasinevicius, from Kaunas University of Technology, who had established links with Universities in London, England many years before, for the exchange of junior academics, etc. Progress with Section formation was very slow and made slower by his absence in Denmark for six years as

Lithuanian Ambassador. However, the Section was finally established in 2005, based mainly in Vilnius. This was followed by the Estonia Section formation in 2006 and the Latvia Section formation in 2008.

IEEE activities in the former Yugoslavia were another special case.⁷ The Yugoslavia Section was formed in 1971 in Ljubljana, Slovenia, and became moderately active in holding conferences and in providing IEEE volunteers. Because of a 'blocked currency' situation, an arrangement was made to keep the funds in a Bank in Ljubljana where they could be utilized for organization of local IEEE conferences and also to pay the local costs of conference attendance there by visitors from Western countries, who could then reimburse IEEE in USA. Following the wars in Yugoslavia, in 1992 the Region 8 Director Kurt Richter organized a meeting with three members of the Yugoslavia Section Executive Committee in Graz, Austria. It was decided to form by petitions three new Sections, as three equal successors of the previous Yugoslavia Section: the Slovenia Section, the Croatia Section, and the Yugoslavia Section. It was a friendly splitting into three new Sections and in 1996 all three Sections celebrated their 25th anniversary. In 1997 the Republic of Macedonia Section was formed. The name Yugoslavia became an increasing anomaly, and in 2005 it was renamed the Serbia and Montenegro Section; the Bosnia and Herzegovina Section was formed later that year.

Because of a number of rather new Sections wanting to host the R8 Committee, and because the R8 Committee management was glad of the opportunities to welcome these new Sections by meeting on their territory, the Committee meetings were held in Vilnius, Lithuania, in 2006 and in Sofia, Bulgaria and Bucharest, Romania, in 2007, and later in Riga, Latvia.

The next few meetings of the R8 Committee are likely to be in Western Europe (for example, Paris, Berlin), and so the long term average is more balanced.

Prof. Tony Davies, 8 June 2008 (minor updating April 2012)
with one paragraph slightly adapted and extended by Aleksandar Szabo.

2.3 Yugoslavia Section from 1971 to 1992 – Baldomir Zajc

In 1970 and even before there were some IEEE members living in Yugoslavia, using benefits of such membership for their professional activity. At that time we noted some contacts between members in Yugoslavia and in other countries, experienced with the significance and benefits of IEEE Sections there. So information was collected. Then contacts between C. Reginald Russell, Assistant Secretary of IEEE Region 8 and Dr. Jože Furlan, Professor at the Faculty of EE, University of Ljubljana in November 1970 resulted in IEEE Membership Services mailing in December 1970 the information on requirements to establish an IEEE Section, and providing also the IEEE Constitution, Bylaws and Section Manual by the request of Mr. Russell.

Section Formation Petitions normally require the signatures of at least 50 members. However, the signed petition with far less signatures was sent on 10th May, 1971, at the suggestion of Region 8 Director P. Jespers, who proposed that less than 50 members were sufficient (only 15 members were available at different locations in Yugoslavia at that time). At the beginning Dr. Furlan explained the difficulties with payment the dues in foreign currency. It was decided that the future payments could be in local currency using a blocked custody account established in a Yugoslavian bank, but that the Section should be set up first. Of course there was also a high interest in IEEE to start activities in Eastern Europe. Director Jespers also visited Yugoslavia in the summer.

The newly formed and developing Section promised to new members the possibility of membership dues payment in dinars and giving all IEEE benefits and services, including magazines, conference participation and also with strong student activity support available. This was throughout the next 20 years a real salvation for the entire international literature of engineering in the country, because of the permanent scarcity of foreign currency which meant that books and magazines could not be imported.

⁷This paragraph is slightly adapted and extended by Aleksandar Szabo.

The formal date of the RAB approval of the establishment of the Yugoslavia Section was 21st June, 1971.

On **13th October, 1971** at the Faculty of EE, University of Ljubljana, the Founding Assembly for an official formation of Yugoslavia Section took place, at which officers were elected for the first Yugoslavia Section Executive Committee and the first Yugoslavia Section Chairman **Mirjam Gruden**. Later elected Chairmen were, in February 1981 **Jože Furlan**, then **Mirko Vehovec** in June 1985 and **Baldomir Zajc** in January 1988. Through the years participants in Executive Committees included the following volunteers: Vinko Albert, Stanoje Bingulac, Andrej Dobnikar, Jože Mlakar, Albin Wedam, Drago Hercog, Franc Bratkovič, Aleksandar Szabo, Dušan Drajić, Ferdinand Gubina, Rudi Zorko, Bogomir Horvat, France Kranjc, Dejan Lazić, Andrej Levstek, Hrvoje Babić, Branka Jokanović and Marko Jagodič.

On 12th June, 1971 a Petition was also signed for the establishment of a Student Branch at the University of Ljubljana.

On July 1972 an IEEE Custody Bank Account in Yugoslavia was agreed by the IEEE Executive Committee, and as a result the payments of membership dues were possible after 1st February, 1973 when the National Bank approved the bank account at Ljubljanska Banka where four persons from USA were authorized to sign withdrawals. So the membership development was enabled and encouraged. This was the beginning of a 20 year long period when the Section Secretary was acting as a benevolent book-keeper over IEEE membership dues payments in the Yugoslavia Section. It was quite an office!

According to the Petition for the State registration of the Yugoslavia Section from 9th November, 1971 the Statement of the official State **registration of Yugoslavia Section in Yugoslavia** was issued on 18th October, 1972.

Later in 1976 according a new “Yugoslav Law for Societies’ registration” a direct registration of the Yugoslavia Section was no longer possible and the Yugoslavia Section joined under the umbrella of the Electrotechnical Association of Slovenia – EZS, in order to be officially allowed.

On 10–13th June, 1984 the President of IEEE, Richard J. Gowen and Executive Director Eric Herz visited Ljubljana and on 12th June at the University of Ljubljana granted three IEEE Centennial Medals to Rajko Tomović, Hrvoje Požar and Lojze Vodovnik.

The RAB Section Membership Growth Award was granted to the Yugoslavia Section for outstanding leadership and results in IEEE membership development activities for Region 8 in 1985.

About 300 members (including 40 Student members) were reported at the middle of the eighties.

An IEEE Region 8 Committee meeting was organized by the Yugoslavia Section at Brdo, Slovenia on 19–20th September, 1987. This was the 3rd such meeting, after those in Dubrovnik on 25–26th October, 1974 and Split on 11–12th November, 1978.

In 1988–1989 the following chapters were established:

- Chapter on SP/CAS (001/041), Chair Hrvoje Babić, Elektrotehnički fakultet, Zagreb
- Chapter on MTT (017), Chair Branka Jokanović, Institut za primenjenu fiziku, Novi Beograd
- Chapter on Com (019), Chair Marko Jagodič, Iskra, Kranj

In 1998 Region 8 Committee accepted the candidacy of the Yugoslavia Section for organization of MELECON 91 on 22–24nd May, 1991 in Ljubljana. The Conference was held and was very successful, although the political situation in Yugoslavia at that time prevented a high attendance of participants.

The Yugoslavia Section cooperated with National Societies ETAN, JUGEL, JUREMA, EZS and with all Yugoslav Universities in the organization of several conferences during those years.

After nearly 20 years of its existence the Yugoslavia Section reported a membership of about 700.

Already during the Annual Assembly in January 1990 there were visible different political attitudes of the Yugoslav Republics and their disagreement was apparent. In 1991 even the currencies used became different and therefore on 9th December, 1991 the Yugoslavia Section Chairman Baldomir Zajc proposed to form three IEEE Sections, in Ljubljana, Zagreb and Belgrade and to split the custody account at the bank into 3 parts because the contacts between the Republics no longer existed.

On 30th April, 1992 Region 8 Director Kurt Richter at the proposal of Baldomir Zajc invited Aleksandar Szabo from Zagreb, Đorđe Paunović from Belgrade and Baldomir Zajc from Ljubljana to form new Sections. All agreed to the proposal for three Sections: Slovenia, Croatia and for the remainder, a new Yugoslavia Section instead of the 20 years old Yugoslavia Section. **1st August, 1992 is the date of the formations of these 3 Sections.** In Macedonia and Bosnia and Herzegovina there was scarcity of members at that time. The Republic of Macedonia Section was established after the first visit of IEEE President Wally Read to Bulgaria (where a delegation from Macedonia was present) and to Slovenia in 1996. In 1997 Wally Read visited this already established Republic of Macedonia Section. In Bosnia and Herzegovina an IEEE Section was established at the end of 2005 in the time of Region 8 Director Baldomir Zajc's term of office, 2005–06.

This description covers the 20 fruitful years of IEEE activity in the area, and after that five Sections were developed in this territory and now, everywhere the IEEE activity is going on successfully with new challenges and new volunteers.