Community Talk with:
Özgün Algin

Creating innovation, results and exploitation with friends

Özgün Algin is founder and managing partner of Acadron, a Turkish research consultancy company that provides services on research strategy development, research business development, collaborative multi-national research project/consortium development and management. He has been in and around the ITEA Community circuit for more than a decade.

A growing Turkish presence

A BSc graduate in Mathematics from Yildiz Technical University in 2004, Özgün already began software programming at university so it was a logical step to kick off his career as a software engineer, working both for himself and for consultancy firms before moving to Mobilera in 2006. It was soon after this move that he first came into contact with ITEA, initially as a research project manager and later research director. "It was then that I became involved in the first ITEA 2 project, LifeWear, led by a Turkish company. It developed a new platform that enables wearable electronics to work in conjunction with mobile computers to enhance the mobile lifestyle of users and create new market opportunities." This statement of intent regarding the Turkish commitment now sees a strong presence within the ITEA Community and spectrum of projects.

During this period as Research Director, Özgün managed several projects for ITEA 2, CELTIC and MEDEA+ within the Eureka world in which Mobilera participated either as a partner, work package leader, country coordinator or project leader. "My role included the strategic planning of the research department, in terms of partner relationships, networking, product development and the research agenda as well as being responsible for managing Eureka grant submissions to local Public Authorities (TÜBİTAK)," he says. "And I'm proud to say that we achieved a success rate of 100%."

Transferring knowledge
In 2012, Özgün decided to taste life as an entrepreneur as he founded his own company, Acadron. Going over to the 'other side of the fence' as it were, working actively as a consultant for clients, Özgün helps SMEs and large companies to apply to and benefit from European (Eureka Clusters such as ITEA, CELTIC, EUROGIA) and Turkish incentive programmes. "I act as the main point of contact between research teams and the high-level management of my client companies on whose behalf I establish multinational networks that embrace the business, academic and research worlds. Of course," he continues, "I am able to make good use of my experience as a research director and involvement in ITEA and other programmes. I can pass on to clients my knowledge and expertise in areas like developing research agendas based on corporate targets, developing research networks, managing multi-million budget research projects including idea development, consortium building, grant application and subsequent project management."

Multinational collaborative research context
Four years later, in 2016, Özgün turned to an interesting opportunity offered by Turkcell Technology, one of Turkey's leading R&D and innovation companies. It was set up to develop competitive information and communication technology (ICT) services and products and to facilitate the international spread of the products and solutions that create a difference in the environment of the Turkcell group of companies, and thus also to create value for other operators. "At Turkcell Technology I represented the company in the Eureka Research Cluster boards, such as being a member of the ITEA Steering Group and Board Support Group as well as being a member of the CELTIC+ Core Group. Working closely with research teams and managers in Turkcell Technology, we are able to define the research agenda, identify new research projects and develop consortiums with universities and research partners. All in a European multinational collaborative research context."

The joy in networking
Clearly, Özgün has a real affinity with and commitment to the collaborative research context and to ITEA, in particular, so what is

it that appeals to him? "There is not just one thing but I guess if I had to sum it up briefly, it would be the fact that it creates an environment in which innovation can really thrive. I mean, the collaboration is sincere and open, and everyone feels free to share ideas with the aim of achieving a result, of having an impact. Which brings me to the second key point: bottom-up. All the projects are driven by the needs of clients. You get to work in teams or consortia that include stakeholders from all across and through the ecosystem, from research and engineering to industrial stakeholders, both smaller and larger companies, as well as Public Authorities and funding agencies. This gives ITEA its strength, I think. And ensures that the goals of projects are aimed at real tangible results that have an impact on the users of those results. This is something of which I am aware myself since my job is to help clients find suitable research projects to help them get an innovative idea to market." At the time of writing, Özgün has returned to focus full-time on his 'baby' – Acadron – enriched by his

involvement and experience in a Community he describes as a 'fun' place to be.

Special feeling
"While innovation, results and exploitation are important for both business and society to benefit from our efforts and are highly rewarding for project participants like myself and for ITEA as a whole, I must admit, it is just as rewarding to have the opportunity to enjoy working with people who then become friends – or should I say family? From my very first day within the Community I struck up friendships – such a variety of people, backgrounds and cultures – it doesn't seem to matter, everyone wants to be friends. Of course, that helps build trust and encourages the openness to collaborate effectively. So not only professionally but also personally I feel that my life is richer because of ITEA. That sense of happiness in being part of the Community cannot be underestimated. It's quite unique and gives me a very special feeling."