

## Community Talk with Arda Güreller

# A real (ITEA) family man at heart

**Arda Güreller graduated with a BSc in Mathematical Engineering from Yildiz Technical University in 2000 and followed this up with a Business Information Systems Master programme from Bogazici University in Turkey. Last year, he took on the role of External Public Funded Relations Leader at Ericsson in the Swedish capital Stockholm.**

### Drawing up a career roadmap

"I started my career in an e-learning company, the Kavrakoglu Management Institute, in 2002. These were early days for the internet," Arda recalls, "but our founder, Professor Ibrahim Kavrakoglu, was very confident about the potential of e-learning and now, during the pandemic some twenty years later, we can see how much foresight he had. It was also during that period that I became involved in my first international R&D project in the sixth EU Framework Programme, together with my manager Alper Elicin. This project, along with the respective technologies, proved to be very informative for me and it helped me a lot to think more about futuristic technologies that can help the world to become a better place. I was not aware that I was entering a career path that would affect rest of my life. Since the Kavrakoglu Management Institute was also working actively in management consultancy, I gained the opportunity to better understand how organisational improvements can enable companies to become more successful. Those first years helped me a lot to structure my future career roadmap. When I joined the Ericsson family in 2010, together with Dr.



Ozgur Gungor and Fatma Ozdemir Canverdi, I got involved in the management of different internal and international R&D projects, including ITEA. I have joined many ITEA project discussions with many colleagues around the world. While I continued to contribute to the ITEA community, in 2018 we set up the Ericsson Research Turkey branch and I worked with Dr. Henrik Almeida to establish the first private research lab focusing on Telecommunication Networks and Security before moving to Sweden in 2021."

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### Ever-present

Arda has been actively involved in the ITEA Community actively since 2013. "From the outset I have been a loyal supporter of this family. I've hardly missed a PO Days event since 2013 and during those years I had chance to meet some very important R&D figures from academia, SMEs and industrial players. To be able to discuss and hear different opinions among experts from throughout the EU, Korea and also Canada has been a real privilege for me. While I continue to be part of the ITEA project discussions, I started to support my colleague Anders Caspár in representing Ericsson in the ITEA Steering Group, a role I continue today and which helps me to grasp the high-level vision of the EU's prominent institutions and their approach towards technology and its realisation."

### Like a family

"As I have already mentioned, ITEA is like a big family. Starting from the first phase of projects to the closure of the projects you interact with different organisations for three or more years, during which time lots of things change that can affect your project. You need to find good ways to deal with those changes together with the consortium, and by doing so you strengthen your relations with partners locally and globally. In ITEA projects you can always interact with different partners from different parts of the world, which not only enhances your understanding of technology and solutions provided by partners but can also lead to new sub projects that can extend year after year."

### Technology and culture

Arda points out one important aspect of ITEA projects, namely the flexibility compared to most other funding mechanisms. "You can

alter the number of participating partners, change the use cases and adapt technologies that are targeted for the project during the life cycle of the project. This all helps the partners target a product output from the project. But I think the best part of the ITEA projects is reserved for the gatherings for the project related management meetings, technical process meetings and review meetings. Before COVID-19, you could meet with the project team in different cities and, besides discovering new cooperation possibilities, discover the culture of those cities while achieving good technical outputs at the same time."

### Compensating for COVID-19

While COVID-19 has reduced the opportunity to gather, it has had the benefits of cutting the CO2 travel footprint Arda has to admit. "I get to spend more time than ever before with my family. Still, I do miss my other family at ITEA. The pandemic has challenged us to innovate in our communication. And I think this is something that ITEA also has to bear in mind. Knowing how important the face-to-face communication moments are, are there ways that we can compensate for this lack within our Community while the pandemic lasts? Perhaps that should be addressed. Because, when it comes down to it, it's the people that make the Community, and it's the contact that is the glue. ITEA has always been good at embracing change – it is a dynamic and flexible programme, so I have every confidence that ITEA can tackle this communication issue. I have been part of many changes in ITEA, and all the changes targeted good purposes."

### Landscape of opportunity

For Arda, there are plenty of positives in being part of the ITEA Community family. "When a new ITEA project is initiated from scratch, we try to invite as many contributors as possible. Because ITEA projects have very fruitful project discussion sessions where suddenly a comment from a partner can turn your project idea into a totally more comprehensive and effective concept for you and your company. Besides that, ITEA projects give you an opportunity to collaborate with new faces outside your organisation and can bring your engineers and development teams a fresh perspective. Also when they travel for projects, they can visit the R&D centres of different institutions and also start discussing new collaborating possibilities. Having been part of many ITEA projects, I also took the chance to visit the most prominent EU R&D centres. In addition to being my second family, ITEA has also provided me with a landscape of opportunity. I look forward to the moment when we can get together again in person and explore and exploit this landscape together."