

Community Talk with: Can Yanyali

In this issue's 'Community Talk' column, Elektronet managing partner Can Yanyali looks at his and his company's involvement in the ITEA community and the benefits that both have gained from participation.

So where did it all start for you?

"I have been an entrepreneur for around twelve years now, having started my business life straight after I finished my studies abroad. That was back in 2004 when I went into the world of informatics and communication. I have specialised in R&D, manufacturing technologies and project management in the electronic manufacturing sector. Among other things, this gave me a good grounding to start up my first technology company, Iconn Technologies,

in California in 2007. But in order to diversify my investments around the world, in 2008 I became a partner in Elektronet Inc., a company that has been active in the informatics and communication sector for 20 years. It was then, as Chief Operation Officer, that I started to move Elektronet in the direction of an international platform.

"By focusing on R&D for payment systems and system integration, Elektronet has managed to manufacture self-service terminals like First National ATM, Electronic Toll-Collection Systems and Goldmatic. In addition, Elektronet Inc. has also become a business partner to the world's pioneering technology companies like Microsoft, Google, JCM Global, AZKOYEN Group and MEI. Since I head Elektronet's International R&D Projects division and the EUREKA programme falls under that umbrella, I also take part in the administrative body of the Istanbul Chamber of Industry (ISO), the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce (ITO), the American Chamber of Commerce in Turkey (TABA-AmCham), the Software Industrialists Association (YASAD) and the Economic Council of Germany (Wirtschaftsrat Deutschland)."

Impressive. When did your relationship with ITEA begin and what kinds of projects have you participated in?

"As Elektronet, our first meeting with ITEA happened thanks to our participation in the PO Days. We first heard of ITEA through TÜBİTAK, the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey, while we were focused on R&D on a local level. But thanks to TÜBİTAK introducing us to ITEA, we are now able to sustain our R&D on an international level. Our involvement with ITEA has been on the basis of project development with partnerships; and I've transferred the gains I have made in terms of my R&D experience to my co-workers and my company. We focused on other companies' projects to help them sustain their projects on an international level by introducing them to ITEA platform. Also, today we are involved in three ongoing projects on the ITEA platform. It's really promising and encouraging for us, as we want to keep growing in terms of R&D."

Over the years ITEA has changed. How have the changes affected the ITEA community of which you are part?

"With new ITEA members joining on a regular



basis, new project opportunities arise. Also, while new R&D topics are being developed, ITEA helps to bring an international profile to the products that once started as projects. Our ITEA journey started with just one project but today we're up to three. This has helped Elektronet not only take on new responsibilities but also gain new project management experiences. One of the most important advantages ITEA provides to enterprising companies is that it enables them to reach out to leading experts and make use of their experiences. Also, ITEA helps improve our R&D culture, encourage SMEs in our country to be part of international projects and help create an international network."

ITEA speaks about 'seizing the high ground'. What does this imply in your view?

"I see this as a statement of intent as ITEA continues to focus on a progressive European market, developing a network of companies and co-created R&D projects. ITEA enables us to plug into new business, project and product innovation techniques which are being extended in the global innovation ecosystem. Along these lines, it is sustainable growth interacting with different business areas and enriching the knowledge for these areas under the ITEA umbrella. For instance, in 2007 investments in Europe for R&D projects were 5,3 billion euros in total while the US figure was nearly double that at 10.4 billion euros. The role that ITEA fulfils in the ICT sector will help close this

gap through to 2020 and help Europe shine more. Also, ITEA's principle of supporting innovative ideas is a good fit with my own business development principles and my point of view on the subject. ITEA has had important successes in automotive, communication, healthcare, aviation and social sectors. With a 2030 deadline in mind, there are plenty of innovative goals for ITEA to achieve in social and economic domains. That said, the new industrial revolution – known by Industry 4.0, Smart Industry or any of the other terms that are being used for the same shift – is inevitable. And the role that R&D has to play in this new era is equally inevitable and essential. So, thanks in no small measure to the ITEA principle of seizing the high ground, we are able to sustain our own essential role better and on an international level."

'Happiness' is an important component in the new ITEA 3 approach. What does happiness mean to you in this context and how can the ITEA community and, more widely, society benefit?

"When we think of happiness we think of the tremendous R&D projects and the synchronised way of working within the ITEA projects. Also, to create a platform to help make R&D projects a commercial success. So our understanding of happiness comes from the opportunity to work with international companies in harmony. Happiness through the opportunity to work for the people, our people, to improve people's quality of life. We feel this responsibility, and we are happy to take that on board and make the end user happy no matter how long it takes. Personally, as a manager, ITEA has helped me extend my vision as a whole, improved my relationships with my co-workers, helped my team learn to manage new challenges and goals, and forced us all to grow and to achieve greater success as a result. This makes me happy. But, most importantly, ITEA has given me the opportunity to represent my county in the EU. ITEA has helped us to be informed on new technology developments that have inspired us to participate in new conferences and to increase our knowledge. It is with a sense of happiness that I can return the favour to those that matter and continue to support our people in the process."