

Exclusive interview of the Delivery Co. with Plamen Nedkov, IFIP Executive Director, on the occasion of his 20th Anniversary of IFIP involvement

[Congratulatory message on the occasion](#)



Plamen Nedkov joined the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences in July, 1982. From 1989 to 1994 he was head of the Department for International Organizations. From 1990 to 1992 he was executive director of the Sofia Office of the International Foundation for Survival and Development of Humanity and National Coordinator for Earth Day International. Since 1989 he is the IFIP Contracts Officer and in 1994 he was named IFIP-UNESCO Liaison Officer and chosen to head the IFIP Secretariat in Laxenburg. He was project manager of IFIP's Telecommunications Project and in 1996 he became the first IFIP executive director. From 1998 to December 2001 he represented IFIP on the International NGO-UNESCO Liaison Committee.

20 years of active involvement in the work of any organization is a serious commitment and achievement. This July, Plamen completed his 20th year of association with IFIP and on this occasion the Delivery Co. invited him to respond to the following questions.

The Delivery Co.: How did you get involved in IFIP?

P.N.: There were two stages. The first stage relates to my involvement in IFIP through an IFIP national member society while the second one relates to my IFIP employment.

I joined the Academy in July 1982. Academician Blagovest Sendov was then recently elected as Secretary-General [and Vice President] of the Academy and one of his responsibilities was to oversee the Academy's international activities. My duties related to some 60 international non-governmental organizations in which the Academy was a member [ICSU and its 20 international unions and scientific committees, IFIP and other NGO's]. There were also the agencies of the UN system - UNESCO, the World Meteorological Organization, the International Atomic Energy Agency, and other. Blagovest became the Bulgarian GA representative to IFIP in 1982 and advanced quickly as Trustee, Vice-President and TA chair. He was elected President-elect at GA '88 in India. His IFIP engagements were increasing and he had to delegate. At GA' 89, I was appointed IFIP Contracts Officer and my affiliation, contacts and IFIP responsibilities were brought to a higher level.

The second stage began with my appointment by the IFIP President, Asbjorn Rolstadas, as Administration Manager of the IFIP Secretariat. My appointment was preceded by the following developments:

The March Council '94 meeting in Brussels decided to authorize formal negotiations with the Austrian government for an agreement to relocate IFIP's Headquarters and Secretariat in Laxenburg. During that Council, Howard Funk [then IFIP Vice-President

and US representative to IFIP] and I had a meal together, and he asked me, “Why don’t you apply for the job?”

Back at the Academy we were going through a rough period of financial shortages which led to many professionals leaving the Academy for higher salaries elsewhere. This was also true for the staff in my Department. I had talked with the President of the Academy, Academician Jordan Malinowski, about certain possibilities but we never got anywhere.

One day in May, Asbjorn and I were having a telephone call to discuss IFIP contractual matters and I asked him whether a person for the new Secretariat was already selected. His reply was “Are you interested?” Soon after this conversation I submitted an application, following which I maintained contact with Aage Melbye [then, IFIP Treasurer and Consultant with responsibilities related to the Secretariat’s relocation]. In July, we met in Vienna with Walter Grafendorfer and his colleagues and Austrian governmental officials to progress the arrangements for the relocation. Jordan Malinowski was advised that I was leaving and I had his full understanding and support. I started work in Austria in September 1994.

[There is an article on the early days in Laxenburg in the IFIP Newsletter, March 2001 issue available at <http://www.ifip.or.at/newsletters/nl1q2001/nl1q2001.pdf>]

The Delivery Co.: What do you value most in your IFIP experience?

P.N. – It’s the people, of course! I greatly value the team I work with in Laxenburg – the Delivery Co., and my many good friends and colleagues in IFIP to whom I am grateful for their faith in me.

When I came to Laxenburg in 1994, my intuition was saying that after the relocation is completed and when we get the necessary infrastructure, people, systems, relations and operations in a stable working mode, I should move on. My horizon then was 4 years and I am already 8 years in Laxenburg.

I feel I have meaningfully contributed, along with many others, in making IFIP more attractive and useful and this certainly gives me confidence and satisfaction. IFIP’s international and intercultural character, its field and scope of activity certainly are a challenge and a source of pride for everyone involved in the Federation. I am glad I survived so far!

The Delivery Co.: Where do you get the inspiration for your anecdotes?

P.N. - In the Mediterranean region, which I know relatively well, it is a matter of courtesy and tradition to ease the tension and to relax the atmosphere when doing business. This is also true for other regions. I remember saying at one Council meeting that humor is a common language. It can open doors and hearts when complex thoughts and intentions need to be communicated with simple clear messages that everyone associates with. I think that anecdotes make people feel partial. One can find inspiration in every subject and then try to develop in parallel “lighter” similarities and caricatures.

**The Delivery Co.: And here are some quick ones:
What means happiness to you?**

P.N. Islands in the Stream.

D.C. The three wisest humans nowadays for you are...

P.N. I can think of only one who stands out in a special category - Nelson Mandela!

D.C. Which animal would you like to be?

P.N. A dolphin, if I have to.

D.C. With whom would you like to spend an evening?

P.N. The Kinks, Jack Nickolson.

D.C. How do you decrease stress?

P.N. Going outdoors!

D.C. Which three things would you take to Robinson's island?

P.N. Fishing rod, magnifying glass and a pan.

D.C. Which talent/ability would you like to have?

P.N. To teleport.

D.C. What would you like to change in yourself?

P.N. To become more relaxed.

D.C. Your life-dream?

P.N. To keep on having dreams.