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Hi Gilbert. Can you please tell us a little bit about yourself?

Former University Professor of Chemical Engineering, I have started working strongly with EU projects as coordinator of the Network of Excellence (NoE) NanoMemPro (FP6) on “Nanoscale Based Membrane Technologies”. This was a great experience with a lot of contacts all over Europe, the possibility to develop various activities (research, but also education, international relations, market analysis,...) and also a huge job (28 Work Packages to coordinate with my two colleagues!).

At the end of the NoE, we have created an International Association devoted to the promotion of membrane technologies (notably towards SMEs) and I became the CEO of the European Membrane House (www.euromemhouse.com). Since then we have launched other projects (especially EU projects which are indicated on our website).

Before my normal retirement date, 6 years ago, I decided to leave my position of Full Professor for another position of Emeritus Professor in order to be able to focus on EU activities, with the budgets that we can get on projects. I must add also that since 2004 I have worked for UNESCO as deputy-director (2004-2013) and now director (2013-2017) of the UNESCO SIMEV Chair devoted to “Membrane for the Environment” (www.simev.org). This is the “world dimension”, with a lot of contacts in developing countries always around membrane technologies!

What does your daily job look like?

My daily job is very varied and quite enthralling in so far as every day is new, with new topics and a lot of possibilities which open. In our small group, I have two colleagues having a background which is totally different from mine - communications for Elsa, and economy / regulations for Lucie.

This is also a way to learn a lot and to understand that «membranes for society» cannot be reduced to pure research but requires also to properly set-up a long value chain which asks for a lot of cooperation and intense exchanges!

What excites you in ROMEO?

Firstly the topic: I think that membrane reactors represent an

enthraling challenge in the process of intensification not only for chemistry (which is the area of ROMEO), but also for water treatment (Membrane Bioreactors) or medicine (artificial organs).

Having the possibility to work on that with great experts from University and Industry present in the consortium is fantastic. I must indicate that before ROMEO, our association was already participating in another EU project devoted to Membrane Reactors: CARENA. But I think that in ROMEO the spirit of “innovation” and the idea of “intensification” are more present.

Finally, I have been very interested when discussing at the start of the topic, to discover that the approach proposed by ROMEO was in the field of chemistry very similar to what had been done in another domain to create the concept of the iPhone: to put together various elements already existing to innovate with a new concept and new methodology applicable to a lot of situations. For me, that is the most exciting part of ROMEO!

What are, according to you, the major challenges to be overcome in ROMEO?

From my point of view, the major challenges in ROMEO are to allow the partners who possess separately the different elements of the puzzle to assemble them correctly and to achieve the final objective. This requires a great sense of common work and excellent human relations.

Could you give us a concrete example of a benefit that could be expected from ROMEO?

If ROMEO is successful and reaches its ambitious objectives, this will be a new and essential step towards the chemical plant of the future, safer, with a reduced foot-print, less energy consuming, higher product quality, amongst other benefits.

You attended the second progress meeting in Copenhagen in September 2016. What will you remember most from this meeting?

There was a very friendly mood during all the meeting. I was also impressed that so early in the project, there were already interesting results presented. On the social side, there was a very nice dinner close to the harbor and a good visit of the LiqTech Company.

Thanks for answering my questions and all the best in ROMEO!



ROMEO in brief

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6 Million €

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has a networking mission and
sets up European research projects
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