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Naci Sahin: Very personal

Exclusive interview with the new Eurovent President

Naci Sahin, General Manager of the Turkish manufacturer FRITERM and representative of the (Turkish) association ISKID, has succeeded Alex Rasmussen as President at the Eurovent Annual Meeting in Oslo. In an exclusive ClimaNovela interview, Eurovent's Morten Schmelzer asks Naci about his agenda for the upcoming year, his industry priorities, personal life, and how it feels to be the first-ever Eurovent President from Turkey.

Morten (ClimaNovela): Naci, congratulations on your Presidency of Eurovent. A simple question to begin with: What's your favourite refrigerant?

Naci Sahin: Every refrigerant that complies with the EU F-Gas Regulation.

Could you tell us something about yourself and your development within our association?

I have started my professional career at FRITERM as a mechanical engineer in 1983. Up until 1996, I have worked throughout the company's sales, manufacturing, after sales, and planning departments. Since 1996, I have been working as FRITERM's General Manager.

As FRITERM, we are very active in many associations and invest a significant time in related activities. My association activities commenced within the University & Industry Cooperation Committee of the Turkish HVACR Manufacturers Association, ISKID. After that, I took on roles in the International Relations Committee of the latter. I was elected to the Board of ISKID in 2008 and continued this role until the end of 2016. I was elected Chairman of ISKID and held this position between 2012 and 2014.

Due to my participation in the International Relations Committee, I started to join Eurovent meetings on behalf of ISKID. In 2012, I was elected to the Eurovent Board, where I became First Vice-President after five years. In 2016, the General Assembly elected me as President starting from May 2018.

Since ISKID has joined Eurovent in 1997, you are the first-ever Eurovent President from Turkey. What does this mean to you and the Turkish industry?

Even though Turkey is not a full member of the European Union, the economic cooperation is very close due to the EU-Turkey Customs Union. The Turkish industry is closely following European standards. It was thus a logical step that, five years after its foundation, ISKID has decided to join the Eurovent Association.

At the beginning, our activity level within Eurovent was limited, but we significantly increased our contributions over time. This also applies to 'Eurovent Certified Performance' (ECP). Although these certification schemes are voluntary, they are very well known and popular in Turkey. Many ISKID members today actively participate in Product Group and Compliance Committee meetings.

Being the new president of the Eurovent Association is not only an honour for me, it is also an important milestone and a new motivation for the Turkish industry to increase its relations with the EU. This is in line with the positions of the Turkish HVACR industry as a whole, and an indicator of our willingness to participate in the European and the global industrial ecosystem.

Historically, Turkey has functioned as a bridge between Europe and Asia. How do you see Turkey's role in today's HVACR industry?

In Turkey, we are also believing that Turkey is an important bridge between Europe and Asia as you have mentioned. We grow in an environment, which is influenced by both Western and Eastern countries. This provides us with a unique perspective.

Yet, there is more to it than meets the eye. Turkey is offering huge opportunities both as a production base and as a market. Our industrial infrastructure is very well developed. Moreover, well-educated engineers and technicians are available within a young population.

Geographically, Turkey is very close to Europe with lots of direct flights from almost all European cities while offering a link towards Middle Eastern and Asian markets. This position is well known by international industry players, of which many are already producing in Turkey.

As I have mentioned before, we observe and apply European Union industry laws and standards and always keep ourselves up-to-date. I believe that Turkey can be one of the leading actors in the HVACR industry with its potential and capability. Having such an ambition, one should also take a high responsibility within an international association such as Eurovent at some stage.

At Eurovent, we've initiated many so-called 2030 Special Projects, which develop forward-thinking solutions in different product areas. Where do you see our industry in 2030?

Digitisation will surely be a hot topic in the upcoming years in the HVACR sector as well as many other industries. I believe that indoor air quality and air quality in general will receive an increasing attention. In the face of global warming, new refrigerants and some old but natural refrigerants will be under discussion.

In my opinion, the importance of the HVACR industry is going to rise until 2030. Natural refrigeration is expected to increase. We have to constantly develop our technology further while acknowledging our responsibility for a better future.

Our Presidents usually focus on certain key issues and have a particular agenda. What's yours?

My predecessors Christian Herten and Alex Rasmussen have done a great job in bringing the Eurovent Association forward. I would like to continue their efforts while ensuring a continuity in our actions, relations with members and partners around the globe.

As each President has certain focus areas, so do I. During my Presidency, I would like to particularly focus on the following issues:

- Further strengthening of Eurovent's footprint in Brussels in front of European institutions.
- Increasing relations between the Turkish and European HVACR industry.
- Further professionalisation and intensification of Eurovent's international activities.
- Expanding of our membership base in Central and Eastern, with a focus on Southeast Europe. Organisation of a Eurovent Summit in this region.
- Development of a long-term vision for the Eurovent Association with clear objectives both in Europe and internationally.
- Strengthening of our financial fundament.

Of course, our readers also want to know a bit more about you as a person. Let me just throw some random questions at you.

During your many years within the Eurovent family, what was your most memorable moment outside the official parts?

Eurovent is a great and diverse family where many friendships develop over time. Each year we receive the opportunity to discover new countries, cultures and technologies. Eurovent basically is Europe in small, covering everything that is nice about our continent, but also the challenges that have to be tackled.

Turkey is a beautiful country. Aside from Istanbul, where do you recommend our readers to go?

Turkey is extremely rich in terms of history, nature and tourism. As we are surrounded by three different seas, I recommend a relaxing summer vacation at either one of them: Izmir, Bodrum, Kusadasi on the Aegean Sea. Antalya (a lot of different options here) and Fethiye for the Mediterranean Sea. For a more historically fulfilling holiday, they can travel to Cappadocia (Urgup-Goreme) where they can visit the infamous "Fairy Chimneys" as well as tasting some delicious wine from the region.

What is, in your opinion, the best Turkish food?

Everyone should try our traditional breakfast with a lot of different options ranging from a variety of jams, Sucuk, Pastirma, cheeses and bakery products such as Simit and Börek. For dessert: The famous baklava and Turkish delight is a must to try. For lunch and dinner: Try the homemade Sarma if you can find it. And of course, you should not miss Lahmacun, Kebap and Doner. I believe a lot of Eurovent members are familiar with these, but I guarantee that the taste is much different and better in Turkey.

How do you spend your free time?

I spend most of my free time with my family, close relatives and friends. I enjoy a good breakfast or dinner with my family to spend some quality time with them. Me and my wife occasionally go to the seaside for a relaxing walk. During the remaining time, I enjoy a good read.

You are known to be a rather quiet person. Was there a moment when you were really loud?

I have always been a quiet person, and this comes from the fact that I am more of a thinker than a talker. I always tend to think before I talk, and I try to choose my words wisely before saying anything. This behaviour has been an important part of my character and has helped me succeed in a variety of things I have done throughout my life. I believe being loud diminishes the point I am trying to make. I thus try to stay calm, choose my words carefully. As a result, I do not recall a moment where I was really loud.

Naci, thank you very much for talking to us.