



Giancarlo Caratti di Lanzacco Deputy Commissioner General, Joint Research Centre, in front of the European Union Pavilion

# interview with Giancarlo Caratti di Lanzacco

Deputy Commissioner General and Head of the EU Task Force for the Expo Milano 2015 World Exhibition, Joint Research Centre, European Union

In August 2014, MCI was officially confirmed as one of the official suppliers for the Expo Milano 2015, the world exhibition from 1 May to 31 October expected to attract more than 20 million people from over 150 participating nations, international organisations and companies worldwide. The **Joint Research Centre (JRC)** of the European Commission needed to create an innovative and emotive experience for visitors to the European Union Pavilion in line with the Expo theme, *"Feeding the Planet: Energy for Life."* Looking to the unique creative services provided by MCI's international Special Projects Division, a key consortium brought together to serve the needs of the countries and companies participating in the Expo, JRC engaged MCI as a strategic partner to co-generate, design, produce and operate the EU Pavilion Visitor Experience. Giancarlo Caratti di Lanzacco from the JRC shares some insights.

**MCI: What was the most innovative suggestion MCI has made and implemented for the EU Pavilion at Expo Milano 2015?**

**Giancarlo Caratti di Lanzacco:** Thanks to MCI the European Union was able to pick a theme for its pavilion *"bread and wheat"*, which connects the EU member countries within the same history and tradition. The consortium then transformed this theme into a modern fairy tale which enchants both adults and children, balancing emotions and education with outstanding storytelling skills. This is a highly innovative way for the EU to communicate with its citizens, and something that is desirable for our institution. Video animation, interactive games, multimedia and multi-sensorial experience theatres, and digital totems all contribute to conveying the EU key messages on Food and Sustainability.

**MCI: How did you decide on the theme "Growing Europe's Future Together for a Better World" for the EU Pavilion and why?**

**GCL:** Based on an established practice for creative works, MCI organised a series of brainstorming sessions between professional storytellers and representatives of the European Parliament and Commission that are most relevant to the Expo theme, for example the Directorate General (DG) for Agriculture, DG Health and Consumers, DG Grow (Enterprise and Internal Market), DG Development and Cooperation, and DG Research.

**MCI: How do the innovative concepts implemented align with the theme of the pavilion?**

**GCL:** A set of fictional characters - Alex, a

farmer, Sylvia a research scientist, and their dogs Alfred and Coco - were developed to tell their story via the short film and multimedia show titled *"The Golden Ear"*, thus guiding visitors through the experience with a personal touch. The result is a seamless onsite experience in a dedicated immersive environment, which helps solidify the emotional connections between brand and audience, for instance by inviting the audience to learn more about the EU policies on food and sustainability directly via the interactive zones and also through the use of gamification, for example by playing the game to make a sandwich with PDO (protected designation of origin), PGI (protected geographical indication), TSG (traditional speciality guaranteed) and organic products and foodstuffs.

**MCI: How did you ensure the 28 member states are recognised in the pavilion?**

**GCL:** We feature clips of European citizens saying *"hello"* in different languages to the visitors and to each other. We cooperated with the nineteen participating Member States to create national bread-product *"recipe cards"*, for example focaccia for Italy, pita for Greece, baguette for France; and posters featuring Alex, Sylvia, Coco and Alfred visiting national landmarks, such as the Brandenburg Gate for Germany, Big Ben for the UK or the windmills of La Mancha for Spain.

**MCI: From strategy to creation, from production to implementation and from hospitality to media promotion, what is your recommendation for a smooth delivery in all steps?**

**GCL:** We were indeed looking for a one-stop shop, ie a company that could manage the whole project for the visitor

experience. The process for the elaboration of the content of the visitor experience went very smoothly in spite of the very large number of stakeholders in the European institutions who contributed to its development. In future, it will therefore be my recommendation to the European Commission that a tender for future events of this kind should also include the design and construction of the pavilion, which in Milan was under the responsibility of the Expo Company.

**MCI: What is the overall objective of the EU pavilion?**

**GCL:** The objectives of the EU Pavilion go further than the visitor experience. In addition to "communication", which is pursued with the narrative story of Alex and Sylvia and the associated social media communication campaigns, the EU has the "policy" objective to contribute to the discussion about solutions to the challenges of how to feed a planet with a rapidly increasing population under the constraints of scarce resources for water, land and energy; a negative impact of climate change on crop productivity; and the imperative to shift to sustainable environmental development. This is being addressed by over 200 events which take place in the pavilion, in Milan or in Ispra, at the main research centre site of the European Commission which belongs to the JRC.

**MCI: Can you share some of the feedback received from visitors so far?**

**GCL:** We have visitor guest books with hundreds of positive comments. Visitors liked the story and wished to express their feelings in the book. ■

## Insider's view

*MCI: What innovative concept, that has been implemented, are you most proud of and why?*

**Matteo Pederzoli:** Citizen-centric communication. We achieved it both in the show/movie as executive producer and in the pavilion visitor experience as curator.

*MCI: Share two challenges you have been facing during the implementation of these concepts and how you overcame them?*

**MP:** Innovation proved to be disruptive against the approach taken by past participation of the EU at world expos, which were not integrated at all, either internally or externally. I let you imagine

how “surprised” the “reactionary forces” would have been!

*MCI: The Expo Milano will end in October 2015. What do you think will be your fondest memory of this experience?*

**MP:** Taking the Expo conceptually beyond the Expo site. On its eve, we staged the movie premiere in a six-hectare “Wheatfield” art installation in downtown Milan, followed by a bread-based buffet. On Europe Day (9 May), dozens of bakers from across Italy participated in the bake-off to make Sylvia and Alex’s signature honey-wheat bread, with the official recipe having been registered by the Italian

Federation of Bread-makers. On World Bread Day (16 October), the grand finale of the Europe bake-off will take centre-stage. Last but not least, we have submitted the film for festivals and awards. Fingers crossed and time will tell! ■

*Matteo Pederzoli*  
Practice Director, Business, Financial and Trade Services, MCI Benelux



More interviews at [www.mci-focus.com](http://www.mci-focus.com)