

Community Talk with: Maria Rimini-Döring

Dr. Maria Rimini-Döring received her degree in electrical engineering from the University of Pavia, Italy, in 1984 and her PhD in semiconductor physics from the University of Stuttgart, Germany in 1991. The same year she joined the Bosch group, at first within Bosch Telecom in the development of large application specific integrated circuits (ASICs). In 1999 she moved to Corporate Research as a senior expert and project leader in the field of human-machine interaction, driver monitoring and traffic safety. Since 2014 she has been coordinating the public funding research activities of the Division for Software Intensive Systems at the Bosch Corporate Research Centre. She is member of the ITEA Steering Group and represents Bosch in the competence network SafeTRANS and in the European Institute for Complex Safety Critical Systems Engineering (EICOSE). She tells us about her involvement with the ITEA community and reveals what she gets out of it.

Committed European

Maria's relationship with ITEA began a few years ago when she was asked to take over the company's ITEA role from a colleague who was retiring. Maria admits to liking it right from the beginning. "I have an international background and I'm a committed European, so I was more than happy to join committees and clusters. I am responsible for the 25 or so publically funded projects of our Corporate Research Division of around 250 people. I'm also involved in the reviewing and submissions processes. I can give it sufficient time and attention because at the

time I started my involvement, my son had just graduated from high school and had gone off to university, so fortunately I didn't need to feel guilty about all the travelling that comes with the commitments."

While Maria had not been involved specifically in ITEA projects earlier, she had participated in other publically funded projects, both national and European. "I noticed certain differences, not least the bottom-up approach of ITEA projects. It's an approach that I like because the top-down approach I had experience of always runs



the risk of ‘missing’ ingredients that can be essential to being able to achieve the intended results. I don’t work in any of the projects myself but I am familiar with projects like APPSTACLE and ACOSAR. What I do is go to events like the PO Days, gather information and ideas, bring them to my colleagues and coach them when they submit proposals and, later on if the project is labelled, I act as a mentor to them. I also do the usual reviews of proposals and project progress reports. The other thing that I really like in ITEA is the very cooperative, goal-oriented and friendly teams. The steering group is a very special team of engaged and experienced people. It’s so interesting to be with them, talk and swap ideas and topics.”

Different

Maria attended the DIF 2017 event in Amsterdam, and it made quite an impression on her, especially the fascinating presentations and discussions as well as the contributions of the SMEs and start-ups. “One of the interesting things about ITEA is the mix. It was evident in Amsterdam. It is different from most European and national programmes. There is greater

diversity in the players and this could make exploitation both faster and more effective. I think this is one of the distinctive features that makes ITEA more flexible and agile than some other large programmes. It’s a very lean organisation with everyone devoted to getting the best out of the projects. The ITEA Office in Eindhoven is extremely supportive. If you have any questions, they answer right away and try to find solutions. And being such a relatively small group of people, that makes for short lines of effective communication. And you get the sense that everyone in the team is very open and cooperative.”

“My company, Robert Bosch, also benefits from its association with ITEA because this level of support enables the projects in which we are involved to get the best out of people and out of the project goals. It also acts as a kind of vehicle, helping us in setting the agenda at a very advanced level and growing a national consortium/eco-system for fast exploitation.” Although ITEA projects tend to receive funding of up to around 45%, the real value, according to Maria, is in the flexibility and efficiency. “This

brings in a very competitive factor compared with EU calls where you have hundreds of projects and the chance of getting your project awarded is really quite small. Also, to have the opportunity to come along with an idea and present this to others who may be interested, and actually get it started is another very attractive aspect of ITEA. The focus at ITEA is very clearly on knowledge rather than on funding. In the European framework programmes, there is a bit of a money race going on – of course, that’s a pull for the larger companies and scientific institutions – but at ITEA aspects like knowledge-sharing, idea-swapping, communicating and networking are accentuated.”

Happy family

And what makes ITEA an even more perfect environment, according to Maria, is the real sense of being part of a family. “Like the project progress reports meeting last month in Rennes. Philippe Letellier, our host, took us some 60 kilometres to the Brittany coast for dinner. What a wonderful location. We arrived during a beautiful sunset at a quaint old port looking out to a seascape lit by a full moon. Just the perfect setting. We talked about work, politics, the world and all kinds of things that matter to us as people, sharing our hopes and fears. I think we all felt free to express our opinions on anything. It was as if we were sitting down to a family dinner. And I would also like to add how good it always feels to read the strong and affectionate messages from my steering group colleagues after a terrorist attack (in Paris, Nice, Brussels, Istanbul, Berlin...). It gives hope and motivation to hold together for a better and innovative world. I am very thankful to ITEA and its people for these ties!”

A funny thing happened on the way to the ‘forum’

We cannot finish without an amusing anecdote. Maria recalls her introduction to her new ITEA colleagues. Having a little trouble understanding the accents, she had to ask a male colleague to repeat his name. It was Jesus. Ah, she thought, how coincidental. But then another ‘family’ member, who had overheard this, introduced himself. “Hello, I’m Joseph!” So there they were, Joseph, Maria and Jesus all in the same room. What was the chance of that happening? The ITEA family works in mysterious ways!