

# Community Talk with: Franz-Josef Stewing

In this first of a new series of interviews, Community Talk (formerly *Who is Who*) invites a prominent member of the ITEA community to speak about his or her ITEA experience and then invite someone else from the ITEA community to be interviewed in the next issue. Franz-Josef Stewing, Director of Product Development and Training at Materna GmbH Professional Services and aficionado of The Clash, Joy Division and The Smiths, among others, kicks off Community Talk.

“It’s a real privilege for me to be the first in this series of talks and I hope I can give it a good start. First, a bit about my background. I gained my MSc degree in computer science from the Technical University of Dortmund about twenty-five years ago after which I worked at the university for a short time. Then I moved to the research C-LAB of Siemens in Paderborn before joining my current employer about ten years later where I have been working in the field of professional services in different roles. In my current role as Director of Product Development and Training, you could say that I have journeyed from research to business, and having worked at the intersection of research and development, I am in a position where I can see the whole trajectory, from concept to product. Which is actually the trajectory of ITEA projects.

“I first became involved in ITEA in 1998 when Siemens/C-LAB management asked me to collaborate in ITEA during its launch from 1998 onwards. During that pioneering period of ITEA the members of all the boards and committees of ITEA had good personal contacts with each other (among others I have been part of the inaugural composition of both the ITEA Board Support Group and Steering Committee), in particular the core team that coordinated the writing of the ITEA Rainbow Book and the SOFTEC project team that coordinated the production of the first ITEA roadmap on Software-intensive Systems. So I guess this must make me a real ITEA ‘veteran’. Looking back, we (the core team) came up with and proposed the format of the PO days that are still being used to this day. I also recall the first, somewhat chaotic ITEA Symposium in Toulouse, in



September 2000, in which I participated. Things have come a long way for the better since then. I was also twice a recipient of the ITEA Achievement Award for the SOFTEC and SIRENA projects, so I am certainly proud of this involvement, too, and its acknowledgement by the community.

“After I left Siemens, I continued my involvement with ITEA with the SIRENA project I just mentioned. It came about a little by accident and a little by design when I was invited to collaborate with former ITEA contacts (Bosch & Siemens/C-LAB) via the Technical University of Dortmund where the project manager of Bosch had worked and set up a corresponding project

proposal planning meeting there. After SIRENA there were a few follow-up projects (OSAmI, EASI-CLOUDS, BaaS) that continued the research partnerships, finishing and refining the results. For the today’s BaaS project, I am the coordinator. It seems that we – ITEA and myself – are destined to be ‘stuck’ together ...”

“Over the years ITEA has changed and these changes have affected the ITEA community in various ways. Certainly, ITEA has become increasingly professional and mature, but fortunately it has kept its family spirit, pragmatism and non-bureaucratic manner and, very importantly, its industry driven (bottom-up) approach. As for my role, I have also changed with the times. I am no longer part of the ITEA core of the early days. Now I am just a ‘normal’ member in ITEA projects, fulfilling a kind of grey eminence advisory role for the ‘younger’ researchers in collaborative R&D projects. Which, I suppose, is in keeping with my career path – from R&D manager to commercial software product development manager leaning on a firm R&D pillar. And when I look at

all these new projects, I still see the pragmatic, bottom-up approach that is geared to industry and market proximity as far as possible along with the honesty, spirit and willingness of project partners to really deliver. This really is significant – they are not about circumventing the real challenges and running off with the funding. They want to make the results work, get them into the market and benefit industry and society. And in that way, they are keen to seize the high ground, investigating the options to be real forerunners in innovation and to make this innovation really happen. They are passionate about achieving a strategic advantage and a future prominent role in commercialising these innovation options.”

“And over the coming decade I think ITEA projects will be vital to helping countries in the EUREKA network achieve their targets. I see them as an important complement to national and European Commission R&D programmes, bridging national and trans-European interests at the intersection of basic research and applied R&D. In a context of ‘happiness’, something that means to me in terms of the ITEA community: maintaining a professional attitude in running and monitoring our projects and jointly moving forward to achieve their intended objectives in a real collaborative manner but without any political tensions that cause unnecessary friction among the partners. In other words, enjoy what you are doing and don’t take it so seriously, that takes the fun out of it. As for society, we should be proposing IT solutions for societal issues, like the Intelligent Ergometer prototyped in OSAmI to provide an option for the IT based rehabilitation of cardiac disease patients, allowing them to convalesce in their homes instead of having to undergo uncomfortable and costly longer stays in clinics. That is happiness.”

“If I had to say what all the results of ITEA projects or my participation in ITEA have done in terms of my own personal life, I would say that they have given me the opportunity to keep in touch with the research community, to establish and maintain lasting (international) friendships and the privilege to collaborate with open-minded colleagues on challenging, interesting and industrial/societal relevant R&D subjects. These are the things that have made me happy. But, of course, we do not invest without aiming to get a return, so after some eight to ten years of my company’s participation in ITEA projects, we are quite close to making some money on the results now. It may have naturally taken quite some time but the wait has been worth it in the end. And that puts a smile on our faces too.”

“And finally, the question of who to hand over this baton of honour for the next magazine. There are so many possibilities – veterans like myself, relative newcomers as I once was and someone with a bit of both. So, let me take that last option and invite Juhani Latvakoski of VTT to take the next leg.”