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
Community Talk
Maria Rimini-Döring

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!