

## FET INTERVIEW for Stephanie Matt

- How does FET fit into the rest of the European research programmes?

It is a unique complementing element to the excellence pillar of H2020, together with the ERC and MSC scheme. It merges three essential elements, namely the research ambitions, power of collaboration and technological orientation. Still at the earliest stages of the TRL scaling, but it will change.

- What makes FET unique?

- 1) Collaborative model on well defined research goal aimed at breakthrough technologies. Not incremental but truly revolutionary, changing the today paradigms.
- 2) Relative ease and user friendliness
- 3) Has a variety of options allowing for both top-down and bottom-up approaches.

In fact, in my opinion the way the FET operates paves a way to a significant evolution of other programs and instruments offered by the H2020. It is just a success, but not of a big-bang type, but a result of hard analytic work and constant interaction with the demanding stakeholders.

- Do you believe we can do magic with FET?

The FET is already a magic, as it is fairly simple, efficient, “user friendly” and most important adaptable and flexible. And this happens with the program run by the EC proving that the EC can act as the best private foundation despite the built in slowing down mechanisms and procedures. In a sense it is a very good example of a peaceful revolution of the organism commonly accused of being a rigid behemoth. And this exemplary position comes from the dedication of a FET team and a wise umbrella of highest ranks in the DG CONN. Dedicated and wise people can do miracles and the FET just is a vivid proof of this simple truth.

- As Chair of FETAG, what are the greatest FET achievements you have witnessed?

Of course most important are the scientific results and they are phenomenal. Equally important is the community building of passionate trying to solve jointly outstanding problems that at the end may change the world of technologies and society. The FET initiative proves shows that public money can do miracles when the rules are clear and there is no compromise in streamlining resources to truly best teams.

The FET changes a common notion that Europe is good only in a blue-sky research of the type funded by the another EC superstar, the ERC. This is why we argued that it is a best seed for a technology-oriented twin to the ERC, the European Innovation Council.

- Does FET has the potential to change research & technology in Europe?

It already changed in the areas it touched. At all levels, i.e. covered by the bottom-up FET-OPEN up to the large scale European FET Flagship initiatives. We can easily track down the origin of numerous

successes of the ICT in the FET programs, not only in terms of a science, but also SMEs, start-ups, but also larger scale business activity. As in the H2020 the FET program became more open to other scientific fields, I am sure that soon we shall hear a lot of such successes e.g. in life sciences. A very important is the societal aspect of the FET programs. This component is being treated with the increased attention and stimulus already at the level of calls. We argued for that in our recent recommendation that it is a must for all technology oriented EC programs.

- What would you like to see (or dream) for FET in FP9?

There is a simple business prescription of a global success: do support things that already proved excellence and success of a mission. Support already good, so they become better. Europe has enormous intellectual potential, especially among the young. And the FET is surely a program opening a chance for a success and fulfilment of dreams, while working together. As is already has proved its unique value, the only reasonable move is to invest more in it simply increasing its budget, especially in a bottom-up part. Of course it should be more open to the innovative SMEs. The evolving FET, either staying as a FET or becoming a seed of the EIC, is the best candidate of a champion of the whole future FP. It should also address the real youngsters offering them the first small European grant on novel practical ideas. The more crazy they are, the better. And it is not just to open up eyes and minds, but to send the strong signal, that Europe is a place of fulfilling their dreams and ambition. Without restoring the “European dream” it will be hard to battle the outflow of top minds of Europe. And clearly the FET construct is among the best candidates to recreate it.