

For the guest book of the
Symposium celebrating the 95th birthday of Prof. Jan-Peter Toennies

Göttingen, May 2025

Dear Prof. Toennies,

When I look back to my time in Göttingen it feels well, triggering mainly good memories which by far outweigh less pleasant experiences.

A bit of a coincidence brought me to Göttingen after my master study at the LMU München and a short 6-month stint at the Max-Planck Institute for Mikrostrukturphysik in Halle. After applying on a PhD job offer in the "Physikalische Blätter" I landed in the group of Dr Hulpke, in a lab with an impressive molecular beam apparatus called "Moloch" ready to unveil the secrets of solid state surfaces. The welcome by you and colleagues was friendly, the atmosphere collegial with a pinch of competition and the hunger of the young researchers to find new effects and to make "gute Physik" undeniable. You encouraged us by regularly dropping by, having conversations, spending more or less time depending on how close the experiment and its performer were to your interests. All in all, you created an environment where many of us, I think, liked to work and to live the passion of physics, at least for a time.

In the following years my path led me away from foundational physics, firstly, to applied research in the corporate research lab of Siemens and later to policy even, when I managed research programmes at the European Commission and helped to make the semiconductor industry in the European Union more competitive. Although these activities have been rewarding and never boring, I did like the time in Göttingen as unique and formative, enriching and preparing for any new challenges which came later. One element it made me learn in particular was the inspiring encounters with international guests and colleagues, another one the rigor of scientific work leading to high-quality output and a third one the lively exchange and discussion of scientific results.

Many thanks for the interest you took in us and in our work at the time. Many thanks today for assembling a good crowd to your anniversary. Have a great time ahead in the circle of your family and friends and many good moments to come!

Dr. Werner Steinhögl,

Brussels, Belgium

