

Press release

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AIT OPEN LAB DAY: INSPIRING WOMEN FOR RESEARCH

As part of the SHE goes DIGITAL initiative, the AIT is opening its doors and welcoming around 40 young women to the AIT OPEN LAB DAY on 22 February. Seven AIT researchers will give visitors an insight into their day-to-day research.

"We want to get girls and young women interested in research. At the first AIT OPEN LAB DAY, we will show them how our female researchers work in practice and what everyday life in a research organisation looks like. Role models are the best way to do this," AIT Managing Director Brigitte Bach is convinced. The AIT is thus participating in the SHE goes DIGITAL initiative, which is run by the Initiative Digitalisation Chancengerecht (IDC) together with Microsoft. "Austria simply cannot afford to leave the potential of digital doers untapped," said IDC initiator and First Lady Doris Schmidauer at the presentation of the initiative in autumn 2023. This is a view that is supported by the AIT, as the demand for personnel is constantly increasing. The AIT is expanding and needs specialists in a wide range of areas now and in the future; around 70 jobs are currently advertised at the AIT.

AIT job profiles: From researcher to research engineer

The AIT OPEN LAB Day is intended not only to give high school and university students, but also women returning to school, an insight into the world of STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics), but also to encourage them to aspire to a job in science and research themselves. The AIT offers a wide range of opportunities and career options: Whether as a researcher, research engineer or in business development. "It is important to us to attract more women to AIT and to significantly increase the proportion of women in the coming years, particularly in terms of diversity," emphasises AIT Gender Equality Officer Manfred Tscheligi, Head of Center for Technology Experience.

A colourful variety of STEM research under one roof

AIT Managing Director Brigitte Bach, Gender Equality Officer Manfred Tscheligi and HR Recruiting Manager Marie-Theres Raberger took part in the OPEN LAB DAY. They welcomed the young female visitors and provided key information about the company as well as an insight into AIT's diverse activities relating to gender and diversity. The AIT has set up its own Gender Office, which is headed by Manfred Tscheligi. The first AIT OPEN LAB DAY was organised by the AIT Gender Office.

The visitors were offered a varied programme. Seven female researchers gave an insight into their careers and their daily work in the STEM field. Martina Rasch and Victoria Fochta from the AIT Center for Digital Safety & Security, Fani Kostourou & Viktoria Sandor from the AIT Center for

Energy, Petra Thanner & Katharina Ölsböck from the AIT Center for Vision, Automation and Control and Christiane Groher from the AIT Center for Transport Technologies were all involved.

Seven insights into everyday life as a female researcher

Martina Rasch studied Media Informatics and Visual Computing and has been working at the AIT Centre for Digital Safety & Security since the end of 2015. She is a Junior Research Engineer and is currently involved in software development in the field of air quality monitoring. To this end, a system is being developed in which users can analyse and edit all relevant information via a web interface. "The work is very varied and I think it's great to be able to help shape future technologies, but also to give the users of our tools the opportunity to better assess climate-relevant information," says Rasch, describing her motivation.

Victoria Fochta studied physics at the University of Vienna and is currently completing her Master's degree in Technical Management at FH Campus Wien. She has been working at AIT as a Junior Research Engineer since 2019 and is mainly involved with the emikat emissions database. The tool enables users to compare different what-if emission scenarios by adjusting values for certain attributes. emikat supports the evaluation of measures and is a decision support tool for decision-makers. "I want to contribute to science-based decisions that both preserve people's health and protect the environment," says Fochta.

Fani Kostourou is an architect, urban designer and researcher from Greece. She has a diverse educational background with a PhD in architecture and urban studies from UCL Bartlett in London and has worked in profit, non-profit and academic organizations. She joined the AIT Center for Energy and the City Intelligence Lab in autumn 2023 as Senior Research Engineer for Computational Urban Planning exploring ways to improve the design and longevity of urban spaces and buildings whilst understanding what works best for the communities that live in them. "My aim is to contribute to a more liveable, sustainable, equitable and just city for everyone," she says for her research vision.

Viktorija Sandor studied architecture in Vienna and has been working as a Research Engineer at AIT since November 2022. Her research focuses on the tangible and intangible aspects of city-making processes. "I am interested in upgrading urban design by integrating aesthetics, atmospheres and eye-level perspectives in spatial assessment. By acknowledging the broad spectrum of urban systems, I try to refine our focus whilst remaining sensitive and open to the nuanced, often overlooked local qualities," Sandor emphasizes. IT and digitalization play a major role in Kostourou's and Sandor's work. Without computer-aided data modelling, analysis, and visualization, modern urban research and urban planning are not possible.

Katharina Ölsböck from the AIT Centre for Vision, Automation and Control is currently working on object recognition and environment reconstruction for assistance systems, e.g. for trams and work machines. She studied Technical Mathematics and has been at AIT since 2020. "I am interested in the development and improvement of automated work machines and assistance systems that support people in monotonous and dangerous tasks and increase road safety," emphasises the researcher, who completed her doctorate in computational topology at ISTA.

Petra Thanner is a Senior Research Engineer at the AIT Centre for Vision, Automation and Control. She studied communications engineering and electronics, communication and management development as well as information and communication technology in Vienna, Krams and Anchorage (Alaska). She has been working in the field of machine vision for around 30 years. "I bring together the latest technical and scientific findings from the fields of computational imaging, deep learning and high-speed sensing with the requirements of industry and initiate innovations for optimised and sustainable production processes," says Thanner, describing her work.

Christiane Groher studied technical chemistry and has been working at the AIT Centre for Transport Technologies since the end of 2020. She analyses the performance of lithium-ion batteries in the battery laboratory. "Various electrochemical tests are used to check the performance and service life of the battery, and surface and gas analyses allow us to determine exactly how well a battery works and how powerful it is," explains Groher. Her aim is "to increase the safety and performance of lithium-ion batteries. In this way, we want to improve the functionality, but also the use of resources in electric cars."

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