Press Release

Vienna, 16 January 2021

WOMEN'S NETWORK MEETING AT THE AIT

Topic: Women’s careers in research

On 15 January 2020, the 7th network meeting of the Women's Network of the FEEI - Association of the Electrical and Electronics Industry and the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien took place. The meeting was hosted by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology. After a welcome by Helmut Leopold, gender representative at the AIT and head of the Center for Digital Safety & Security, successful female technicians spoke in their keynotes about their exciting research activities for the energy transition and the necessary funding for innovations in the energy sector. In the panel discussion, successful female researchers also provided insight into their personal career paths. Numerous interested women from the technology sector as well as young female technicians and students accepted the invitation.

Together with the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien, the FEEI - Association of the Electrical and Electronics Industry - awards a scholarship to female students at the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien to promote young female technicians. A women's network has grown up around the scholarship programme in recent years, which invites women to network meetings twice a year. These always take place in cooperation with another company or on a different topic. This time, the motto of the network meeting was "Women's Careers in Research". The event was organised by the AIT Austrian Institute of Technology.

Laboratory tours at the AIT

After an introduction about the AIT, the participants had the opportunity to visit the City Intelligence Lab. This is a new laboratory where augmented reality (AR) combined with artificial intelligence is used for future urban planning to create complex simulations and parametric planning. Another focal point of the tour was the AIT SmartEST Lab, where smart electricity grids of the future can be simulated.

Research for the energy transition - decarbonisation of industry

In the subsequent keynote speech on the topic of "Research for the energy transition - decarbonisation of industry", Veronika Wilk, Senior Research Engineer at the Center for Energy, AIT told about her research projects: "High-temperature heat pumps can make an important contribution to increasing the efficiency of industrial processes and avoiding CO2 emissions, and are therefore considered an important building block for industrial heat supply. At the AIT we have developed high-temperature heat pumps that convert unused waste heat into process heat at up to 160°C. To this end, two demonstration plants are being implemented in the field of brick drying and starch drying in industry. These demonstration plants are an essential step towards establishing this new efficiency technology."

Smart funding for innovations in the energy sector

Theresia Vogel, Managing Director, Climate and Energy Fund spoke in her keynote about smart funding for research and development for the energy transition. "The innovative strength of a country is a key location factor. I encourage all women to actively help shape this. This requires frameworks that make this possible. Funding such as that of the Climate and Energy Fund is part of this, but so are concrete offers that support women's careers. But one thing is clear to me: it also simply takes the courage and will of women to conquer their terrain in technology here."

Career paths of successful women researchers

The panel discussion highlighted the career paths of successful female researchers - from universities and universities of applied sciences, from research institutions and from industry:

Verena Halmschlager, fellow, TU Vienna, researches in the field of optimisation of industrial plants and digitisation of industry. She outlines the differences between university research and research in an industrial company: "In industrial companies, research is often very goal-oriented. A problem or a wish for improvement is followed by a research question. In contrast, in research institutes the research question often comes first. The research should, above all, provide more insight into a topic that has hardly been studied so far."

Jana Kemnitz, Data Scientist at Siemens in the research group "Distributed-AI-Systems in Corporate Technology" deals with the research and application of artificial intelligence in the entire production value chain. She adds: "In industrial research, the projects are much shorter, there is often a lot of company interest behind them and there is always a whole team working on a topic at the same time. Personally, I like industrial research better because I like working in a team and developing an idea together, which then possibly leads to a product."

Andrea Werner, on the other hand, is a research associate at the FH Technikum Wien, Institute for Renewable Energy, and researches ecological and social aspects in projects on decentralised renewable energy systems, such as the transformation from energy consumer to prosumer. She describes the daily research routine as "very project-based and flexible in terms of time." The applied approach to research was initially a challenge for her - coming from university.

Appeal to young female technicians

When asked about challenges along the professional path, Halmschlager replies, "My biggest challenge was and still is to be convinced that I am good at what I do. The fact that everyone who asks me about my career comments: 'Really? And as a woman?' has often not made that any easier. But as your successes grow, so does your confidence and you learn to be proud of it." She advises up-and-coming female technicians to be less self-critical and to have more confidence in themselves.

Werner appeals to "Choose a future line of work and a field that interests you and where the basic work culture seems appropriate." After all, job satisfaction has to do not only with the subject areas, but also with the context of the work. "For this, it is helpful to get a taste of many areas (large companies, SMEs, start-ups, office, laboratory, field service, etc.) in the form of internships,"

she says. In her opinion, young female technicians should also apply even if they do not seem to meet all the requirements. Because: "You can grow into the job."

Kemnitz also recommends: "Even if something does not work out the first time, try it again and again. And: "Ask for advice - you do not have to make all the mistakes yourself. If there is someone who has worked on similar projects or has your dream job, ask how he/she achieved it. Share what you want, what your goals and expectations are. No one can support you if they do not even know what to do."

The evening was hosted by Michaela Ernst, editor-in-chief of Sheconomy, the business magazine for women that aims to connect women's networks.

Picture: Nicole Sagmeister (FH Technikum Vienna), Margit Özelt (AIT), Veronika Wilk (AIT), Helmut Leopold (AIT), Jana Kemnitz (Siemens AG), Verena Halmschlager (TU Wien), Michaela Ernst (Sheconomy), Theresia Vogel (Klima- und Energiefonds), Pia Winter (FEEI), Clara Kaindel (FEEI),Andrea Werner (FH Technikum Wien). FLTR

About the FEEI - Trade Association of the Electrical and Electronics Industry

The Federation of the Electrical and Electronics Industry represents the interests of the second largest industrial sector in Austria with around 300 companies, around 67,000 employees and a production value of 18.83 billion euros (as of 2018). Together with its network partners - including the University of Applied Sciences Technikum Wien, UFH, the Platform Industry 4.0, Forum Mobilkommunikation (FMK), the Association of Alternative Telecom Network Operators (VAT) and the Association of the Railway Industry - the primary goal of the FEEI is to strengthen the position of the Austrian electrical and electronics industry in the globally led competition between locations.

About the FH Technikum Wien

The FH Technikum Wien was founded to inspire people to study technical subjects and to respond to the demand for top technical personnel in industry. In the 25 years of its existence, it has produced 12,000 graduates. Currently, more than 4,400 students study at Austria's only purely technical university of applied sciences. The UAS is a network partner of the FEEI - Association of the Electrical and Electronics Industry. https://www.technikum-wien.at/

About AIT Center for Energy

At the AIT Center for Energy, around 200 employees under the direction of Wolfgang Hribernik are researching solutions for the sustainable energy supply of tomorrow. The many years of experience and scientific excellence of the AIT experts, as well as high-quality laboratory infrastructure and global networking, offer companies innovative and applied research services and thus a clear competitive advantage in this future market. In 2018, a total of 370 projects were carried out at the Center, with the share of European research projects standing out at 41 percent. The Center for Energy's portfolio of topics is oriented around three central systems: Sustainable energy infrastructure, decarbonisation of industrial processes and plants, and innovative technologies and solutions for urban transformation (buildings, cities). Further information about the Centre: https://www.ait.ac.at/energy

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