

Challenge yourself at ICT Group

SARAH'S CHALLENGE: Make old and new installations communicate with each other, for Industrial Automation engineers a wonderful challenge

Sarah Stinissen, Junior Control Engineer, ICT Belgium

Sarah's father introduced her at a young age to the world of electronics. At first, only to computers and software followed by analogue electronics. After her education, Sarah started working in software programming but she always knew that her real passion included the technology of hardware. The choice for ICT group was made easily when she was offered the prospect of developing her professional skills in Industrial Automation. "I now work in secondment on a project in the paper industry, a plant that turns fibre into all kinds of high-end cardboard and paper products. Here, I get to work with the automation of electro mechanics, engines and hydraulics, but also smaller electronical systems, control technology, PLCs, HMIs, SCADA, I feel like a kid in a big playground. Right from the start, during the job interview, my curiosity was triggered and that drew me to this company. I really feel encouraged to learn and develop myself at ICT Group."

Dutch Company

ICT Belgium was founded in 2017 as a subsidiary to grow ICT Group's business and secondment activities in the Belgian market. The Belgian branch has already grown into a lively organisation with many different nationalities. "The Dutch influence on the organisational culture is evident, especially the informal atmosphere. In general, Belgian companies are more hierarchical which can be pleasant for people who like clear internal work relations. However, I must say I have adopted the Dutch way and can really see the benefits. Everybody is very accessible and even management is easily approachable. It is important that employees reach their highest potential and are encouraged by means of the Dutch coaching culture to keep learning and move forward. The message is not 'this is your job, just do it' but they look at how your talents and interests can be fulfilled. Receiving a compliment is nothing out of the ordinary here. When a project runs well or the client is happy with the work, it is shared. That makes me enjoy my work even more."

Tech Support

Sarah's job is to help build a complete machine park for the papermill. "My role is to assemble information on the installations and about the different vendors, document how it everything works and interacts, from the arranging the fibres to rolling up the end product. I document the kinds of breakdowns and errors that can occur, how to diagnose these emergencies, and how to solve the breakdowns." Currently, Sarah's work consists mainly of tech support services. "I've had a good day when I am called to a breakdown which we can solve rather quickly. Preferably without interrupting the production process. For me, that is a good experience as I learn how to stay calm when ten people report some emergency at same time. Without keeping your head cool, nothing gets solved, and I've learned that a little humour can help keep everything together."

An additional challenge in Industrial Automation is that modern programming languages like TiaPortal have to collaborate with legacy codes like Step7 and even Step5. "I can see where everything is coming from and at the same time where it is headed in terms of automation. Introducing modern systems and techniques is not always easy because in these big factories all machines, old and new, must be able to communicate with each other. I find that a very interesting challenge."

Women in Technology

More and more women are working in technology, but in practice the balance is still off. "During working hours, I meet women more often, not only in support roles but also as peers. For myself, I never really thought about it because from a young age I have always been the only girl interested in technology. After a while, gender is not an issue anymore as colleagues just want to know what I can contribute and if I can do my job. But the same goes for any new colleague. I feel free to lay out my ideas when I think something can be done better and it is always taken seriously. I am very happy with the outlook and the opportunities I am getting here."

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