

## PRESS RELEASE

### “Role models rethought”: Portraits of 4 female STEM graduates at Infineon Austria

Villach, 22 April 2024 – When thousands of girls get a taste of working life in Austrian companies from 25 April as part of the Girls' Day initiative, Infineon Austria will of course also be there. The aim is to encourage girls to explore new professional fields in microelectronics and to conquer this area even more than before. In Graz, for example, third and fourth grade girls will discover the research and development laboratories, experience what it is like to work in a high-tech environment after completing an education in the natural sciences or technical field. The girls can look forward to playful discovery, first-hand experience and hands-on sessions, as well as demos and discussions on exciting research and development topics.

On days like these, the mood is optimistic that more girls will be attracted to careers in STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) in the future. However, statistics show that a career in STEM is still the exception for women: their share in technical apprenticeships was only 11% in 2022. In Austria's HTLs, 17% of students are female, in university STEM degree programs 20% and in STEM subjects at universities of applied sciences just under a quarter (23%).<sup>1</sup>

"In German-speaking countries, science and technology have an image with little appeal, and quite wrongly so. Girls and women in particular do not feel addressed. The measures taken so far have not yet succeeded in bringing about a real turnaround in girls' career choices. New approaches are needed here! Studies show almost unanimously that girls are, often unconsciously, given less confidence in technical and scientific fields from an early age. This leads to them having less confidence in themselves later on. Added to this are prejudices and a socially characterized "male image" of technology. We need a new, gender-sensitive way of teaching with authentic role models, practical insights into the real world of work and we need to emphasize much more how socially relevant STEM professions are. Young people, parents and teachers often simply lack the imagination to realize

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<sup>1</sup> Source - \*MINT the Gap! Educational and career choice processes of young women, 2022. A study commissioned by the Austrian Fund for the Empowerment and Advancement of Women and Girls, LEA - Let's empower Austria, conducted by L&R Social Research

what exciting and meaningful careers they can pursue after completing a STEM education," says Sabine Herlitschka, CEO of Infineon Technologies Austria.

Infineon Austria is taking this as an opportunity to introduce **four young tech-power women from STEM disciplines**, highlight their careers and show how diverse, attractive and relevant **STEM professions** are today, just in time for the start of the Girls' Day initiatives.

### **Commitment to STEM**

Infineon Austria is committed on a broad basis to awakening and strengthening young people's interest in technology as early as possible. In the company's day care centre, the "International Day Care Centre" in Villach, a playful approach to science and technology is encouraged. Events such as "Girls' Day" or "Girls! TECH UP", internships and co-operation with schools, technical colleges and universities, Infineon also helps to overcome young people's - and especially girls' - fear of technical disciplines. This gives young women access to the high-tech world and enables them to build up a network. In March 2024, the "Women's Award for Digitalization and Innovation" was awarded for the second time together with ORF to recognize outstanding female talent in the fields of technology and science.

### **Mathematics: Anna Posch, technical mathematician**

#### **The musical mathematician who does away with clichés**

Anna Posch does not look like what you would imagine a female mathematician to look like. And therein lies the problem: the common image of a male professor with a chequered jacket is completely outdated, if it ever was. "In my degree program in technical mathematics at the University of Klagenfurt, there was a fairly balanced ratio between female and male students, including in the doctoral program and among the professors." The second cliché that Anna can dispel: Math is only taught. "Most people who find out that I'm a mathematician ask what school I teach at," laughs the 29-year-old. Anna already realized how much fun math is at secondary school. "I had a great professor who was also able to teach us the importance and possible applications of math." Today, Anna works as a Senior Data Scientist at Infineon in Villach and experiences the beauty of math every day in her work. Her personal to-do list includes data analysis and modelling, projects on the use of artificial intelligence in chip production and projects that deal with the omnipresent topic of "large language models" (better known to many as "chat GPT"). What does that look like in concrete terms? She does a lot of programming, in between meetings, and thanks to digitalization, she can also do some of her work from home. The sporty Klagenfurt native is also active in a music band, where she plays the flute. What advice would she give to young girls and women in the career orientation phase? "The most important thing is: you can do anything. Just try it out, find something you enjoy. Don't set yourself any hurdles and explore the whole

range of training programs and professions. The Matura is a good basis and you can study something technical, even if you haven't done anything like that before!"

## **Computer science: Chiara Janach, multimedia designer**

### **The creative computer scientist who enjoys helping others**

Chiara Janach, 23, has achieved something in her career that many aspire to: combining several of her passions. In Chiara's case, this means creativity, technology and the good feeling of helping people. Shortly before her A-levels at a fashion school, when Chiara was still aiming for a career in the creative industries, the Carinthia University of Applied Sciences introduced itself at career orientation days. The young woman from Villach was immediately enthusiastic about the "Multimedia Technology" degree program, which was quite new at the time. 3D modelling, audio and video technology appealed to her creative spirit. She had an interest in technology, but no technical skills such as programming. No problem: thanks to the preparatory course on offer and the training program, she quickly acquired the technical skills she needed to become a computer scientist. "It's important to me to pass on my knowledge to young people: Please have the courage! You can also learn programming at university - and it's okay to take a different path than others. This results in refreshing new perspectives, which will be highly valued in the job later on." As a service desk employee at Infineon Technologies IT-Services GmbH, based in Klagenfurt's Lakeside Science & Technology Park, Chiara now helps her Infineon colleagues around the world when they face IT difficulties - in personal dialogue, but also by "helping them to help themselves" with good instructions that she and her colleagues develop for the more than 58,000 Infineon employees worldwide. Her creative and communication skills benefit her just as much as her technical expertise. The respectful interaction, the feeling of really making someone's life easier and the fun in the team make the job complete for her. The opportunity to spend part of her working time in the home office saves time and creates space for her hobby as a book blogger, where she writes book reviews on digital platforms. Incidentally, Chiara reads almost exclusively in analogue. "The feel of the paper, the smell and the sight of a full bookshelf are irreplaceable for me - especially because I work so much with digital media!"

## **Natural science: Susanne Reischauer, chemist**

### **The well-travelled chemist who has turned her passion into a profession**

Born in Upper Austria (29), she has already seen a lot of the world: Studies in Graz, doctorate in Berlin (summa cum laude!), research at the Max Planck Institute in Potsdam, study visits to New York and the Czech Republic, post-doc in Chicago. Her love of chemistry was sparked by her first chemistry set, which she was first allowed to experiment with in her parents' living room and later - for safety reasons -

in the garden shed. An open day at a chemistry high school did the rest: the exciting world of chemistry and materials science never let go of Susanne Reischauer, taking her around the world and then back to Austria. She has been a Senior Project Leader in Technology Development at Infineon in Villach since March 2024. She supports the development of new, even more energy-efficient chips from their infancy to market maturity and their use in solar systems, for example. Technical understanding is important here, as are project management skills and a flair for people, because communication is essential when coordinating projects. "When people hear the word "chemistry", they immediately think of smoking chimneys. But chemistry is so much more and affects all areas of life. Career opportunities range from hospitals to the semiconductor industry, where we contribute to the climate transition every day." What advice does she give young people in the career orientation phase? "Look at as much as possible, do internships, don't be put off and find your passion. Every job makes you grow and gives you experience. I've seen a lot, from waitressing to pharmacy work, and every job has helped me to find my way."

## **Technology: Selma Karic, electronics technician**

### **The pragmatic technician with a sense of style**

Selma Karic, 29, is a technician - to be precise, she completed her bachelor's and master's degrees in electrical engineering in Graz. She is in favor of more pragmatism in career choices. Born in Bosnia-Herzegovina, she came to Austria to study and soon joined Infineon via an industrial internship. "Where I come from, career choices are much more pragmatic and less characterized by stereotypes. If you're enthusiastic about scientific subjects, then the door to technology is open to you - whether you're a girl or a boy."

Selma: "I was faced with the choice between medicine or electrical engineering - and I deliberately decided against becoming a doctor with all its emotional challenges. Studying electrical engineering is challenging, she makes no secret of that, "but as always when you have a goal: stick with it, be consistent and don't give up straight away. Afterwards, you'll be rewarded with a varied, exciting career in which you can develop your talents and preferences." Selma is currently working as a System Verification Engineer and Verification Manager at the Infineon Development Centre in Graz. "We check whether the microchips, in our case those used in ATM cards, passports, e-cards and the associated software, work or whether they do what our colleagues imagined and designed at an earlier stage of development." A varied job, half in the lab, half in the office or working from home. The stereotypes she wants to dispel: "We are not the nerds behind the computer, as many people imagine! You can do different tasks: Some want to program, others prefer to test, others prefer to plan and manage. You can build your job on your own strengths. And you can look however you want. I, for example, like to go to the office looking stylish. As long as you're authentic, you'll be taken seriously." This is

exactly what Selma actively tries to pass on to the many young girls she mentors as part of the career guidance program at Infineon in Graz, e.g. as part of Girls' Day or the "Girls! TECH UP" experience days.

### **About Infineon Austria**

Infineon Technologies Austria AG is a subsidiary of Infineon Technologies AG, a global semiconductor leader in power systems and IoT. Semiconductors are essential for mastering the energy-related challenges of our time and helping to shape the digital transformation. Infineon's microelectronics drive decarbonization and digitalization and enable groundbreaking solutions for green and efficient energy, clean and safe mobility as well as a smart and secure IoT.

Infineon Austria pools competencies for research and development, production as well as global business responsibility. The head office is in Villach, with further branches in Graz, Klagenfurt, Linz, Innsbruck and Vienna. With 5,886 employees (including around 2,500 in research and development) from 79 nations, the company generated revenue of EUR 5.6 billion in the 2023 fiscal year (ending 30 September). With research expenditure of 672 million euros, Infineon Austria is one of the strongest research companies in Austria.

Further information at [www.infineon.com/austria](http://www.infineon.com/austria)

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