



JKU / News & Events / News / The LIT OIC Introduces Itself: Software Competence Center Hagenberg Ltd.

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An interview with the two managing directors at the Software Competence Center Hagenberg Ltd. talk about the advantages of working at the LIT OIC.



von links: Robert Wille, Markus Manz

Why did the Software Competence Center Hagenberg Ltd. (SCCH) move into the LIT Open Innovation Center?

Markus Manz: We always knew we wanted to work closely with JKU and moving into the OIC was the ideal opportunity to expand on this idea. Our founding directors have a close relationship to the JKU and we are partnered with a number of JKU institutes. When Prof. Dr. Robert Wille was appointed CSO of SCCH, we were able to make particularly good use of the resulting synergies and we now have a number of joint research projects and strategic collaboration efforts. The open-concept workspaces are ideal for our employees and allows them to communicate effectively. The open-concept is inviting and supports creative workflows as well as joint discussions with different "residents" at the OIC. This often gives us completely new perspectives and there is a social aspect. Knowledge transfer is easy and modern, thanks to the many exciting presentation series and events.

What makes the SCCH unique?

Robert Wille: There are many things! Our strength is being able to concentrate on both software and data. We analyze data resulting from industrial processes and use it for predictive analytics, quality control, and process optimization. Data from imaging systems are used to detect cancer cells as well as make public buildings and rail vehicles safer. In the area of software science, we conduct research in secure software design, efficient engineering, conduct an optimized analysis of software errors, and focus on increased data security.

Research-wise, we collaborate with small and large companies, providing digital change support: It is a radical change that is turning traditional industrial companies into forward-thinking businesses that today have a high proportion of software. Industrial companies are increasingly becoming software companies. There are many Upper Austrian industrial companies - some of which are world market leaders in a wide variety of fields - that can no longer be innovative if it weren't for software. This is where SCCH can make important contributions, especially with its research expertise in the fields of Data Science and Big Data, AI and Security.

SCCH is currently overseeing four Horizon 2020 projects and two Interreg projects, in which SCCH is driving internationalization. We are enjoying the success. They strengthen both the SCCH's and Upper Austria's beacon function and attractiveness as a location for "Research without Borders". Our intercultural and interdisciplinary team includes 90 researchers from 16 nations, including Egypt, Brazil, India, and the Ukraine.

What is your favorite project at the moment?

Markus Manz: The projects at SCCH are very different and that's what makes it very interesting! It's nearly impossible to just name one of our exciting projects. For example, we are particularly interested in the role humans play when interacting with artificial intelligence. The FFG project AI@Work (Human Centered AI in Digitized Working Environments) focuses on getting to the bottom of research question about ways humans and AI can work together as a team, so to speak, and compensate each other's respective weaknesses, thus ensuring human sovereignty.

We have also created a new Secure Software Analytics (SSA) division to develop cybersecurity solutions for industrial machines in cloud environments. Security should clearly be understood as a quality feature of software. The SeCoMo (Secure Code and Runtime Monitoring) project is currently ongoing.

We also encourage start-up companies to conduct research with us. Among others, SCCH currently supports local start-up companies such as blockhealth Ltd., Chatvisor Ltd., Symflower Ltd., Newsadoo Ltd., Show my Size, and many more.

How does the LIT OIC support research?

Robert Wille: SCCH has always considered itself an interface between research and industry and this requires opportunities to exchange information, develop creative ideas, and encounters different "worlds". The OIC's structure and concept is conducive to the idea, offering us numerous opportunities. OIC stands for research that is not conducted in an ivory tower but rather gives us contact to companies without having to first overcome many hierarchies. We appreciate the joint collaboration in this particular environment and not just because there are partners here with the same fields of strength, such as in the area of AI, IT Security and Industry 4.0. The resulting exchange often leads to further research collaboration and a boost of innovation.

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