

## *The portrait of a generation*

**Viktoria  
Herzner**  
Austria



### **Your job**

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#### **Who do you work for and could you describe your job?**

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Austrian Agency for Health and Food Safety  
Radiation protection expert

I collect environmental samples (water, soil, plants and air) for monitoring or clearance projects and write reports. I am partly responsible for the gamma spectrometry measurements.

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#### **How did you get into radiation protection?**

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During my studies, radiation fascinated me because we are surrounded by it – naturally and artificially. I was drawn into this field deeper and deeper like I had no other choice.

For my bachelor degree, I used thermoluminescence dating to gather knowledge about the age of an Austrian brick. During my Master's, I worked with the noble gas radon which is the second reason for lung cancer next to smoking. I researched the capacity of a specific zeolite material for Cs-137 and Sr-85, which can be used to remove those nuclides from water.

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#### **What do you enjoy most at work?**

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The variety. I do fieldwork, analyse data, meticulously check documents, digitise workflows and plan new projects. Every day is different!

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#### **A professional meeting you still remember today?**

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The COST workshop about NORM (Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material) at work and the natural environment in Poland. I learned a lot and it was great to meet other people with the same interests but with different background. I made a good friend and even visited her in Canada where we spent two weeks at a lake in her parent's cabin and that time was one of my best holidays I ever had.

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### **Any message you would like to pass to the younger generation about working in RP?**

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Do not hesitate to apply for a position, even if no specific position is advertised. RP is a very exciting field and it is huge too.

Personal meetings were not possible during Corona. The online meeting allowed us to keep in touch and it was even possible to meet people from further away who would not normally attend. Please appreciate the benefits of online meetings and stay connected!

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## ***Radiation Protection Associate Society***

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### **How are you involved in your AS?**

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President of the Young Scientists and Professionals (YS&P)

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### **How many members in your AS?**

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In total, we are 277 members (each age group, March 2024).

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### **Are the young professionals connected (Club)?**

### **Are you performing activities together?**

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There is a section for Young Scientists and Professionals (YS&P) in the AS. Typically, we hold one online meeting per quarter, with a minimum of two in-person meetings per year, along with various excursions. As the president, I am eager to plan the next initiatives.

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### **Your best memory with your AS?**

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After our joint excursions (such as visits to decommissioned nuclear power plants, radon healing galleries, or disposal sites), coming together for a meal provides a wonderful conclusion and an opportunity to get to know each other better and learn from one another. I can't even decide which excursion-memory is my favourite.

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### **How do you see the future of radiation protection in your country? Is it specific to your country or applicable to other?**

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It will stay important. Right now, we are looking into the position for a final depot for radioactive waste. It is still a long way to go and the public acceptance must improve a lot.

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## About you

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### Hobbies and pets?

After work, the best method to unwind mentally is kickboxing! It is a full-body workout and requires a precise coordination of hand, eye and foot.

On the weekend I love to be outdoors – hiking, horseback riding, bicycling.

At home, I have a black female cat called Fortuna. She talks a lot and loves to lie in the sun.

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### 3 things you will bring on a desert island?

- jack-knife
  - fire striker
  - survival guide (a book like “How to Survive on a Deserted Island”)
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### Favourite dish?

Grießschmarren

It is an Austrian dish and mine tastes nearly as delicious as the cooked one of my grandma.

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### Favourite drink?

black tea with milk

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### Best travel destination recommendation? (including the period of the year)

I travelled a lot during my studies and am still going for a bigger trip each year. I cannot decide which country I like most. I love the landscape of New Zealand, Ireland and Scotland. I like rainy days and hiking is possible whenever – you just need the right gear. I am also very impressed by Australia and I made so many friend there with whom I am still in contact. For me it was something new to see and drive through so much unoccupied and wild landscapes. I visited Australia in summer, autumn and winter – you just need the right clothes for each day and you can enjoy yourself!

What I can recommend is to travel on your own occasionally. It is a great opportunity to get to know yourself better and you interact a lot with the locals. I got so many invitations to homes and dinner parties while travelling alone and had so many unique experiences that bring a smile to my face each time remembering them.

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## **Word to word**

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*What/who would you be if you were ... (and please explain!)*

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**One element from the Periodic Table?**

Maybe Oxygen.

I would be chemically reactive on my own, but in a compound with hydrogen or carbon or another oxygen, I would be vital for life.

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**One ionizing radiation (particle included)?**

Gamma rays.

Get through nearly everything.

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**One famous scientist?**

If I have to choose, I would say Lise Meitner.

She was born in Austria, but had to seek refuge in Sweden in 1938. Her discoveries of nuclear fission together with her nephew Otto Frisch. She was the first woman to earn a doctorate in physics from the University of Vienna. I could tell you more, but the best would be if you do some research on your own.

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**One radiation protection instrument (laboratory measurement included)?**

I would like to be a gamma spectrometer.

I am cooled the whole time and I can measure big areas or small samples. The analyst just have to know how to define the right geometry and how to interpret the nice spectra I will produce. But in reality, I am more complex than most people think.

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