

TINA KATIKA

Project Manager in ICCS

What motivated you to pursue a career in technology, and how has your professional experience in this field been?

I have always been driven by problem-solving and innovation, which naturally led me to pursue a career in technology. My journey began in civil engineering, then transitioned into geophysics, where I worked on oil extraction in the North Sea. Over time, I became increasingly interested in how technology—particularly extended reality (XR)—can transform industries and enhance learning and collaboration. This interest led me to move from academia to a software company specializing in XR for education, and eventually into product management. I now focus on designing and deploying XR applications across various fields, including human-robot interaction and digital twinning.

What barriers or stereotypes have you encountered along the way, and how have you dealt with them?

Throughout my career, I have faced biases and stereotypes, especially in male-dominated technical fields like engineering, geophysics, and XR. There have been times when my expertise was questioned or my contributions undervalued. I addressed these challenges by continuously strengthening my technical skills, demonstrating my abilities through tangible results, and surrounding myself with supportive mentors and peers. Rather than letting obstacles hold me back, I used them as motivation to move forward and establish myself as a leader in the XR space.

What message would you like to share with girls who are discovering ICT today and could be tomorrow's innovators?

To the girls exploring the world of ICT, I would say: don't be afraid of your curiosity, embrace challenges as opportunities to learn, and trust in your abilities. Technology is constantly evolving, and diverse perspectives are essential to shaping its future. Don't let stereotypes discourage you—your creativity, problem-solving skills, and unique perspective can lead to groundbreaking innovations. Seek mentors, build a strong support network, and always remember that there's a place for you in the tech world, wherever your interests may take you.

PAULA RUIZ

Director of R&D&I and Sustainability at TROPS

What motivated you to pursue a career in technology, and how has your professional experience in this field been?

Since I was a child, I was fascinated by mathematics and felt a natural curiosity to understand how things worked. I grew up in a family of teachers: my father taught technology and computer science, and he passed on his passion for understanding and mastering new technologies; and my mother, through psychology, taught me the value of emotional intelligence and active listening. That combination has allowed me to dedicate myself today to what I'm most passionate about: applying technology with a human and transformative approach. That combination taught me to love technology, but also to understand people—something that is key in my day-to-day work.

I chose to study Industrial Engineering because it offered very versatile training, with many career paths, and it allowed me to apply my passion for mathematics to the real world. Throughout my career, I have worked in very different fields: teaching, programming, developing engineering and home automation projects... until I ended up leading the R&D&I and Sustainability area at TROPS. I never imagined I would end up working in the agri-food sector, a world as exciting as it was unfamiliar to me at the beginning. I was surprised to discover the amount of engineering, innovation, and technology behind every crop, every process. Now I lead a multidisciplinary team and over 100 projects in a leading agri-company, where we apply technology to the entire value chain, driving innovation with a sustainable approach.

What barriers or stereotypes have you encountered along the way, and how have you dealt with them?

When I started my degree, there were only three women in a class of nearly a hundred students. That initial imbalance made it clear that there was still a long way to go. However, those same three girls remained in the program in the final year, when only 15 or 20 students were left because many had realized that engineering wasn't for them. The gap exists, but it is not a barrier if you are clear about your purpose.

Along the way, I have learned that talent has no gender. Sometimes you feel like you have to work a little harder for your work to be recognized, a reality that still reflects certain imbalances in our society. The most important thing in facing these barriers and stereotypes has been walking together, sharing experiences, and supporting each other as women. I have had the support of women who, like me, firmly believed that we have a lot to contribute in technology: vision, future, organization, and determination. What matters is working from a place of equality, without giving up what makes us unique.

What message would you like to share with girls who are discovering ICT today and could be tomorrow's innovators?

To the girls who are discovering the world of technology today, I just want to say: yes, this world is for us too. There are no limits when you have curiosity, passion, and a desire to learn how the world works. Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

You can be engineers, programmers, scientists, tech leaders... or all of them at once. The world needs your ideas, your creativity, and your way of looking at challenges. With confidence, education, and mutual support, there is nothing we cannot achieve.

Beatriz Moreno

Director of the International Institute of Mobile Communications.
Telecommunications Engineer at Future Connections

What motivated you to pursue a career in technology, and how has your professional experience in this field been?

Since I was a child, my favorite subjects were always science/technology-related: Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Physics, and Chemistry. When it came time to choose, I didn't have any close role models, but I never considered anything else—I wanted to study something I enjoyed that also offered good career prospects, so I chose Telecommunications Engineering.

In the years I was finishing my studies, the ".com" crisis hit telecom companies hard, and in that context, the academic and professional atmosphere was not very optimistic. Shortly afterward, the 2008 crisis didn't help improve expectations either. The reality I encountered was a sector that was no longer as well-paid as in previous years, but ever since I entered the job market, there have always been job opportunities for Telecommunications Engineers. There are many areas in which we can work and reinvent ourselves if necessary. It remains a sector with little (or no) unemployment, and many companies offer good work-life balance conditions such as hybrid or remote work.

What barriers or stereotypes have you encountered along the way, and how have you dealt with them?

At the beginning, I didn't notice any differences compared to my male colleagues, and I still don't see them in junior positions. The difficulties appear as you try to move up and progress in a sector where around 80% of the workforce is male. The reality is that it's harder to reach positions of greater responsibility. We still find ourselves in meetings where we have to repeat an argument for it to be acknowledged, where men sometimes step in to repeat our point of view and suddenly it seems like a great idea. And above all, the gender pay gap is decreasing, but it still exists in the private sector. For the same position, within a salary range, women are still more likely to be on the lower end compared to men.

It's not easy to deal with certain situations because some behaviors are deeply ingrained in society. I believe it's essential to maintain an open and conciliatory mindset to listen to all arguments, to be persistent in claiming our space, ambitious in pursuing fair compensation based solely on strictly professional criteria, and responsible in knowing how to distinguish injustices and biases from things that, for whatever reason, haven't turned out in our favor.

What message would you like to share with girls who are discovering ICT today and could be tomorrow's innovators?

There are no "girls' subjects," just as there are no "girls' games." Anyone who wants to study something and has the privilege of choosing should only think about whether that's what they enjoy.

As you grow up, obviously other factors come into play, such as job prospects, but today technical professions still show very good employment rates and strong salaries. Moreover, the demand for ICT professionals is global, meaning they can work anywhere in the world.

Cristina Merino Archivet

Senior Solution Architect in Nokia

What motivated you to pursue a career in technology, and how has your professional experience in this field been?

I was always better at physics and mathematics. I became very interested in computer science thanks to my older brother. I ultimately chose Telecommunications Engineering because of the career prospects and because the specialization I picked was a combination of computer science and telecommunications, which I saw as a great challenge to take on.

I currently work at Nokia on a mobile network monitoring project that evolves with technology—we're already working on 5G! I'm passionate about my job.

This year, I'm part of a Nokia program in collaboration with UN Women. In March, I attended a workshop in Lisbon where I had the opportunity to meet the 20 women participating in the program. It's been a very enriching experience both personally and professionally. I've realized that women are increasingly valued in companies and in higher positions that until a few years ago were only held by men.

What barriers or stereotypes have you encountered along the way, and how have you dealt with them?

At university, there were few girls, but I never felt undervalued—we were all treated equally. After finishing my degree, I did come across some uncomfortable questions during job interviews, especially those related to motherhood.

What message would you like to share with girls who are discovering ICT today and could be tomorrow's innovators?

Don't be afraid to choose the studies you enjoy, and don't think ICT is just for men. Fortunately, in the ICT field, the number of women is growing, and there is more equality in companies.