# Function Block Factory: Web-based service facilitates the creation of PLC function blocks

Tool supports common automation systems and IO-Link devices of all manufacturers

**Freiburg, April 2020 – The Function Block Factory (FBF) from SICK is the first and only web-based service of its type for facilitating the integration of IO-Link devices into automation systems. Based on the device description (IODD), the software automatically creates control-specific function blocks which ensure quick, individualized and error-free implementation of IO-Link devices.**

The FBF impresses with its application-friendly and -safe user guidance, which prevents the need for manual data searches and complexity and rules out error risks. Thoroughly tested for function and reliable in application, the tool currently supports ten automation systems as well as all IO-Link devices on the market listed in the IODD finder - and this includes all manufacturers.

The FBF from SICK is therefore an open and universal solution. It enables users to configure and create their own function block libraries with individualized parameters and functions as well as names and designations which speak for themselves. The scope and content of the libraries can be defined individually through free selection of the available device parameters and the process data parser function and can be adjusted at any time.

**FBF: The efficient way to create function blocks**

When working with the FBF, developers and programmers profit from the fact that the software service not only provides function blocks, but also data structures. These ensure that there is no effort needed for the declaration of parameter variables. Furthermore, complex searches for parameters, their indexes and data formats are a thing of the past, which considerably reduces development time and programming effort. When creating function blocks, the FBF accesses the contents and variables in the process data strings of the IO-Link devices in addition to the device parameters. In this way, they can be systematically selected for transmission and evaluation using subindex access, which reduces data load and communication length.

The multi-selection option for simultaneous reading of several parameters and enumerators, which also allow for meaningful designations in the source code instead of meaningless numbers, and the auto deselection function for simplified deselection of selected variables and parameters are additional features of function blocks which can be selected in the FBF. They also make PLC programming easier and allow for a clear and legible code at the same time.

**Access via IO-Link product page of SICK devices or service menu**

The FBF software service as provided by SICK goes back to a concept which SICK originally used internally for a long period of time and on a proprietary basis for its own IO-Link devices,” explains Peter Kamp, Head of Industrial Software Engineering, Industrial Integration Space Global Business Center, SICK AG, Freiburg. “The version further developed and opened for the market is therefore thoroughly tested for function and reliable in application.” The FBF is accessed through a browser via the SICK homepage, either from the Internet page of a SICK IO-Link product or from the service menu. After registration as a first-time user or login with a SICK ID, the IO-Link device is selected in the IODD finder using the filter function and its IODD is obtained. In the next step, the user selects the desired PLC with the engineering tool and the fieldbus. In the next step, names are given to the function blocks, the parser function and the data structures. The FBF makes it possible to assign names in line with your own naming convention for the first time. The desired device parameters are then selected. A few clicks are enough to configure and create individual function block libraries.

**Use openness, minimize effort**

For example, the openness of the FBF control and device technology makes it possible to equip the same machine of a manufacturer for different customers with a favorite or prescribed automation system and then reuse the function libraries in PLC programs as often as desired. The integration of IO-Link devices into controls is therefore no longer a great challenge - thanks to the FBF, it is nothing more than a simple task for which no special IO-Link knowledge is required of the developer and programmer.

You can call up the Function Block Factory service at <https://fbf.cloud.sick.com>.

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*The web-based Function Block Factory service makes it possible for users to configure and create their own individualized function block libraries from the I/O device description (IODD) of a wide range of IO-Link devices in order to reuse them in their PLC programs as often as desired.*

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SICK is one of the world’s leading producers of sensors and sensor solutions for industrial applications. Founded in 1946 by Dr.-Ing. e. h. Erwin Sick, the company with headquarters in Waldkirch im Breisgau near Freiburg ranks among the technological market leaders. With more than 50 subsidiaries and equity investments as well as numerous agencies, SICK maintains a presence around the globe. In the 2018 fiscal year, SICK had almost 10,000 employees worldwide and a group revenue of around EUR 1.6 billion.

Additional information about SICK is available on the Internet at http://www.sick.com or by phone on +49 (0) 7681 202 4183.