28 April, 2023

New developments in Social Finance

Training 1
Programme and information

Training outline

We can expect that technological advancements will continue to transform many aspects of our lives. Two of the innovations covered in this webinar are blockchain technology and artificial intelligence. Both technologies have seen their cycles of hype and decline in the past.

The blockchain technology is primarily known for cryptocurrencies. However, its decentralised, secure and transparent nature makes it ideal for a range of applications in the finance sector but also the wider social economy based on smart contracts. These are self-executing agreements with the terms of the contract directly written into code.

Artificial intelligence is a concept which enables machines to learn from data and experience, and perform tasks that traditionally required human intelligence. It currently receives a lot of attention around the large language models and image creators. However, finance is a natural fit as it involves numerous variables and either risk or return as an outcome. There are also some interesting approaches to measure the ESG scores of companies using Natural Language Processing.

This training is designed to explore the potential of blockchain and AI in contributing to the growth of ethical finance and the social economy. The session will include a real-life case study from a FEBEA member that demonstrates how blockchain technology is being used in the social economy. The case study will provide insights into the practical application of blockchain in promoting transparency, accountability, and trust in social enterprises

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Agenda

Friday, 28 April 2023
(Time in CEST)
*For more information and our cancellation
policy, please check our website*

10:00 – 10:15	Welcome, Introduction to the workshop
10:15 – 11:00	Introduction to blockchain technology

1. Explaining the concept underpinning the technology
2. New business models (algorithmic governance, transparency, smart contracts)
3. Financing models (lending, charity, DAOs)
4. Classification of use cases

11:00 – 11:30	Case Study (Fondazione di Comunità di Messina, FEBEA member)
11:30 – 11:45	Q&A
11:45 – 12:00	*Break*
12:00 – 12:30	Introduction to Artificial Intelligence

1. Models and approaches (learning types, model families, neural networks)
2. Playbooks (open source vs platform use)
3. Use cases (as of 2023)

12:30 – 13:15	Open discussion, sharing of experiences
13:15 – 13:30	Wrap-Up, Outlook and feedback

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Meet the Speakers

Wolfgang Spiess-Knafl
European Center for Social Finance

Wolfgang Spiess-Knafl works at the European Center for Social Finance, which delivers Technical Assistance services on behalf of FEBEA. He has an engineering background and started his career in investment banking. Wolfgang has been active in the field of social finance since 2009. His current main interests are emerging new technologies and their intersection with social and environmental objectives.

Francesco Longo
University of Messina

Francesco Longo received his Ph.D. in Computer Engineering from the University of Messina, Italy, where he is currently an Associate Professor at the Department of Engineering. He is one of the co-founder of SmartMe.IO Srl, an academic spinoff of the University of Messina focusing on transforming the advances of scientific research in the IoT field into solutions available on the market. He is a member of the scientific committee of the Horcynus Orca Foundation and of the Messina Evolved Social District.

FEBEA – the European Federation of Ethical and Alternative Banks and Financiers– is a non-profit association based in Brussels. It gathers 33 financial institutions whose aim is to finance social and solidarity economy (SSE) and projects with social, environmental and cultural value in 17 European countries, serving more than 700,000 people.

Its objective is to support the exchange of experiences and promote cooperation between social economy and social finance practitioners.

Each FEBEA member is integrated in the SSE Sector in its country, focusing on mobilising savings and equity from responsible citizens and using these funds to finance sustainable development and local communities. FEBEA is member of GECES, the European Commission's expert Group on Social Economy and Social Entrepreneurship and of Social Economy Europe, the main European network of social economy practitioners.

FEBEA members finance:

- The creation of jobs, social employment in particular;
- Social enterprises and social economy;
- The non-profit sector and participatory economics;
- New forms of social entrepreneurship
- People or groups of people who are victims of social or professional exclusion or are unbanked;
- Sustainable development: renewable sources of energy, organic farming, biodiversity, etc.;
- International solidarity and fair trade.

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