European Commission

Third Workshop of #Blockchain4EU: Blockchain for Industrial Transformations

On March 15 we organised the third workshop of our project *#Blockchain4EU: Blockchain for Industrial Transformations*. As #Blockchain4EU is now coming to its end, this workshop was the last in our larger series of participatory and stakeholder engagement activities. You can read about our first workshop in July here and also have a look at our second workshop in November here.

Project

#Blockchain4EU: Blockchain for Industrial Transformations is a forward looking sociotechnical exploration of existing, emerging and potential applications based on Blockchain and other Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs) for industrial / non-financial sectors. It is coordinated by the EU Policy Lab / Foresight, Behavioural Insights and Design for Policy Unit of the Joint Research Centre (JRC) in collaboration with the Innovation Policy and Investment for Growth Unit of the Directorate General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship & SMEs (DG GROW). You can find more about it and follow our activities in the EU Policy Lab blog.

Workshop Overview

This workshop followed the project's main core at the intersection of science and technology studies, foresight and horizon scanning, and participatory and generative design. Through four rounds of hands-on explorations we aimed at a broad spectrum discussion on policy strategies for digitisation of industry and businesses, with particular focus on technology adoption and SME innovation. Our main goal was to gain a better understanding of how Blockchain and other DLTs fit into present and future digitisation landscapes, and how these technologies may potentially affect or impact different actors operating in non-financial / industrial sectors.

Participants in the workshop came from a selected group of stakeholders at the forefront of EU digitization and SME innovation, including industry, startups and SME representatives, European networks or initiatives, think tanks and business consultants in the field, and intergovernmental and international organisations. Policy Officers from DG GROW also participated in the workshop by engaging in the discussion rounds and exercises throughout the day with the other participants.

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to all stakeholder participants for their availability, and for the key insights they generated and shared during the day: Laurent Bernat (OECD / Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), Justina Bieliauskaite (European DIGITAL SME Alliance), Alexander Bode (Plattform Industrie 4.0 Germany), Rafael Boog (Association Industry 4.0. Austria), Kris Broekaert (World Economic Forum), Ferdinand Casier (Agoria), Gaia della Rocca (Confindustria), Giovanna Galasso (PwC), Lou Juget (ESBA / European Small Business Alliance), Luc Hendrickx (UEAPME / European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), Steffen Holly (IDMT / Fraunhofer Institute for Digital Media Technology), Stavriana A. Kofteros (European Startup Network), Julia Krysztofiak-Szopa (Startup Poland), Petri Liuha (EIT Digital IVZW), J. Scott Marcus (Bruegel), Joana Mil-Homens (Beta-I), Željko Pazin (EFFRA / European Factories of the Future Research Association), Martin Pečar (WATIFY Ambassador & OmniOpti), Christoph Riedmann (Eurochambres), and Ionut Tata (Central Romania Innovation and Technology Cluster & Iceberg).

Starting the Day

The workshop took place at our very own JRC's EU Policy Lab and we started off by briefly presenting the main objectives of the

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Notes and thoughts

Publications

#Blockchain4EU project as a joint collaboration between the JRC and DG GROW. The EU Policy Lab team also went through the current policy context in the European Commission related to digitalisation of industry and recent initiatives on Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technologies (DLTs), such as the open Call 'Blockchain and Distributed Ledger Technologies for SMEs' (INNOSUP-03-2018) as part of Horizon 2020 Work Programme 2018-2020 on 'Innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises'. We addressed this call in our blog here and more information can be found in the EU Programmes 2014-2020 webpage. Finally, in anticipation of the launch of the #Blockchain4EU report at our final event in May, we presented the current status of our research including a summary of previous workshops, and the co-creation processes of our five prototypes for policy that will physically represent or exemplify in tangible and interactive ways how Blockchain and other DLTs may be developed or operate in a near future considering five use case scenarios.

Morning Rounds

The morning was composed of two exercise rounds. Participants were previously divided into five groups to assure diversity of backgrounds and affiliations.

The first round was dedicated to "Envisioning Futures of Digitisation for EU Industry and Businesses", and each group had one hour to discuss and build a representation of what would be an ideal digital ecosystem for European businesses and industry in 5 years' time.

In doing so, all groups were free to make their own choices regarding what to include in this ideal ecosystem, but we asked them up front to consider actors and elements such as market players and other commercial stakeholders; public agents and government or regulatory bodies; events, initiatives and places; goods, services, products and technologies; processes and trends as large scale innovations and main changes in business ecosystems / models. We provided all groups with a similar generative design toolkit that included a blank canvas, pens, markers, scissors, inspirational images, wood dolls, blocks and connectors, and multiple LEGO bricks and minifigures. In the end, on top of creating this ecosystem representation, groups also had to fill a template with the name of their ideal scenario together with the three main features or takeaways they wanted to convey, and place it in a common wall for further discussion.

The second round on "Zooming in and Backcasting on Futures of Digitisation" started with each group presenting their ideal scenario in a plenary mode with 3 minute summaries. While a presentation took place, we asked all other participants to write down in post-its gaps, roadblocks, problems or other negative points of that specific scenario, and place them in the common wall bellow the respective template. This triggered the plenary discussions where participants engaged in more in-depth discussions about the main opportunities and challenges

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of each other's ecosystems.

Afternoon Rounds

The afternoon was also composed of two exercise rounds. Participants were rearranged into new five groups, now based on their organisational affiliation or stake in the field.

The third round dedicated to "Connecting Blockchain and Other DLTs with Digitisation Strategies" started out by a presentation from the EU Policy Lab team mainly focused on our current research of what Blockchain might mean for industry and business outside of the financial sectors. It also included a brief introduction to Blockchain technologies, an overview of its projected impact, foreseeable main opportunities and challenges, and ongoing use cases or initiatives from across Europe in non-financial sectors.

With this presentation we set the scene for a facilitated open discussion with the participants as stakeholders already established in the large field going from digitisation to SME innovation, but not necessarily in the knowing about what Blockchain and other DLTs could represent for their operations and business models. The following were some of the questions that we asked the participants to discuss in a plenary mode:

- *How would you like to be involved in the discussion when the European Commission starts making decisions on Blockchain as part of EU digitisation strategies?*
- *How would policy strategies followed in the past for the adoption of other technologies can serve as good / bad lessons for Blockchain?*
- *How should the European Commission communicate about the potential of Blockchain to your organizations or members of your organizations? And what are the big mistakes it shouldn't do?*
- *What can the European Commission offer in terms of support to business and industries who are not yet in the Blockchain space but would like to be?*
- *What would you prefer to do, or what would you mainly advise your partners to do if Blockchain solutions flood your market in 2 years?*


In the fourth and final round "Reacting to Potential Disruptive Effects of Blockchain and Other DLTs", each group was presented with micro hypothetical scenarios regarding futures where Blockchain applications would be a reality, and devised a question for each of these scenarios. Each group had 15 minutes to discuss the scenarios and questions and come up with answers or possible group recommendation for a course of action.

Adapting the "6 hats" methodology, all elements in the group assumed one of five 'personas' assigned to a colour: White ("focusing on the facts and only dealing with the facts"), Yellow ("exploring the positive aspects and benefits"), Black ("criticizing and spotting difficulties and dangers"), Red ("bringing emotions and intuition to the top"), and last but not least, Blue ("coordinating the discussion and summarizing ideas").

When assuming their respective 'persona', participants had to think about how their organisation would first react, what would be a likely action, or what would they recommend, and then collectively agree to an answer to discussed in plenary. Here are some examples of the scenarios we presented and questions we asked the participants to discuss:

- *Blockchains replaced the need for regulatory central authorities, third-party certification bodies or government agencies. What if errors or problems happen and you need to hold someone responsible, or arbitrate disputes or conflicts between different parties?*
- *Blockchains made redundant certain types of jobs, like notaries, dispatchers, clerks or analysts across sectors, or even create new jobs and competences. What if such transformations disrupt current work patterns and your organisations or members of your organisations have to deal with underuse or shortage of skills?*
- *Blockchains allow people, companies and businesses to coordinate in more open, collaborative and decentralised ways. What if your organisation or members of your organisation are forced to redefine their sources of value, and need new business and innovation models in the short term?*
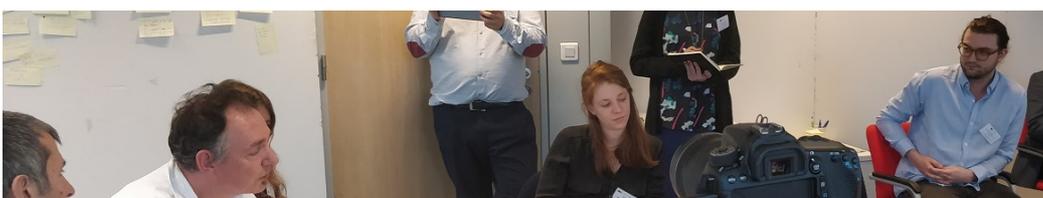
Next Steps

We fully documented the workshop with consent of the participants, by filming and photographing all outputs, templates, presentations and major discussions, and also by taking extensive notes on the major points raised in the plenary discussions and in the group debates on every round. The Joint Research Centre's EU Policy Lab team is currently harvesting and examining the documentation via content analysis and other qualitative data exploration techniques.

Alongside other elements of desk and empirical research gathered through previous activities, the results of this workshop will be processed to feed the conclusions of the project's final report following our research framework for evidence based policy advice. They will also help us to better define and target our main research outputs regarding industrial and business stakeholders not currently engaged in the non-financial / industrial Blockchain spaces, particularly those who might be the first affected by its potential developments, or those who may become interested in entering the space by acquiring or developing their own Blockchain or other DLT solutions.

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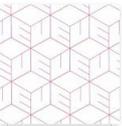
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BY **ALEXANDRE PÓLVORA** | APRIL 3, 2018 | IN **LAB SESSIONS** | LEAVE A COMMENT

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