

Sucess Story: The most innovative chain on the market **B-hub for Europe: European network brings Blockchain into use**

When the Gartner market researcher company presents the ten most important technology trends for next year in autumn, the IT industry and potential users will listen carefully. The "practical blockchain" is included for 2020. The blockchain can be described as a digital, encrypted and chronologically structured chain of transactions where data is shared by all members of a network. Without the protection of a central authority, it enables cooperation, based on trust — even among those who do not know each other. Gartner's thesis: The current hurdles of innovative technology will be overcome by 2023. Companies are already implementing the blockchain, often in a watered-down form. At the same time there are more and more ideas forming how to link the "innovative chain" with artificial intelligence and the Internet. As a result, novel applications will emerge. Market researchers Gartner give an example: a car could negotiate its insurance independently with an insurance provider.

Early interest in Blockchain

The theory of the blockchain has existed for several years. Dr. Torsten Oelke and Silvan Jongerius were among those who became enthusiastic about the approach early on. Oelke, a successful IT entrepreneur and investor from Berlin, who advises the German Ministry of Economics and is a passionate networker, founded Connect Global in 2015, a company that connects innovative technologies with businesses. In 2018, the first international networking project was carried out, supported by the EU. During this project Oelke got to know many blockchain companies from Europe and saw the chance to continue in this field.

Berlin Partner/Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) supports the project proposal

Oelke, who has experience in setting up accelerators, i.e. programs in which young companies drive their business ideas forward, approached Berlin Partner for Business and Technology, with the idea of setting up a blockchain network for Europe. His aim was to bring various exciting development centres into cross-border contact with each other and to accelerate the practical implementation of the technology in companies and the public sector. "The European Commission and especially the local contact person on the subject have a good understanding of the potential of blockchain, and this has strengthened my resolve", explains Oelke.



The innovation manager for Blockchain at Berlin Partner supported the project and also presented the services of the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), which helps with European projects and the internationalization of companies. It turned out that a regional partner was still being sought for the already existing international consortium, so that the Berlin Partner/EEN team linked the players with the BerChain association. Since the beginning of 2019, they have promoted the capital Berlin as one of

the most important hotspots for block chain developments. Berlin Partner/EEN also supported the project proposal with a "Letter of Intent".

B-hub for Europe: 5 countries, 5 ecosystems

The application for a "B-hub for Europe" was submitted to the EU in 2019: with success. As of January 2020, Oelke is one of 5 partners in the consortium with Connect Global. The total funding amount of the project, which is scheduled to run for 2 years, is 2 million euros. The other partners are located in France, Italy, Lithuania and Romania. Project manager at Connect Global, Silvan Jongerius, is one of the board members of BerChain. Jongerius, who was born in Holland, came to Berlin in 2012. He has had numerous roles in IT, but the blockchain concept in particular, has convinced the international spirit within him. "Blockchain and Berlin, just fit together for me. Critical developers live in the city, the decentralized and transparent approach of the technology inspires many in the large, international Berlin IT community. It stands to reason that so much development has taken place in the large crypto-currency project Ethereum in Berlin," says Jongerius.



B-hub for Europe focuses on three approaches. Firstly, the network selects around 50 young companies with a blockchain focus which it includes in an accelerator. Starting in autumn 2020, these start-ups will be supported for six months at a time in globalization, compliance, funding topics, investment and many other areas. The program is decentralized and primarily digital.

Bringing blockchain closer to the users

The second approach is free training for companies and public institutions, in which blockchain is explained and concrete application scenarios are tested together with the participants. An example of this: The potential this technology has for making public procurement more efficient. Berlin Partner supports the network in attracting the right participants. Finally, the third approach is the networking of start-ups with potential customers. The basis for this are so-called "Matching Labs", in which the products and services of the blockchain providers are presented to potential customers and public institutions. In addition, the start-ups are personally supported and networked, not only with companies but also with the other ecosystems.

Strengthen business development, act as a mentor and ensure that the blockchain technology itself, but also the strong players in Europe, become even better known: These are the goals Oelke and Jongerius have set for themselves. From their perspective, the applications are obvious. Whether it is passports or international driving licences or the Fintech area where the blockchain is currently used most often: Transparency, security and trust are enduring themes in democracy, business life and human interaction. The blockchain can make a positive contribution here on the digital level. And the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN) will contribute its contacts to the Europe-wide matching process and provide support in the area of EU funding.