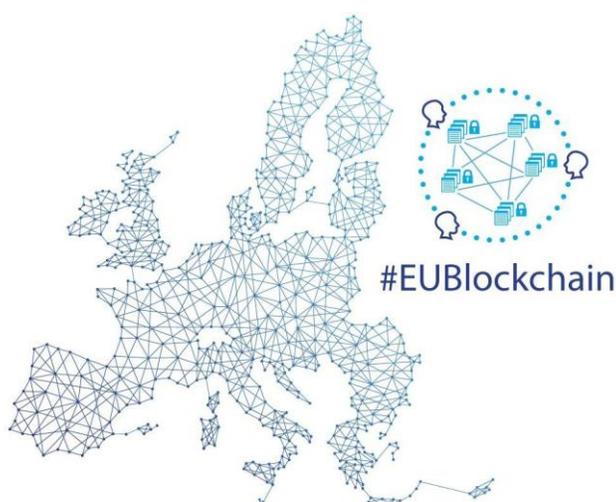# EU BLOCKCHAIN OBSERVATORY & FORUM

Workshop Report –
Blockchain & Metaverse –
Why all the hype? –
Online Video Conference, 24 May 2022

#EUBlockchain

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WELCOME

Bara Greplova, INATBA, commenced the workshop with a brief explanation of the housekeeping rules to be followed during the workshop. The workshop was a joint event between INATBA and European Blockchain Observatory and Forum about the metaverse.

Ricardo Simões, Executive Director of INATBA welcomed everyone to the workshop on the blockchain and metaverse. His introduction included some general remarks on the subject and encouraged the audience to familiarise themselves with blockchain topics through INATBA's material.

KEYNOTE PRESENTATION ON METAVERSE

The workshop kicked off with **Mr Antonis Polemitis** presentation about the metaverse. Mr Polemitis initially presents some fundamental points: the metaverse is not only a game but is the internet, the existence of two architectural structures for the metaverse (closed, open), and the national and economic security risk for the EU posed by the closed metaverse. In more detail, the public views metaverse as a virtual reality using gadgets like reality goggles and is against this notion. This is a misconception as the metaverse is effectively the internet with couples of twists like a progressively better visualisation and persistent digital objects. The progression is ongoing from little tools in the past to the current two-dimensional meeting rooms like Zoom and finally to the future adoption of augmented reality. Improvements in graphics and processing power will pave the way for that. As UX spaces are enriched, the time spent on them will increase and, consequently, the value of the digital objects ranging from identities and other objects. Well-known cases are CryptoPunks and Bored Apes, where people express their values and beliefs in a community. Generally, the metaverse is the visualisation and persistent digital objects.

Mr. Polemitis focused on the persistent digital objects as blockchain brought significant changes. Before 2009, databases were the sole option for storing digital objects and followed a central and closed approach with a database owner. The blockchain surge provided an additional option which can be permissionless, interoperable, and standards-based. Based on these characteristics, a mental leap and social construction have occurred where a specific type of token following standards like ERC-720, 1150, and similar ones can represent arbitrary and tangible objects. Objects of the tokens can be avatars, photographs, intangible assets like intellectual property rights, and physical and tangible assets in the future. Tangible assets will require a bridge to the real world to exist, while most of the innovations are built on digital assets. While Bitcoin and similar assets represent a form of money, NFTs can represent any arbitrary, intangible, digital object in a self-sovereign, open, and interoperable format.

Mr. Polemitis has explained his worry about the close metaverse, especially in the context of the EU. European users mainly interact through American based web companies, with no European company reporting any success. In this light, these companies have a competitive edge due to the assets, power, and the trend of the strategic decisions towards metaverse investment. Examples from the tech industry come from Facebook, Epic, and Apple. Three reasons pose risks to the European ecosystem. The first reason is economical, as it tends to be a network effect in these business models. Essentially, the suggested rates currently discussed follow the App store paradigm of 30% on the revenue. In a future economy based on digital interactions, American companies can impose harsher expenditures on European companies than national laws since the tax is calculated on revenues instead of profits. The economic outflow can become gigantic for Europe. The second risk is the medium that the European public and governments communicate via American companies. The risk emerges from the recent discussion on Donald Trump's Twitter account ban, where Europe had no voice over the matter, and a closed system made the decision. Finally, the last reason is surveillance, as edge devices and sensors will convey information and data to a server. There is the possibility of compromising privacy policies

and intergovernmental agreements. Generally, the speaker believed that there is no European company that can compete with the American ones in a closed metaverse as the investment is not equal and does not permit scaling.

A solution is to promote the open architecture for the metaverse. Blockchains and NFTs can be some of the building tools for open architecture. A concern is that the view towards blockchain and cryptocurrency is predominantly from an AML and consumer safety perspective. While these are valid discussion subjects, Europe's digital sovereignty seems pivotal in a future where a large percentage of the economy, society, and personal interactions will take place in persistent digital spaces. There are more issues to address like constitutional, accessibility, economic, and surveillance. The eminent decision lies on a closed metaverse dominated by American companies or a metaverse following open and interoperable standards. For instance, Linux is an open-source option in place of the Windows system.

All in all, the metaverse is inevitable and more uses will emerge in the future. It is an exciting subject for computing, but a huge incentive for the European Union lies in deciding the format of the metaverse.

PRESENTATION ON WEB3

Dr. **Ingrid Vasiliu-Feltes**, chief executive officer at Softhread, presented different points on Web3. Initially, the speaker concurred with the previous point of the inevitability of the metaverse; thus, cultivating a culture of digital ethics is essential for the future. The speaker focused on distinct subjects for the metaverse and Web3; economy, investments, converging technologies, and legal issues.

There is a noticeable economic value in the digital transformation and metaverse global market per the valuation estimation by 2026. The Web3 drivers are subjects reporting increased activities around them, such as digital currencies, digital assets, CeFi & DeFi, metaverse, and omniverse. Investments by venture capitals in different areas were estimated to be around 30 billion dollars for 2021, while the figure for the first quarter of 2022 has reached 14.6 billion dollars. The speaker points out converging technologies related to the blockchain like AI, AR & VR, 5G, IoT, and Next Generation Computing (e.g., quantum computing).

Various challenges and opportunities were part of the presentation. The brief list of challenges includes privacy, trust, digital ethics literacy and fluency, cyberthreats, regulatory, legal, taxation, and ESG-consciousness. Privacy and trust are the focal points for numerous global organisations diving into preserving and restoring trust. Literacy and fluency are important for the future as informed consent demands more than available information and calls for public education to handle the information. Additionally, cyber events get more complex and costly than in the past. Despite the increased advocacy for ESG-consciousness, there is room for improvement in tracking activities with more expressive KPIs and quality standards as indicators for the short and long term.

There are opportunities in the metaverse and Web3 development that can be harnessed for the public's benefit. One of the first points is the financial and digital inclusion that can be transformational for society. During the last pandemic, the public familiarised themselves with the value of zero-trust environments and global data exchanges. Healthcare is solely one example of facilitating these notions, as other domains can benefit from them. There is a current need for creating a culture of digital ethics and cyber resilience that concurrently exists. It is common for companies to enforce policies in siloes, while a harmonised and proactive approach can produce more benefits. The UN SDG alignment can be more efficient in Web3 than in the previous iterations as a synergistic approach to tracking the rights is achievable. Finally, human rights are vulnerable to events like the pandemic even with good intentions.

There are several impact points of Web3 on all SDGs, but health, education, and smart cities can be sectors with a profound impact on daily lives. Moreover, the speaker advocated for creating a Bill of Rights and a Code of Conduct for Web3 to avoid adjustments and tweaks from a late adoption of frameworks for emerging technologies. There is the opportunity for cementing strong fundamentals

from the early stages.

For fostering a culture of ethics, consideration should be given to individual, corporate, and societal ethics. Guidance should be available for all these facets. Crucial subjects include non-maleficence, beneficence, respect for autonomy, justice, and proportionality, where collective knowledge and experience can provide a better platform. The principles of responsibility, trustworthiness, fairness, and accountability are focal, as indicated by the example of Healthcare 4.0, where harmful impact can possibly be long-lasting if no attention is given.

Other subjects of discussion are less general and include well-known topics like digital identity management, cross-border validity, privacy, security, interoperability, and digital twins. Initially, there are hurdles to overcome for digital identity principles compared to Web1 and Web2. It is crucial to achieving a pluralism of operators and the methods for cross-border standards. Self-sovereign identity (SSI) can be applied appropriately and characterised by longevity, portability, and interoperability with better data ownership.

Organisations should adhere to different points for building a digital ethics culture. Firstly, the ethics statement should align with the organisation's purpose. The risk assessment should expand to include digital issues such as data handling. Failure mode analysis, metrics, and KPIs should express the digital ethics culture and facilitate the long-term monitoring of the goals. Personnel should be trained to cope with the new environment and enforce frameworks and policies. Finally, the enterprise strategy, policies, and procedures should be harmonised with the digital ethics culture. The presentation concluded with the future directions that Web3 can bring, including digital citizenship, cyber twins, smart cities, and global data exchanges.

Dr Ingrid answered the public's question about the possibility of the Declaration for the Future[1] of the Internet as a step for applying ethics. The speaker shared her opinion as the Declaration sets the stage favourably since it covers an umbrella of overarching subjects and can set the floor for deeper dives.

PRESENTATION ON METAVERSE

The event proceeded with the presentation on the Metaverse by Mr **Alexander Whalen**, the Public Policy Manager for EU Affairs in Meta. After the introduction, the speaker commented that Meta views the metaverse as the evolution of social technologies to virtual spaces where recreation and exploration with other people without sharing the same physical space. Essentially, it will allow people to interact with each other and the metaverse through virtual and augmented reality. The aspiration is to be a hybrid of today's online social experiences and ideally expand into three-dimensional. This transition to the metaverse requires time based on experience. Despite the aid of the digital world in connecting, there is room for improvement in the digital experience. The metaverse has the potential to answer this challenge by having the in-person feeling in human communication. The purpose of Meta is not to substitute in-person experiences, as nothing will beat that, but for digital interaction to get better and more meaningful.

The estimation for the metaverse and its improvements is to be realised over the next decade. The metaverse will impact the economy, as noted by the global figures from the previous presentation. Experiences with other technologies set a core principle for Meta to avoid surprises with the public. In detail, Meta tries to have an open conversation before launching technologies, facilitating collaboration with developers, experts, policymakers, academia, and more.

The evolutions with the metaverse are not going to be based solely on the US, but they will impact Europe. Talent is to be employed for building components for the metaverse. Currently, solutions are deployed on the market as an initial step to a virtual world.

The public heavily correlates the metaverse with devices like headsets and more for diving into a virtual

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[1] European Commission. (28 April 2022). EU and international partners put forward a Declaration for the Future of the Internet. Source. (Accessed: 14 July 2022)

reality world, but there are three roles for the metaverse. The first one is in the physical world that we live in. The second is augmented reality, where layers are added to the physical world to enrich the experience and offer utilities. The last role is the most intriguing one with the digital world for transcending time and space. The current transition to the digital world is cumbersome; especially compared to augmented reality with the use of mobiles; as headsets are a requirement for virtual worlds. The vision is to improve this aspect and provide a more seamless way to connect to virtual worlds.

In reality, the metaverse has only begun its journey with components gradually built. For instance, horizon workrooms let people collaborate in digital spaces with spatial audio to communicate with others. Despite any negative feelings about the current solutions, these are a crucial stepping stone for building virtual worlds as they offer learning experiences that permit users to have more useful and immersive experiences.

It is not about wearing devices to experience the metaverse. Currently, there are three alternatives on the market for Meta to let people explore the metaverse. One is a portal which is a video calling device allowing communication with augmented reality capabilities built into the portal. The second alternative is Virtual Reality (VR), where headsets can be used to induct users into new worlds. This experience is currently hardware reliant as no PCs are involved. The third one is Augmented Reality for mobiles, with the example of Spark AR studio focusing on developing AR applications. An indicative application is to try a couch for your apartment via an application.

The metaverse will unlock economic opportunities, and blockchain has a role in the architecture. Despite being in the infancy stage of the metaverse, blockchain can relate to entitlements for a range of activities like access to entertainment and allow enterprises to build decentralised and transparent solutions for digital proof of ownership, collectibles, and interoperability. Meta intends to have an open metaverse where transactions are secure and completed on-demand. Blockchain facilitates the previous features along with building trust between stakeholders. Non-fungible tokens (NFTs) and their marketplaces can facilitate market interactions. Currently, games promote NFTs for collectibles allowing players to exchange in-game items. Meta has introduced NFTs in Instagram with a selection of users involving digital wallets, automated creators tagging, and privacy settings. The public and open blockchain of Ethereum is used as a fundamental block of the solution. The support will expand to other blockchains, namely Polygon, Flow, and Solana, and digital wallets like Metamask and Coinbase are considered by the architectural conception. This is a stepping stone and learning experience as the journey to a full metaverse has begun.

PANEL DISCUSSION: GOVERNANCE OF DECENTRALIZED FINANCE
Moderated by: Hussein Hashish, Founder of the Blockchain Hub Egypt

- **Alexander Whalen,** Meta
- **Florian Wimmer,** Cofounder and CEO, Blockpit
- **Dr. Merav Ozair,** Rudgers Business School
- **Jim Mason,** Blockchain Practice leader, Paramount Software, EuBOF expert

Objectives of the session:

- Discuss their views on the metaverse and its future.
- Discuss the possibilities of the economic models in the Web3 and metaverse era.
- Clear the role of blockchain and other technologies in the metaverse.
- Converse on the ethical issues for Web3 and metaverse.

Main outtakes from the session:

- The first one to kick start the discussion was **Dr. Merav Ozair** who presented her thoughts on the metaverse. It relates to the points in the presentations; metaverse will not be able to scale without auction technology. There are different subjects, namely interoperability, the connection between the physical and virtual world, payments, DeFi, digital identities, and tokenisation, without the technology. As the interest is enhanced, as indicated by the banks' involvement in the metaverse, it is hard to envision creating metaverse services without blockchain. Hardware is essential for experiencing metaverse, and there are developments to be done to evolve from cumbersome equipment. The case is similar to the software aspect where blockchain can deliver services. An open metaverse that is interoperable is essential to have mobility similar to physical spaces where you can go from room to room.

- The panel's moderator, **Mr Hussein Hashish**, posed a question on the education landscape as the passionate economy is proliferated in Web3.0 and metaverse and subjects like digital ownership, data control, and monetization come along. **Dr. Ozair** pointed to the fundamental value of education and the need to clear misconceptions on blockchain, metaverse. Educational material for different roles and sectors has to exist. For instance, material tailored to educating policymakers is important. Generally, education importance is highlighted by questions posed from people from all backgrounds. Such questions include the future of the technology and the personal privacy. People are hesitant to implement the technology as they fear of the big brother effect. Part of the education is to clear misunderstandings and misconceptions and collaboration between developers, industry, and regulators can explain the way that the technology itself protects the public. The discussion can move from the general subject of who builds the metaverse to more granular subjects on smart contracts and the flexibility to leave control to users' hands. Additionally, the inclusion of monitoring mechanisms to avoid bestowing control to one entity.

- It is common for a wide range of data to be captured in the metaverse with different devices. The moderator, **Mr Hussein Hashish**, turned attention to the evolution of business models from the ad-based revenue model based on user data. **Mr. Alexander Whalen** shared his thoughts by initially referring to a profound and simple concept of the difficulty in predicting the evolution of business models. Advertisements will be present on the metaverse in some shape, but Meta takes the initiative as it desires to diversify its revenue streams. Currently, the revenue streams

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rely heavily on advertising but moving forward requires to realise that privacy has to be a core component. Examples of this direction are simple steps like storing data on users' devices rather than on a server. These steps are important as more and more data are captured, and developers work on refining the devices. It was emphasised that Meta does not envision the metaverse to be another digital world to submerge, but it will use the devices as a means to deliver services. Privacy and data protection will matter and be part of the metaverse. Particularly in Europe, GDPR is legislation by its definition meant to be technology-neutral and future-proof. So, the idea when it comes to privacy and data protection applies even to the metaverse, where there was no consideration of its possibility in the past. These terms to be covered by legislation is important to start searching the application method, as most of the data are sensitive or personalised data.

- The moderator continued the fruitful conversation by pointing out that legislation operates in a centralised approach as there are subjects to the laws. But blockchain shifts to a decentralised network, with an example being DAOs. **Mr Florian Wimmer** shared his experience and opinion on the way for Europe and GDPR to tackle cross-chain platforms governed in a decentralised manner. It would be ideal to have one ready solution, but the problem lies in the implementation. Digital identities can aid in privacy and security, but methods should be devised to handle identities on-chain and cross-chain. Essentially, it comes down to developing novel procedures for handling data. GDPR may not be enough to enforce a regulated environment with the changes and developments. **Mr Wimmer** believed that the environment could regulate itself based on users and their feedback, but mishaps can be experienced to reach that point. For example, access rights on private data and the possibility of restricting it at a DAO's will acting across chains could be a solution to enforce legislation and privacy. There might be two types of DAOs, regulated and shadow, based on the regulations they abide by. Users can join regulated DAOs as trusted entities, but the users need to be educated on the involved risks that come with the shadow DAOs. It would be challenging for a single government or the EU to regulate this since the regulation's subject will be reformed from an individual or legal entity on a technological level. Additionally, one of the key factors in moving forward in Metaverse's data protection is to introduce digital identities into a global standard ideally.

- The next subject was the formulation of a permissionless and borderless economy away from the traditional financial world based on blockchain. Mr **Jim Mason** pointed out the industrial frameworks like Tradelens and IBM Food as the blockchain has over a decade of its conception. These frameworks are well-defined and operational communities working in the real world and solely offering a theoretical layer. Additionally, these communities have deployed frameworks on blockchain for executing smart contracts legally binding for the partners. The two aforementioned examples are in the shipping and food supply chain, respectively. From the speaker's experience in the financial sector, some people prefer simple things analogue to a box of crayons with three colours. But the reality is more complex, and that is the case with the metaverse. The discussion in the financial sector focuses on the debate on classic finance and DeFi, while current designs for settlement systems consider existing systems and blend with all the existing DeFi concepts. There are times that technology is looked at as a horse race where bets are placed on the approach that will prevail for the right platform being Avalanche or Hyperledger Fabric and Indy. But, there is hardly a clear winner in anything while looking at history. It is similar to the example of different countries and languages. Platforms like Tradelens and Food Trust and the future ones in finance have to assume that the operation is across different entities with a separate set of rules. The variety of rules adds a fair amount of complexity. So, the debate is not about traditional finance and DeFi but about rethinking finance. The critical aspect is to define what is working on and leverage the integrated technologies. Revising the previous presentations, persistent objects have been around for years, and the largest questions are around governance. There are human proxies that can exist in system deployment. Additionally, the question is on the responsibilities and liabilities allocated to the

proxies operating on your behalf in the digital world. Essentially, companies like Meta and governments may need to take responsibility for their proxies and take action. The world is complex and far from simple, so finance may need to be reinvented rather than decentralised.

- The moderator commented on the changing environment with the evolution of AI and other technologies; issues will exist in cybersecurity. The subject in this era is the way to moderate and manage these new capabilities and possibilities for the community's benefit. Mr **Jim Mason** introduced his opinion by pointing to the public tendency to narrow the focus on technologies by definitively putting labels. For example, similar objects to smart contracts have been around for a long time. Essentially, digital proxies imitate actions that humans would have otherwise performed. The word smart does not narrow the term to DLT or exclude AI from the smart digital objects. In the metaverse, manufacturers operate AI to recognise objects and overlay spaces, and an operative example in the industry is a car and a parking lot. Labels like AI and blockchain are unnecessary, but the term smart proxies may fit them better. The responsibility delegation is done to the smart objects connected to the physical world. In the speaker's opinion, practical examples like Tradelens platform can seek economic solutions to apply in order to move forward. Governance is a huge and important area with light treatment, but there is the idea of proof of governance as a service. In detail, proof of governance takes activities and considers them independently to govern them.

- The moderator pointed to the use of blockchain as an infrastructure for creating an ownership layer for the metaverse, especially with NFTs. Moreover, Meta focuses on the social aspect and the avoidance of the dystopian scenario, but the company's vision can include more things for the future. Mr **Alexander Whalen** shared his hypothesis for Meta's future vision for the metaverse. As the opportunities are endless, services should expand from individual customers and users to incorporate enterprise customers. In Meta's Global Affairs President's post[2] on the metaverse, Mr Nick Clegg described the way the company thinks about the technology. The metaverse is parallel to a house where the foundation is the devices, protocols, and standards. The ground floor is the intermediary later where platforms, institutions, and other networks are to create the world of the metaverse. The first floor is the experience where individuals will be engaging via a variety of VR and AR applications that we can not think about today. The applications will support the creators by offering the ability to design a multitude of unique spaces. The future is uncertain, making the answer to the question difficult, but a broader vision of the technology expands from existing models. The idea is to have an open space so people can build objects on top of the infrastructure and not create a walled garden defeating the purpose of an equitable environment. A key question arises for inclusion for users as the equipment is quite pricey today.

- The moderator referred to the ethical issues and values maintenance in the new era of the digital world and the matter of who is responsible for making ethical judgements. Mr **Florian Wimmer** stated that it is a thin line, especially if a single entity decides on what is ethical. It has to somehow self-govern in terms of reputation, and a shortcut could be disposable identities. Identities should be connected to services like a seller on Amazon should carry his reputation. The reputation can act as a score for differentiating entities between trusted and misbehaviour ones. The market can set ethical limits once a reputation system is established. A governance system directing all the doubts, blockchains, jurisdictions, and cultures can be hard, so there might be different metaverses based on ethical standards. Despite the difficulties, the speaker was optimistic about the regulation of metaverse via the market and community feedback.

- **Dr Ozair** reinforced Mr Mason's points on smart proxies since it can be the way to approach them. Blockchain and AI may be different technologies, and the definition is complex. The

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metaverse requires synergies not just between the aforementioned technologies but with other emerging ones to deliver a service. On the ethical subject, there is an added complexity from individual, cultural, governmental, and other biases. In other words, it is hard to define what ethics on a global scale is clearly. One solution may be to have a different approach in each metaverse and let the users decide on joining a metaverse. Even in today's world, people may abide by different rules depending on the places they are. The metaverse should strive to establish mobility similar to the real world. DAOs can have a role in the metaverse for deciding on the approaches. There is no obligation to reinvent the wheel for the virtual world, as there are structures from the real world applicable to the digital world.

Appendix

Official agenda

Agenda:

15:00–15:05	5 mins	INATBA/EUBOF	Introduction and welcome
15:05–15:20	15 mins	Antonis Polemitis (University of Nicosia)	Keynote presentation on Metaverse
15:20–15:35	15 mins	Ingrid Vasiliu-Feltes (Softhread)	Presentation on Web3
15:35–15:50	10–15 mins	Alexander Whalen (Meta)	Presentation on Metaverse
15:50–16:28	38 mins	Moderator: Hussein Hashish (EIS Group, AthensDAO) Panellists: 1. Alexander Whalen (Meta) 2. Florian Wimmer (Blockpit) 3. Merav Ozair (Rudgers Business School)	Panel discussion
16:28–16:30	2 mins	INATBA/EUBOF	Conclusion

Speakers Biographies

Mr Antonis Polemitis, CEO IFF, University of Nicosia

Mr. Polemitis currently serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the University of Nicosia and EDEX, as a Board member of EDEX and UNICAF, and as a member of the Council of the University of Nicosia. The University of Nicosia (UNIC) serves over 14,000 students, along with over 18,000 additional students in its affiliated academic institutions. UNIC is the largest university in Cyprus and is the largest English language university in southern Europe.

Mr. Polemitis helped found the world-leading Digital Currency / Blockchain Initiative at the University of Nicosia, co-taught the first university cryptocurrency course in the world, and is regularly quoted as an expert on cryptocurrency issues. He was a member of the national committee that designed the blockchain strategy for Cyprus.

Mr. Polemitis is the managing partner of Ledra Capital where he led early-stage investments in, or software development of, Software-as-a-Service platforms in the areas of higher education, cryptocurrency, online video publishing and legal research. Mr. Polemitis was previously a principal at ACG Capital, a privately held multi-billion dollar investment firm and a partner based in New York and London in the private equity practice of Mercer Management Consulting (now Oliver Wyman), one of the world's leading strategy consultancies.

Dr. Ingrid Vasiliu Feltes

Ingrid is a healthcare executive, futurist and globalist who is highly dedicated to digital and ethics advocacy, serving as an advisor to the EU blockchain observatory forum. She is a Forbes Business Council member, digital strategist, passionate educator and entrepreneurship ecosystem builder, known as an expert speaker, board advisor and consultant. Throughout her career she has received several awards for excellence in research, teaching or leadership.

She holds several certifications, such as Bioethics from Harvard, Artificial Intelligence and Business Strategy from MIT Sloan, Blockchain Technology and Business Innovation from MIT Sloan, Finance from Harvard Business School, Negotiation from Harvard Law School, Innovation and Entrepreneurship from Stanford Graduate School of Business, Certified Professional in Healthcare Risk Management, Fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives, Patient Safety Officer by the International Board Federation of Safety Managers, Master Black Belt in Lean and Six Sigma Management, Professional in Healthcare Quality by the National Association of Healthcare Quality, Manager for Quality and Organizational Excellence, by the American Society for Quality, and Certified Risk Management Professional by the American Society for Healthcare Risk Management.

Dr. Vasiliu-Feltes is CEO of Softhread Inc., the Founder and CEO of The Science, Entrepreneurship and Investments Institute, Founder & CEO of Revexpo Consulting and currently serving as a Country Director for WBAF USA, Senator of WBAF, Faculty Member of the WBAF Business School- Division of Entrepreneurship, and teaching the Executive MBA Business Technology Course at the UM Business School. She is also acting as the Chief Innovation Officer for Government Blockchain Association. Additionally, she serves as an Advisor to the EU Blockchain Observatory Forum, Partners in Digital Health Board Member and previously held the role of Chief Ethics Officer for the Government Blockchain Association.

Most recently she served as President of Detect Genomix, Chief Quality and Safety Officer Chief and Innovation Officer for Mednax, Chief Quality and Safety Officer and Chief of Compliance for the University of Miami UHealth System.

Additionally, Dr. Vasiliu-Feltes is an Honorary Advisory Board Member of several companies, entrepreneurship incubators or accelerators, as well as an Editorial Board Member for several international publications, an author, keynote speaker and TV/Media partner.

Merav Ozair, PhD

Dr. Merav Ozair is a data scientist, a quant strategist and a Crypto/Blockchain expert. She has in-depth knowledge and experience in global financial markets and its market microstructure. Currently, Dr. Ozair applies her unique expertise to researching and investigating Distributed Ledger Technology (DLT) and Blockchain ecosystem, digital assets, crypto markets and specifically, Decentralized Finance (DeFi) space. She has been developing innovative methodologies to evaluate digital assets and crypto markets, including cryptocurrency indexes, valuation metrics, ratings and tokenized products; and of particular focus – researching/developing various DLT and DeFi solutions, including Decentralized Identity, and Decentralized Trust Privacy and Security.

Dr. Ozair is a FinTech Faculty member at Rutgers Business School (RBS). At RBS she has developed and teaches courses on blockchain and digital assets for both undergrads and graduate level; and is the Research Director of RBS Blockchain Hub. She serves as an Advisor and Researcher at the Rutgers Blockchain and FinTech Collaboratory; and is an Affiliated professor at Rutgers Law School, focusing on DeFi. She has been frequently interviewed by world-wide media, such as BBC, ABC, yahoo!, RIA Intel, etc. Dr. Ozair is the Editor-in-Chief of the World Scientific Series in FinTech at World Scientific Publishing, and is writing a series of books on Blockchain, Digital Assets and DeFi.

She is a member of Academic Advisory Body at INATBA (International Association for Trusted Blockchain Applications) and serves on the Advisory Board of EQM Indexes – Blockchain Index Committee; she holds a PhD from Stern Business School at NYU.

Alexander Whalen (a-lig-ZAN-der WAY-lin) - Public Policy Manager, EU Affairs

Alexander holds the position of public policy manager within the Facebook EU Affairs team. He is responsible for all topics related to data protection, privacy, cybersecurity, and law enforcement access to data. He is based in Brussels.

Prior to joining Facebook, Alexander was a Policy Director at BSA | The Software Alliance's Brussels office where he advised member companies on issues related to privacy, security, and cybercrime. Previously, Alexander also held the position of Senior Policy Manager at DIGITALEUROPE where he worked on similar topics. He holds a Master's degree in EU Affairs from Lund University (Lund, Sweden) and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science & Economics from Bates College (Maine, USA).

Florian Wimmer

Florian is one of the founders and CEO of Blockpit, which provides automated tax compliance solutions for crypto assets. Before founding, he made his diploma in software engineering and worked at KPMG for four years.

Being active in the crypto space since 2015, he continues to do so with a strong focus on DeFi and NFTs.

Hushein Hashish

Hushein started his career in a more traditional manner. He attended the American University in Cairo and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Accounting
in 2008. Shortly after, joined the family shipping and logistics business, where he is now Director of Sales and a Member of the Board.
In 2013, he stumbled across Bitcoin and started reading more on Blockchain technology which led to enrolling in the Master of Science for Blockchain and Digital Currencies of the University of Nicosia, where he graduated Magna Cum Laude in 2020.

In March 2021 he founded the Blockchain Hub Egypt, an online school that offers free blockchain education, and partnered with Pan-Africa Technology Foundation to spread the knowledge of cryptocurrency and blockchain across the African Continent.

In April he joined AthensDAOs investment subcommittee as an analyst, and currently leads their Metaverse and gaming guild subcommittee.

Recently, he launched his new brand called Metaversive where he consults brands on how to utilize open user generated content platforms to raise brand awareness and explore new revenue

Jim Mason – Paramount Software Solutions, Inc Blockchain Practice Leader | Sybal.io | Member of Expert Panel at EU Blockchain Observatory & Forum

Experienced leader enjoys building teams and helping businesses deliver new data solutions, services, products and applications using new technologies improving internal operations and partner networks in manufacturing, financial services, banking, healthcare, supply chain and transportation.