Press Release FOM & TrustCerts

impossible to falsify

FOM University for Economy & Management and TrustCerts establish a blockchain-based trust service to secure certificates

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From now on, every newly issued FOM certificate can be checked for authenticity in digital form.

Falsifying university certificates is easier than ever in the digital age. Experts assume that one in ten university certificates in Germany today has already been manipulated or even completely forged. In other European countries this proportion is estimated to be even higher. And the consequences of forged certificates can be serious. For example, employees are hired on the basis of forged documents and certificates, which can lead to serious consequences in many professional fields and professions - not only in medicine.

Forged or manipulated university certificates, however, also represent a loss of trust for the respective university. No university wants its name to be associated with forged certificates in the minds of HR departments or managers.

Based on this motivation and in order to do keep up with the progressive technical development, the FOM University, with 55,000 students the largest private university in Germany, and the young cyber security company TrustCerts from Gelsenkirchen have developed a solution for the protection of certificates against forgery. With their innovative approach, universities can protect their certificates against forgery in an uncomplicated and cost-effective manner. The relevant stakeholders, such as human resources departments and management, can check the authenticity of a certificate in a few seconds without barriers.

This is made possible by the blockchain, which acts as tamper-proof memory. The digital checksum of the certificate and the signature of the FOM are stored in it and stored on several servers throughout Germany. The graduate decides in complete sovereignty about the passing on of his or her certificate and thus who is allowed to view his or her data. A recipient of the digital certificate can have the proof checked via an online portal by drag-and-drop, whereby the document remains on the end-device of the examiner and no personal data is sent via the Internet. This procedure can be used to determine unambiguously and unalterably whether the certificate is an original, who issued it, at what time it was created, and whether it is still valid. Even for the provider of the technology itself, the TrustCerts GmbH, it is impossible to sign data on behalf of FOM, since all processes are logged via the blockchain. The manipulation protection works independently of the file format for all digital originals and can therefore also be used to secure other documents in the university context, such as semester certificates.

Markus Felten, Vice Chancellor of FOM University, is enthusiastic about the technology: "We are already using the new technology at all of our 32 FOM university centers in Germany. Within a very short time, we were able to secure over 10,000 certificates and make them verifiable for HR managers.

For TrustCerts, the implementation of the technology is a further step towards establishing the blockchain technology independently of Bitcoin, said Mirko Mollik, founder of TrustCerts: "We are pleased that we have been able to prove that the blockchain technology has exciting applications far beyond the Bitcoin hype. We are proud to have won FOM as a partner for the project. TrustCerts' technology can not only make the university landscape in Germany a little bit more secure, it is also another important step in actively and securely shaping the digital change that is taking place".

Prof. Dr. Andreas Pinkwart, Minister for Economic Affairs, Innovation, Digitalization and Energy in NRW, has already been able to convince himself of the functions of the TrustCerts solution and its advantages: "With the idea of a digital notary, the start-up company shows in an exemplary manner the potential of the young founders in Gelsenkirchen. Even if their projects are still in the starting blocks, we want to give them the necessary support and encourage them to keep at it".

Further information about the project and TrustCerts can be found at https://www.fom.de/verifizierung.html and https://www.trustcerts.de

With 55,000 students, FOM is the largest private university in Germany. It offers professionals and trainees in 32 cities in Germany and in Vienna the opportunity to complete practice-oriented Bachelor's and Master's degree programs in the fields of economics, health & social sciences, IT management and engineering. The degrees are state and internationally recognized. FOM was initiated by the non-profit foundation BildungsCentrum der Wirtschaft based in Essen. The university has been accredited by the German Science Council and was the first private university in Germany to be awarded the seal of approval for system accreditation by FIBAA at the beginning of 2012. Further information: www.fom.de.

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