

Pressemitteilung

For business editors
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Commerzbank and Fraunhofer IML begin joint research project on digitisation of trade finance

- **Research cooperation on “Financial Supply Chain Management 2025“**
- **Focus on development of new digital supported business models**
- **Based on Distributed Ledger- and Blockchain-technologies**

International trade finance and the underlying commercial and financial transactions are becoming more and more a focus of digitisation initiatives by corporates, banks and research institutions.

Increasing global competition, changing customers demand and shorter product lifecycles have put pressure on optimised and more efficient international supply chains. With digitalisation gaining pace, multiple opportunities for process optimisations from enhanced data management and near real-time data availability, has arisen along the physical supply chains.

Commerzbank and the Fraunhofer-Institute for Material Flow and Logistics (IML) in Dortmund have agreed on a cooperation which aims to develop scenarios for future supply chains. Fraunhofer IML supports the bank with the orchestration of these new processes and provides latest insights into the future of physical supply chains as well as the future deployment of blockchain based technology in this area. Blockchain or distributed ledger technologies build a decentralised database for the so called Internet-of-Things applications (IoT) and Smart Contracts (automated processing of business cases). They constitute the basis for new trade ecosystems, new supply chain finance concepts, faster transaction processing and new solutions in working capital management.

“Our core competence in the trade finance business; cash management financing trade and risk management will continue to be of great relevance for our customers in the digital age. Teaming-up with the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics grants the best possible insight into the currently extremely heterogeneous digitisation approaches along the logistic- and material flow processes of our customers“, commented Dr. Bernd Laber, group executive Trade Finance & Cash Management Corporate Clients, Commerzbank. “We are working on several projects and in a number of consortiums also with other international banks on the digitisation of bank products and bank services, and on applications for blockchain technologies. As a corporate bank the focus on future supply chains of our customers is of paramount importance and we will develop this in co-operation with Fraunhofer Institute“, Dr. Laber explained.

“Digitisation approaches in supply chain management as for example the development of smart containers which are autonomously able to route themselves, to communicate, to interact with logistic service providers and to initiate payments will offer new business potential for banks in financing, risk management and transaction banking.” explains Prof. Dr. Michael Henke, Director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Material Flow and Logistics (IML). “I am convinced that technologies like blockchain and smart contracts will become the central enabler for the intelligent interlinking of physical and financial supply chains. With Commerzbank as innovative cooperation partner we will elaborate new, fast and secure solutions for the supply chains of the future.”

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About Commerzbank

Commerzbank is a leading international commercial bank with branches and offices in almost 50 countries. In the two business segments Private and Small Business Customers, as well as Corporate Clients, the Bank offers a comprehensive portfolio of financial services which is precisely aligned to the clients' needs. Commerzbank finances approximately 30% of Germany's foreign trade and is leading in financing for corporate clients in Germany. Due to its in-depth sector know-how in the German economy, the Bank is a leading provider of capital market products. Its subsidiaries Comdirect in Germany and mBank in Poland are two of the world's most innovative online banks. With approximately 1,000 branches, Commerzbank has one of the densest branch networks among German private banks. In total, Commerzbank serves more than 17.5 million private and small business customers, as well as more than 60,000 corporate clients, multinationals, financial service providers, and institutional clients. The Bank, which was founded in 1870, is represented at all the world's major stock exchanges. In 2016, it generated gross revenues of €9.4 billion with approximately 49,900 employees.

About Fraunhofer IML

Fraunhofer IML is said to be first address for all questions with respect to holistic logistics, the employees work on all fields of internal and external logistics. At the Institute, founded in 1981, there are at the moment 260 employees as well as 250 post-graduates and students, supported by colleagues in workshops, laboratories and service areas. Made-to-measure arranged teams create cross-industry and customer-specific solutions in the area of materials handling, warehouse management, supply chain management, simulation supported business and system planning and also traffic systems, closed loop economy, resources logistics, building logistics and e-business. Not least, the Fraunhofer IML is acting as general coordinator for the multi-institute central theme »Internet of Things« within the entire Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. If necessary, Fraunhofer IML can draw on 24,000 employees in 67 institutes of Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. Further locations beside Dortmund are Frankfurt/Main, Hamburg, Prien at lake Chiemsee, Lisbon and Beijing.