



ADRIA FINTECH JOURNAL



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Interview:

Petar Arsić

EY Serbia



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Welcome to the Fourth Edition of Adria Fintech Journal

We are excited to bring you the latest insights, interviews, and developments in the world of financial technology in Southeast Europe. In this edition, we continue to explore transformative innovations and discuss critical trends that are reshaping the financial landscape of our region.

Our cover story features the Mission Fintech, commencement of this project marks a step forward in advancing financial inclusion and access to digital financial services. This collaboration marks a significant step forward in advancing financial inclusion and access to digital financial services. We also sit down with **Petar Arsić**, Partner at EY, who shares his expert views on the ever-evolving fintech industry and how organizations can adapt to a rapidly changing environment.

Highlighting our commitment to recognizing excellence, we present the **Adria Fintech Journal Innovation Recognition Program**, where we celebrate NF Innova's achievements in delivering outstanding digital solutions. Additionally, we provide a comprehensive overview of the **Data Science Conference** to be held in Belgrade, alongside a detailed report from the 2024 **Infintech conference**.

Further, this issue includes a preview of the upcoming **ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day** and **ESecurity 2024** conference report, both crucial events for staying up-to-date on cybersecurity and digital governance. We also announce the highly anticipated **Technobank 2025** conference, set to bring together key players in banking technology next year.

Lastly, we explore the role of fintech in enhancing financial inclusion. This article examines the latest strategies and innovations aimed at reaching unbanked populations and fostering economic empowerment across the region.

We are eager to hear your feedback and appreciate your continued engagement with Adria Fintech Journal. Your support drives our mission to deliver top-quality fintech content to leaders and innovators in Southeast Europe.

Enjoy reading!

Sincerely,

The Editorial Board of Adria Fintech Journal

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Mission Fintech: A Step Forward in Financial Inclusion and Sustainable Development

As of September 2024, Mission Fintech (ANOA DOO) began to enhance financial inclusion and accelerate the outreach of sustainable financial services in Serbia. This marks a significant step in the commitment to bridging the financial inclusion gap, particularly for underserved populations. Aligned with the goals of the Sustainable Development Agenda, the project aims to strengthen local economies by supporting financial literacy and making essential banking services more accessible to all.

“Mission Fintech has strived to innovate and be a customer-centered organization,” says Dr. Miodrag Džodžo. “Our goal is to leverage digitalization to ensure financial products are accessible to everyone, aligning with standards for sustainable impact.”

This initiative underscores the importance of addressing financial literacy and access challenges within Serbia, with a focus on underserved communities. By leveraging digital

tools and innovative strategies, Mission Fintech is setting a new standard for inclusive financial services.

Key Figures Driving Mission Fintech

The success of Mission Fintech is guided by a dedicated team at ANOA DOO, working tirelessly to address community needs and uphold ethical standards. Under the leadership of Dr. Miodrag Džodžo, Mirko Džodžo and



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Marija Dželajlija Džodžo, Mission Fintech has established a collaborative and impactful approach to financial inclusion. Their expertise ensures the development of solutions that align with the principles of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) standards while addressing the unique challenges faced by underserved populations.

Scope of the Mission Fintech Model

Mission Fintech is currently working on the proof of concept for its model in Serbia. The project’s focus includes:

- Promoting financial literacy programs to empower individuals with knowledge about managing their personal finances.
- Generating leads for financial products and services to underserved communities, ensuring accessibility and transparency.
- Developing sustainable solutions that align with ESG principles and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Through targeted outreach and education, Mission Fintech aims to simplify the process of accessing financial

products, helping clients navigate the complexities of personal finance and build a more secure financial future. not only accessible but also contribute to the well-being of communities and the environment.

Commitment to SDG Principles

Mission Fintech’s efforts are rooted in a strong commitment to ESG principles and the broader Sustainable Development Agenda. The project emphasizes:

- Financial literacy as a cornerstone for empowerment and sustainable growth.
- Solutions designed to address economic inequalities and promote economic resilience.
- Sustainable and inclusive financial services that support green initiatives and energy efficiency.

By focusing on these principles, Mission Fintech aims to create lasting impact, ensuring that financial services are

Future Vision and Regional Expansion

While the current focus is on Serbia, Mission Fintech has aspirations to expand its model across Southeast Europe. The long-term vision is to create a regional network of financial literacy and inclusion initiatives, bringing transformative solutions to underserved populations throughout the region.

As Dr. Džodžo explains, “Our ambition is to extend financial literacy and inclusion to communities in Southeast Europe. With robust support, we are well-positioned to make a real impact, enabling communities to achieve more financial security and independence.”



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MISSION FINTECH



Conclusion

Mission Fintech represents more than a project—it is a movement toward building a more inclusive and sustainable financial future. By aligning its efforts with the Sustainable Development Goals, Mission Fintech is setting a new example for how financial initiatives can drive meaningful change. The work being done in Serbia serves as a proof of concept, inviting other financial institutions and stakeholders across the region to collaborate on similar initiatives.

Through its innovative approach, Mission Fintech is demonstrating that financial inclusion and sustainable development are not just ideals but achievable goals that can transform lives and communities.



Interview: Petar Arsić

With over 14 years in the financial industry and risk management, can you share the pivotal moments that shaped your career and led you to your current role as Partner at EY Serbia?

My journey began at the National Bank of Serbia (NBS), where I gained fundamental insights into the financial sector and developed a strong foundation in risk management. This early exposure was crucial in building my understanding of the industry. A significant chapter followed at Alpha Bank, where I gained invaluable experience in risk management and finance functions. It was during this period that I familiarized myself with key industry certifications, which played a crucial role in advancing my expertise and professional standing. I then moved to OTP Bank, where I took on a senior position with considerable autonomy. This role was instrumental in developing my leadership skills and ability to make independent, impactful decisions. Driven by an entrepreneurial spirit, I founded Sharpe Education, a venture that allowed me to explore my passion for education and innovation. This experience sharpened my ability to take calculated risks and think strategically, skills that have been essential throughout my career. Recognizing the right moment to embrace new challenges, I made the transition to the Big Four, starting with KPMG and later moving to EY. Each move involved accepting the risks associated with such significant changes, but these decisions have proven to be highly rewarding.

Throughout my career, I've dedicated myself to continuous learning and have made significant personal sacrifices to succeed. The journey has been incredibly rewarding, allowing me to work in different countries, understand various systems, and collaborate with diverse groups of people. These experiences have been both professionally enriching and personally fulfilling, leading me to where I am today.

Your expertise in risk consulting has allowed you to tackle critical economic issues and develop bespoke risk mitigation strategies. What has been the most challenging project you've worked on, and how did you overcome those challenges?

Having spent over a decade in risk consulting, it's incredibly difficult to single out just one project as the most challenging. In fact, due to the nature of our work, many of the most interesting cases are shrouded in confidentiality—so I'd have to tell you, but then I'd have to delete the story! But what I can do is share some of the elements that make consulting both a demanding and fulfilling profession.

One of the most critical aspects of consulting is team management. This is something every industry grapples with, but it's particularly vital in consulting, where people are our most valuable asset. The inherent nature of consulting brings its own share of stress—stemming from the pressures our clients face, such as tight deadlines, staffing shortages, regulatory findings, and the overarching business challenges in an already challenging environment. This stress is part of the job and must be met with a smile and unwavering commitment to our clients. However, the real challenge often lies in manag-

ing internal dynamics, which can also be a significant source of stress. This is something within our control, and it's crucial to address these issues to maintain a positive atmosphere and ensure that our team can balance work and personal life effectively. A strong team culture is the foundation of delivering excellent consulting services.

Another element that makes consulting so demanding, yet rewarding, is the constant need to adapt, learn, and grow. The complexity of our work—and the very reason clients turn to consultants—stems from the fact that we tackle challenges they've never encountered before. We often work under tight deadlines, with directives from regulators or auditors, or under significant business pressures in a demanding environment. Whether we're solving regulatory or methodological problems, dealing with quantitative challenges, or developing technical solutions, rarely do we get the luxury of repetition. Each situation is unique, requiring us to think on our feet and come up with innovative solutions. These elements—the preservation of team morale and the constant need for learning and adaptation—are what make consulting not just a profession, but a journey of continuous growth and fulfillment.

Winning the CESA Innovation Lab Competition 2022 with the STK tool is a significant achievement. Can you tell us more about this tool and its impact on the industry?

Winning the CESA Innovation Lab Competition 2022 with the STK tool was a significant milestone for us, and it reflects our commitment to pioneering the next generation of risk management tools. STK (and other tools like EY Minerva, EY Neptune, EY Vesta...) embodies our vision of achieving modern, integrated, and transparent risk management and reporting, which is what truly resonated with both the jury and the audience, leading to the recognition we received. STK is designed as a comprehensive tool with separate modules that cover a range of risk categories, including credit risk, concentration risk with ESG elements, liquidity risk, interest rate risk, operational risk, FX risk, and strategic risk. However, what sets STK apart is its ability to offer an integrated view of the risks a client is exposed to, along with the capability to analyze various scenarios. This holistic perspective is crucial in today's fast-paced financial environment, where organizations need to make informed decisions quickly and efficiently.

Risk management tools typically involve two critical components: the methodological-regulatory component and the IT component. Ten years ago, the problems these tools needed to solve were much simpler. For instance, Basel 1 was a relatively concise regulation, easily digestible over a cup of coffee, which is not the case with the current complex regulations like CRR3/CRD6 or BRRD2. Additionally, the complexity has increased as clients now deal with much larger volumes of data that need to be processed and utilized in significantly shorter timeframes. The pace of change has accelerated, and the need for timely information has become more pressing. What was once a quarterly task is now done monthly, what was once done daily is now intraday. On the other hand, IT technologies have advanced significantly, making the devel-

opment of such tools much more manageable than it was a decade ago. This progress is due to several factors, including the advancement of programming tools, the development of new programming languages, open-source code and libraries, better documentation and online resources, automation and DevOps practices, as well as AI and automated coding tools. These innovations have allowed us to create STK with a level of sophistication and efficiency that would have been unimaginable just a few years ago.

In essence, STK represents a forward-thinking approach to risk management, blending advanced methodological frameworks with cutting-edge technology to provide our clients with a tool that is not only robust and comprehensive but also agile and adaptable to the rapidly changing regulatory and economic landscape.”

You’ve been involved in advising the Central Bank of Montenegro. What insights or lessons from this experience have you found most valuable?

Advising the Central Bank of Montenegro (CBCG) was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience. It was a large-scale project that involved our team as consultants to CBCG, alongside other auditing firms, a significant number of appraisers, and all the banks under review. Essentially, we followed the guidelines applied by the European Central Bank (ECB) with some local adaptations, and the project, including preparation, spanned almost two years.

One of the most challenging aspects of the project was the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged right at the start of the engagement. We had to ensure that such a complex project could be carried out largely remotely. While there was some travel involved initially, it quickly became impossible, requiring us to adapt to a fully remote working environment. Additionally, we faced the challenge of the merger between CKB Bank and Podgoricka Bank, which was of significant material importance given the size of the banks involved. Since we had to assess the situation as of a specific reference date, it was extremely demanding to gather all the necessary information from both banks while the merger was in progress. Moreover, all of this occurred within a sensitive political context, particularly considering the ownership structure of one of the banks. Nevertheless, the project was completed successfully, as confirmed by relevant international institutions, which strengthened the credibility of the regulatory authorities in Montenegro.

If I were to highlight one key lesson from this experience, it would be the lasting impact of the pandemic on remote work. The way we view working from home or other locations has fundamentally changed before and after COVID-19, and we must accept this shift. There’s ongoing debate about what is optimal. On one side, you have figures like Elon Musk, who even questions the morality of remote work when certain professions must still show up in person. We’ve certainly had the opportunity to observe the negative effects of full remote work—both on organizations and individuals—and how it influences their well-being. The challenge now is to find a

golden mean, but using remote work will help balance the professional and personal challenges we all face in life.

Balancing a demanding career with personal interests such as hiking, playing the piano, and traveling must be challenging. How do you manage to maintain this balance, and how has it influenced your professional life?

I’d be lying if I said it’s easy or that I always manage it perfectly. Over time, I’ve learned that balance in life means more than just juggling work and personal life; it also involves friends, family, and, importantly, taking care of myself. I like to think of balance not as a two-legged stool (work and life) but as a three-legged one that includes these additional elements. I try to integrate my hobbies with family and friends, and even with colleagues, which helps me make time for everything that matters. For example, I often go hiking with my family and friends, or play the piano at gatherings, which allows me to combine relaxation with social connection. Fortunately, I also have an electric piano, so I can play late at night without disturbing anyone when the urge strikes.

One story that I believe perfectly captures the situation we all face daily comes from the book *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*. In it, the protagonist mentions not having time to stop and refuel because he needs to keep driving. The truth is, at some point, we all have to stop and refuel. The sooner we realize this, the better off we’ll be. This approach to balance has had a profound impact on my professional life. It has taught me the importance of self-care and how essential it is to recharge. It’s easy to get caught up in the demands of work, but by making time for personal interests, I’ve found that I return to work with more energy, creativity, and focus. In the end, this balance is not just about maintaining well-being, but also about sustaining long-term success in my career.

As an ambassador of GARP and an active member of the Serbian Association of Managers (SAM), how do you see the role of professional networks in advancing the financial industry in Southeast Europe?

As an ambassador of Global Association of Risk Professionals (GARP) and a member of the Serbian Association of Managers (SAM), I’ve seen firsthand the critical role professional networks play in advancing the financial industry in Southeast Europe. During a visit to our London office, I realized how vital collaboration is for tackling global challenges like sustainable development and AI—efforts that often require resources beyond what individual companies or even countries can provide.

These networks promote the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and information, which is essential for regional progress. Many organizations, like GARP and SAM, also focus on education, which I believe is crucial for long-term success. As the saying goes, „If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people. “ Finally, in a time of significant

Photo | EY



migration, professional networks help preserve values and assist individuals in adapting to changes, ensuring that our region remains competitive and resilient.

EY Serbia has been instrumental in providing strategic consulting services across various regions. Can you highlight some of the key projects or initiatives that have significantly impacted the financial services sector in Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Montenegro?

EY Serbia has played a pivotal role in advancing the financial services sector across Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Montenegro through several strategic projects and initiatives. Our efforts can be grouped into several key areas:

Regulatory Compliance: The financial services industry is governed by complex and continuously evolving regulations.

Our work focuses on helping clients navigate these challenges, ensuring that they not only meet regulatory requirements but also enhance their operational stability and security. For instance, we recently conducted a study in collaboration with the EBRD on MREL (Minimum Requirement for Own Funds and Eligible Liabilities), covering three Western Balkan countries. This study aimed to provide regulators with deeper insights into current practices and facilitate alignment with BRRD2, while also helping investors like the EBRD understand the environment and support banks through investments in MREL instruments.

Growth, Efficiency, and Innovation: We support banks, fintech companies and other financial institutions in expanding into new markets, finding partners, and identifying growth opportunities. Our strategic guidance helps clients optimize their operations and implement cutting-edge technologies. We recently formed a specialized team dedicated to mar-



ket analysis, macroeconomic forecasting, and in-depth sectoral studies to better assist our clients in navigating these challenges. Through benchmarking and best practice application, we help clients enhance their competitiveness, whether by developing new products, improving customer experience, or introducing innovations that set them apart from their competitors.

Sustainability and Environmental Stewardship: I personally see this as one of the most pressing global issues, often underestimated. Unfortunately, financial capital still overshadows natural capital, but we must not take the natural services—like clean water and air—that nature provides for granted. EY is actively helping both corporate clients and financial institutions integrate ESG principles, manage climate and natural risks, and report on their sustainability efforts. This work is crucial in driving the necessary shift towards a more sustainable business model.

Stability: Recent global events have highlighted the fragility of the financial system. The conflicts in Ukraine and Gaza, political uncertainty in major countries, economic tensions among leading nations, and the battle over energy resources

and critical minerals have all created a volatile environment. The financial sector has been reminded of this volatility with the 2023 banking crisis, involving institutions like Silicon Valley Bank, Signature Bank, Credit Suisse, and First Republic Bank. Additionally, the closure of Sberbank's operations in the EU and the Balkans in 2022, as a consequence of the situation in Russia, underscored the need for robust risk management. In response, financial institutions have accelerated the implementation of BRRD2, including Bail-in playbooks, Transfer Playbooks, and dry-run exercises. Our work in this area contributes to the overall stability of the financial system.

The financial sector is rapidly evolving with the integration of AI, innovation, and sustainability practices. How is EY Serbia positioning itself to stay ahead of these trends and meet the future needs of its clients?

At EY Serbia, we're committed to being a transformational partner for our clients in a world where change is the only

constant. As industries evolve rapidly, clients demand swift and effective solutions, and we strive to deliver by leveraging our multidisciplinary expertise. Globally and locally, EY has heavily invested in technology; our local technology consulting team alone has grown to over 100 professionals, who collaborate across our firm to drive innovation and AI initiatives.

Recognizing the vast potential of AI, we're implementing it to enhance efficiency, automate tasks, harness data's full potential, and improve decision-making. EY has invested over \$1.4 billion in our EY.ai platform, which we continually refine for safe and structured AI deployment. However, we understand that AI isn't just a technological challenge—it requires a holistic approach. We consider the human element, focusing on how people interact with AI and addressing the trust and risks involved. Personally, I see opportunities to further develop in this area, particularly through certifications like GARP's RAI, which ties AI to risk management.

On the sustainability front, while awareness is growing, the urgency often resembles the scenario depicted in "Don't Look Up" rather than a call to action. Efforts are still centered on reporting and assessing the current situation, with regulations in place but often lacking stringent enforcement. As climate change becomes more evident—through extreme weather, rising temperatures, and impacts on agriculture—it's clear that sustainability regulations will significantly impact supply chains. Given that our region may lag behind EU standards, this could have negative repercussions for businesses, potentially redirecting them to other markets. Anticipating these challenges, we're focused on helping our clients adapt to future sustainability requirements and stay competitive. Some regions and organizations are already leading the charge, whether through regulatory pressure or proactive measures, and we aim to guide our clients to follow suit.

Looking ahead, what are some of the strategic goals and upcoming projects for EY Serbia? How do you envision these will contribute to the growth and development of the financial industry in the region?

At EY Serbia, our strategic goals and upcoming projects are carefully aligned with the evolving needs of our clients and the broader financial industry landscape. Our approach is focused on four main areas that will drive growth and development in the financial sector across Serbia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, and Montenegro:

Regulatory Changes: Navigating the complex and dynamic regulatory environment is crucial for our clients. As regulations continue to evolve, we are committed to supporting our clients through these changes. From the latest regulatory updates I would like to point out the following:

- **IRRBB Compliance:** Interest Rate Risk in the Banking Book (IRRBB) is a significant regulatory focus, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, with anticipated developments in Serbia. We offer comprehensive support in this area, including regulatory

and methodological guidance, quantitative analysis, and technological solutions that align with the latest EBA guidelines. We already mentioned banks that failed due to inadequate management of interest rate risk.

- **Payments and Digitalization:** The ongoing digital transformation in payments, driven by regulations such as PSD2/3 and SEPA, is reshaping the industry. Our involvement in implementing PSD2 in Montenegro and supporting open banking initiatives in Serbia highlights our role in advancing payment systems and digitalization. We continue to develop innovative solutions to enhance risk management and financial operations. This will significantly reduce costs for general population and make domestic and international payments much easier, thus enhancing our economic activities.
- **AI Regulation:** The recent adoption of the EU AI Act in March 2024 represents a key regulatory shift. We are preparing to help our clients integrate AI technologies while ensuring compliance with new standards, thereby facilitating their adaptation to these important changes.

Data Utilization: Effective data utilization is vital for improving financial operations and decision-making. There is significant potential to refine quantitative models to be used for various purposes. We are focusing on applying advanced data analytics and machine learning to enhance these models and improve risk management. Leveraging data more effectively will drive organic growth and improve efficiency. By better understanding client needs and market trends, we can help financial institutions optimize their operations and make more informed strategic decisions.

Digitalization and Innovation: Digital transformation is central to our strategic initiatives. We are assisting our clients on modernizing legacy systems and integrating advanced technologies, to improve efficiency and customer experience. Our projects include developing new tools and technologies that facilitate digital transformation. By staying ahead of technological trends, we ensure that our clients can adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing environment.

Market Changes: Addressing market dynamics and supporting expansion efforts is crucial for growth. We assist financial institutions in expanding into new markets and establishing new payment and e-money institutions. This support is essential for driving growth and adapting to the evolving market landscape. As new players enter the financial sector, we provide guidance on regulatory compliance and market entry strategies. This helps both new and existing players navigate the competitive landscape effectively.

Interviewed by:
Dr Miodrag Džodžo
Member of the Editorial
Board of Adria Fintech Journal



Photo | www.pexels.com

NF Innova Honored in Two Categories at the Adria Fintech Journal Innovation Recognition Program

As financial technology continues to reshape the banking landscape, the importance of well-executed digital transformation and superior customer experience cannot be overstated. The Adria Fintech Journal Innovation Recognition Program, launching this year, is designed to highlight and celebrate advancements that set a new standard in the industry. This initiative aims to elevate the visibility of high-quality financial technology solutions emerging across Southeast Europe and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) regions, bringing deserving attention to trailblazers like NF Innova. On December 18, 2024, the awards ceremony in Belgrade will recognize their significant contributions.

The Vision Behind the Recognition Program

In a world where digital banking continues to evolve at a rapid pace, distinguishing exceptional work from mere participation is crucial. The Adria Fintech Journal's recognition program has been carefully curated to identify and showcase standout innovations that have a measurable impact. This is not simply about applauding concepts or ideas but about honoring solutions that have tangibly improved banking processes and customer engagement.

For NF Innova, receiving recognition in the *Best Customer Experience Solution* and *Digital Transformation*

Leadership Categories represents the culmination of years of strategic focus and meticulous execution. These accolades are a testament to the company's steadfast commitment to advancing digital banking and providing real value to financial institutions.

A Thoughtful Approach to Customer Experience

When NF Innova developed the FINTENSE Digital Banking Platform, the company was addressing a critical shift in customer expectations. Modern banking customers expect convenience, speed, and a seamless experience, and FINTENSE Digital Banking Platform is purpose-built

to deliver just that. Raiffeisen Bank Serbia's iCash on-line lending service, powered by NF Innova, exemplifies this. Before iCash, loan applications could take weeks and required multiple in-person visits. Now, customers can complete the process entirely online in less than 5 minutes, with far fewer data fields to fill out. The result is a Net Promoter Score exceeding 75, reflecting high customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Digital Transformation with Practical Impact

Recognition in the **Digital Transformation Leadership** category underscores NF Innova's ability to facilitate efficient, meaningful changes for its banking partners. One striking example is OTP Banka Srbija's super-app. This collaboration led to the launch of a comprehensive digital banking solution, integrating financial services with everyday conveniences like food delivery and social networking. Importantly, OTP Banka was able to improve operational efficiency while simultaneously reducing costs and customer churn.

The FINTENSE platform's flexibility is one of its core strengths, allowing banks to integrate digital services with legacy infrastructure seamlessly. This pragmatic approach ensures that banks can deploy new products quickly, meeting market demands without overhauling their existing systems.

NF Innova: A Partner in Progress

Established with the goal of developing new ways how banks can approach digital transformation, NF Innova operates with a clear mission. The company provides an all-encompassing digital banking platform that supports a holistic, customer-centric experience across various touchpoints. The key to NF Innova's approach is adaptability—offering solutions that can be tailored to the specific needs of banks, whether they are small regional institutions or large multinational corporations.



Photo | www.pexels.com

The FINTENSE platform is not only about technology but also about fostering a new culture of agility and responsiveness within financial institutions. NF Innova's architecture-led approach has helped banks like Raiffeisen Bank Albania and QIIB in Qatar achieve significant milestones, both operationally and in customer engagement.

Measurable Outcomes, Not Just Concepts

NF Innova's work has produced concrete results, a crucial factor in securing recognition. At Raiffeisen Bank Serbia, the iCash solution has become a strategic product, accounting for 50% of the bank's loan volume. By digitizing the lending process and reducing associated costs by up to 40%, NF Innova has proven that digital transformation can lead to significant financial and operational gains. Furthermore, during the pandemic, the digital readiness facilitated by NF Innova's solutions enabled Raiffeisen Bank to continue serving customers without interruption, a key advantage when many banks struggled with branch closures.

OTP Banka's experience further illustrates the importance of practical digital solutions. Their super-app has set a new benchmark in the region, differentiating the bank from competitors and attracting a new generation of tech-savvy customers. By integrating services such as payment processing and real-time personalized financial management, the app has positioned OTP Banka as a leader in digital innovation.

Looking Ahead: A Future of Strategic Collaboration

The relationship between banks and fintech companies is evolving from one of cautious partnership to one of essential collaboration. NF Innova's approach reflects this trend, focusing on long-term, strategic relationships rather than short-term gains. As Gregor Bierent, CEO of NF Innova, explains, *"fintech partnerships work best when banks view them as long-term relationships. Project teams*



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from the bank and fintech firm should collaborate wherever possible. These teams need to feel valued and believe that the work they are performing advances their careers." This alignment has become the foundation of successful digital transformation initiatives.

About NF Innova

NF Innova is a dedicated digital banking software company, empowering financial institutions of all sizes to lead in the digital landscape. They specialize in delivering seamless customer experiences across all digital touchpoints (Omni-Channel) and driving automation in customer-facing processes for Retail, SME, and Corporate banking.

NF Innova's comprehensive digital product stack includes solutions like Digital Account Opening (DAO), Digital Loan Origination, Personal Finance Management (PFM), and more. At the core is their FINTENSE platform, a ready-made, cloud-based digital banking platform designed for fast deployment and scalability, leveraging the latest technology trends, including artificial intelligence and advanced personalization. Through AI-driven seg-

mentation, FINTENSE offers tailored experiences for users, ensuring that each interaction feels relevant and personalized. Its advanced functionality, including Super App capabilities, enhances the platform, making it an ideal choice for banks striving to provide exceptional customer engagement.

Operating across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, NF Innova supports banks, lenders, and microfinance institutions in advancing their digital capabilities and establishing themselves as leaders in digital banking innovation. Their efforts have been recognized, with FINTENSE receiving accolades such as "The Best Consumer Lending Platform" at Finovate and being a 2024 Finovate finalist. NF Innova continues to advance digital transformation, ensuring banks can stay competitive and innovative in a rapidly evolving industry.

Written by:
Marija Dželajlija Džodžo
Chief Editor at Adria Fintech Journal

Conclusion

The Adria Fintech Journal Innovation Recognition Program serves as a reminder of the ongoing transformation in financial services. By highlighting the achievements of companies like NF Innova, the program encourages further innovation and collaboration. As December 18 approaches, banking leaders will have the chance to reflect on these advancements and consider how similar strategies might benefit their own organizations. NF Innova's journey offers a compelling blueprint for a future where digital and traditional banking coexist, driven by a shared commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction.



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Mar **Money Motion**
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Zagreb

Apr **Technobank**
www.technobank.rs

Belgrade

Apr **Istanbul Fintech Week**
www.istanbulfintechweek.com

Istanbul

May **Finticipate**
www.finticipate.com

Belgrade

EVENTS CALENDAR

Sep **Fintech Week**
www.fintechweek.ro

Bucharest

Oct **eSecurity conference**
www.esecurity.rs

Belgrade

Oct **Infintech**
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Tivat

Nov **DATA SCIENCE CONFERENCE**
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November 18th - 22nd, 2024 | Metropol Palace Hotel, Belgrade

DSC Europe 24: Top AI & Data Leaders Gather in Belgrade – Don't Miss Out!

Welcome to the 10th edition of DSC Europe, Europe's leading AI and Data conference. This year's event promises to deliver an unmatched experience, bringing together cutting-edge innovations, business transformation strategies, and the brightest minds in data science and artificial intelligence. As AI continues to revolutionize industries and societies globally, DSC Europe 2024 is the ultimate hub for thought leadership, networking, and practical insights into the future of AI-powered business solutions.

DSC Europe is renowned as Europe's premier event for data science and AI professionals.

With **4,000 attendees from over 60 countries**, the conference is the epicenter of knowledge exchange and collaboration across industries. DSC Europe will explore **100+ key topics** related to the impact of AI and Data on business and society, with a special executive track featuring insights on AI & Data strategy, digital transformation, and fostering a data-driven culture in organizations.

Conference Program and Speakers

DSC Europe 2024 features a packed agenda with **world-class keynotes**, interactive panels, and hands-on workshops, all designed to provide deep insights into the most important trends in AI and data science. Attendees will hear from top industry leaders and innovators, including:

Amie Bright, VP of Enterprise Data & Analytics at **Git-Lab** (United States)

Dragan Tomic, VP of Engineering and Site Lead at **Databricks** (Serbia)

Ido Engel, Microsoft Cloud & AI GTM lead at **Microsoft** (Israel)

Dr. Andreas Nauerz, Member of the Board at **Bosch Digital** | CTO & Executive Vice President (Germany)

Tobias Zwingmann, Author & Managing Partner of **RAPYD.AI** (Germany)

Karen De Sousa Pesse, Senior Executive at **Salesforce** (Belgium)

Alberto-Giovanni Busetto, Chief AI Officer & Global Future Council Member of **Health AI**, World Economic Forum (Switzerland)

Xiang Yang, Deputy Director of Cloud Computing Institute at **Peng Cheng Laboratory** (China)

Jose Portilla, Leading AI Instructor at **Udemy** (United States)

Rana Gujral, CEO of **Behavioral Signals** (United States)

Natali Delic, Chief Strategy and Digital Officer at **Telekom Srbija** (Serbia)

Dr. Suren Movsisyan, Founder, CTO | CMO | Tech Lead at **Algorithm** | **Revolve Games** | **Bitcoin Center NYC** (Denmark)

From **AI ethics** to **generative AI**, the DSC Europe 2024 program is designed to help you navigate the complexities of data and AI in today's business environment.



Photo | www.datasciconference.com

Why attend

DSC Europe 2024 offers exclusive opportunities to connect with decision-makers and thought leaders at the forefront of the AI and data revolution. To maximize your time at the conference, **C-Level Executives, Founders, Senior Data & AI Professionals, Investors, and Policy Makers** driving the AI and data science industry forward are encouraged to select VIP tickets.

VIP attendees will gain access to:

Exclusive Networking: Engage with industry leaders, keynote speakers, and executives from global companies. Access the Data & AI Summit with round-table discussions - perfect for deeper conversations on emerging business opportunities and industry collaborations. You'll also be invited to VIP dinners, where you can continue discussions in a relaxed, sophisticated setting.

Premium Content: Participate in hands-on sessions focused on the latest advances in AI and data science, led by world-renowned experts.

VIP Perks: Enjoy fast-lane registration, access to the VIP zone with exclusive breakfast & lunch, a personalized schedule with "Must-Attend" sessions, automatic ticket validation, a pre-filled profile on the networking app, and on-site support.

Join Us

Be part of shaping the future of AI and data science at **DSC Europe 24**. Whether you're a seasoned professional or just beginning your journey in AI, this conference provides invaluable insights, networking opportunities, and access to the latest trends. Don't miss the chance to be at the center of innovation and discovery in AI.

Written by:
Predrag Terzić
Data Science Conference



Join us in Belgrade from November 18th to 22nd and be part of Europe's leading AI & Data conference.

The end-to-end knowledge company

CRIF is a global company specializing in credit & business information systems, analytics, outsourcing and processing services, as well as advanced digital solutions for business development and open banking

The mission that drives CRIF is to create value and new opportunities for consumers and businesses by providing reliable information and solutions, allowing more powerful decisions and accelerating digital innovation. We work responsibly to offer innovative solutions to support our customers to enhance access to credit in compliance, granting a digital access and use of financial services by excluded and underserved people. CRIF is currently the leading group in continental Europe in the field of banking credit information and one of the main operators on a global level for integrated



services for business & commercial information and credit & marketing management. CRIF supports banks and financial institutions, insurance, telco & media, and energy & utility companies, as well as businesses and consumers, thanks to continuous innovation, the use of the most advanced technologies, and a culture of Information Management. Furthermore, within the context of end-to-end solutions, CRIF has developed a line of services for consumers and SMEs dedicated to financial well-being and to fraud and cyber risk prevention and protection.

Building Trust in an AI-Driven World: Key Insights for Bankers at the ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day

In today's rapidly evolving digital landscape, artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionizing every sector, including banking and finance. As technology grows in sophistication, the need to secure AI's safe, ethical, and responsible use becomes crucial. On December 5, 2024, from 9:00 to 18:00 at the Chamber of Commerce of Serbia, the ISACA Belgrade Chapter will host its 7th annual "ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day – Building Trust in AI Driven World." This event, tailored for professionals in governance, risk management, cybersecurity, and AI, promises to be a milestone gathering for bankers and finance leaders looking to navigate the complexities of an AI-driven future. With an agenda packed with insightful presentations, panel discussions, and practical workshops, the conference is designed to equip attendees with the knowledge and tools needed to adapt to this rapidly changing environment.

Why Bankers Should Care About Building Digital Trust in AI

The increasing adoption of AI in the financial industry is reshaping the way banks operate, from automating customer service through chatbots to detecting fraudulent activities and assessing credit risk in real-time. AI's potential to transform banking is undeniable, but it also brings forth a host of challenges. As AI systems become more sophisticated and autonomous, concerns about data pri-

vacancy, algorithmic bias, transparency, and the ethical use of technology are surfacing. Financial institutions must grapple with these issues to protect their clients, maintain regulatory compliance, and uphold trust in their services.

For bankers, building trust in AI means establishing robust governance and oversight mechanisms. This is essential not just to manage risks but also to ensure that AI solutions align with ethical standards and societal values. ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day will offer an in-depth explo-



Photo | Isaca

ration of these themes, providing bankers with actionable insights into navigating the AI landscape. The event will highlight the significance of trust in digital ecosystems, where a single misstep—like a data breach or a biased algorithm—can undermine customer confidence and lead to regulatory backlash. Banking professionals will benefit from understanding how to balance the dual objectives of innovation and risk management while fostering an environment of transparency and accountability.

Key Opportunities for Learning and Collaboration

The conference will serve as a hub for learning and professional networking, featuring high-profile speakers who are at the forefront of AI and cybersecurity. These experts will share their experiences and knowledge, offering perspectives on both the technical and strategic implications of AI adoption in banking. The agenda includes a series of expert-led sessions designed to address the current and future impact of AI, particularly in terms of risk management, data security, and organizational resilience. For instance, industry leaders will discuss how AI technologies can be harnessed to predict financial trends, optimize operational efficiency, and deliver personalized banking experiences, all while safeguarding against cyber threats.

Panel discussions will further enrich the conference experience, offering an interactive platform for exploring AI's transformative potential. These discussions will focus on practical applications of AI in banking, the ethical dilemmas associated with algorithmic decision-making, and the ways financial institutions can use AI to enhance governance and compliance. Experts will provide re-

al-world examples of how AI-driven systems are already reshaping banking operations, from credit scoring and loan approval processes to anti-money laundering (AML) initiatives. For attendees, these panels are an invaluable opportunity to hear diverse viewpoints, pose questions to thought leaders, and gain insights that can be applied directly to their organizations.

One of the highlights of ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day is the emphasis on collaboration. The event will facilitate networking opportunities, enabling professionals from banking, technology, and regulatory sectors to exchange ideas and collaborate on solutions for building trust in AI. This cross-disciplinary approach is crucial, as developing AI governance frameworks requires input from various stakeholders. By connecting with peers and experts, bankers can learn about best practices, emerging trends, and innovative strategies to future-proof their institutions in an AI-driven world.

Navigating AI Risks and Regulatory Compliance

The financial sector is heavily regulated, and the rise of AI has added new layers of complexity to compliance requirements. Regulatory bodies across the globe are introducing AI-specific guidelines to ensure these technologies are used responsibly. For example, the European Union's AI Act aims to set stringent rules for high-risk AI systems, which include many applications relevant to banking. Compliance with these regulations is not optional; failure to adhere could result in substantial fines, reputational damage, and a loss of customer trust. This regulatory landscape presents both challenges and opportunities for



banks, which must be proactive in understanding and implementing compliance measures.

ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day will address these regulatory challenges head-on. Experts will discuss how financial institutions can stay ahead of the curve by adopting robust risk management practices. Attendees will learn about frameworks such as the AI Risk Management Framework (AI-RMF) and other internationally recognized standards that can help mitigate AI-related risks. Topics will include data privacy, model interpretability, and the importance of continuous monitoring and auditing of AI systems. Banking leaders will gain a deeper understanding of how to ensure compliance while also leveraging AI's capabilities to enhance efficiency and decision-making.

The conference will also highlight the role of governance in building digital trust. Effective AI governance goes beyond compliance; it involves creating a culture of accountability where the ethical implications of AI use are regularly evaluated. For banks, this means being transparent about how AI models are developed and used, ensuring that human oversight is maintained, and being prepared to explain AI-driven decisions to both regulators and the public. Attending ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day will give banking professionals the tools they need to implement these governance practices, ensuring that their organizations remain trustworthy and resilient in an AI-driven world.

Hands-On Learning with Real-World Impact

One of the most exciting aspects of ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day is the hands-on workshop titled "Cybersecurity

for Artificial Intelligence," led by the esteemed Rolf von Roessing. Scheduled for December 6, this half-day session will provide a deep dive into the cybersecurity risks posed by AI and the strategies needed to manage them. Rolf von Roessing, a global authority on governance, risk, and compliance, will guide participants through practical frameworks and standards that can be used to safeguard AI systems. The workshop will feature a case study, allowing attendees to apply their knowledge in a realistic scenario and see how theoretical concepts translate into actionable solutions.

For banking professionals, this workshop is a must-attend event. AI technologies, while powerful, introduce new vectors for cyberattacks. As AI models become more integrated into financial systems, ensuring their security becomes paramount. The workshop will cover essential topics such as data protection, the impact of AI on information security, and how to develop incident response plans tailored to AI-driven threats. Participants will leave with a comprehensive understanding of how to secure AI systems, comply with emerging regulations, and implement best practices that align with their organizations' risk tolerance and business objectives. Additionally, earning five Continuing Professional Education (CPE) credits is an added benefit, underscoring the practical value of the workshop.

Written by:
Tatjana Krivačević
ISACA Belgrade Chapter

Conclusion

A Must-Attend Event for Forward-Thinking Bankers

ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day 2024 provides a unique platform for finance professionals to stay ahead of technological advancements while safeguarding organizational integrity. The event's focus on trust, security, and ethical AI use makes it highly relevant for bankers who are navigating the digital transformation of financial services. Attendees will gain actionable insights into how to implement AI responsibly, ensuring that their organizations remain competitive and resilient in the face of rapid technological change. Moreover, the opportunity to engage with leading experts, participate in thought-provoking discussions, and learn through hands-on experiences sets this conference apart.

Banking leaders who attend ISACA Belgrade Chapter Day will be better equipped to harness AI's potential while managing its risks. By understanding the regulatory landscape, adopting best practices in cybersecurity, and fostering a culture of transparency and accountability, financial institutions can build the trust needed to thrive in an AI-driven world. For more information and to register, visit www.isacaday.rs. Don't miss this opportunity to be part of a forward-thinking community dedicated to shaping a secure and ethical future for AI in finance.

INFINTECH 2024: A Comprehensive Report on One of the Region’s Premier Banking and Fintech Events

The INFINTECH 2024 Conference, hosted on October 10th and 11th at the picturesque Porto Montenegro, has once again solidified its reputation as a leading event in the banking and fintech landscape of Southeast Europe. This year’s edition showcased substantial growth, drawing an impressive 320 attendees—a notable increase of 100 participants from the previous year. With representatives from 14 countries, 65 C-level executives, and 155 bankers in attendance, the conference was a melting pot of insights, innovations, and networking opportunities.

Event Overview and Growth

The INFINTECH 2024 Conference underscored its growing influence in the region by bringing together a diverse array of stakeholders, including bankers, fintech innovators, regulatory officials, and technology leaders. The con-

ference was supported by 20 sponsors and 6 media partners, further illustrating the event’s significance and industry-wide support. Organizers expressed their gratitude for the exceptional turnout and the trust placed in them, emphasizing that each attendee played a pivotal role in the conference’s success.



Photo | Infintech

Who Attended?

The attendee demographic was well-balanced, reflecting the conference’s commitment to attracting a diverse and influential crowd:

- Banking and Financial Institutions: 42.7% of attendees represented banks, microcredit institutions, and insurance companies.
- Solution Providers: 32.7% were from companies offering cutting-edge technological solutions for the financial sector.
- C-Level Executives: 26.3% of attendees held executive roles, reinforcing the conference’s strategic importance.
- B-Level Directors: 37.7% were B-level directors, contributing to a well-rounded assembly of decision-makers.

Day One Highlights

The opening day of INFINTECH 2024 was marked by high energy and a robust agenda designed to inspire and inform. The conference began with a lighthearted yet engaging standup performance by Andrija Dabanović, setting a positive tone. Following this, Ivica Tatar, Co-Founder of Logate, and Gabriel Ghita, Vice President of Customer Solutions Center, South East Europe at Mastercard, delivered the opening remarks, highlighting the significance of digital transformation in banking.

Keynote Presentations and Discussions:

1. “IT Transformation: Accelerating Digitalization and Emerging Trends in Banking Technology” was presented by Zarija Milić, Group IT Managing Director at Addiko

Bank AG. Milić discussed the rapid pace of technological advancements and how banks can harness these changes for greater efficiency and customer satisfaction.

2. Panel Discussion: “Explore Globally, Transform Locally” featured Petar Jovanović, CEO of AIK Bank; Martin Leberle, CEO of NLB Bank Montenegro; Dino Redžepagić, Member of the Management Board at CKB Bank; and Miloš Miketić, CEO of Lovćen Bank. The session, moderated by Vladimir Pajović, Head of Banking & Enterprise Solutions at Logate, focused on leveraging global trends to enact meaningful local transformations within financial institutions.

Breaks for Networking and Refreshments: Coffee breaks provided opportunities for participants to exchange ideas and build valuable connections, ensuring the energy and engagement remained high throughout the day.

People & Culture Track

The second segment of the day revolved around the crucial theme of “People & Culture.” Ivana Brkljača, Founder of IB Management, delivered a keynote titled “Golf & Business: From Swing to Business Opportunity,” drawing fascinating parallels between strategic business management and the game of golf.

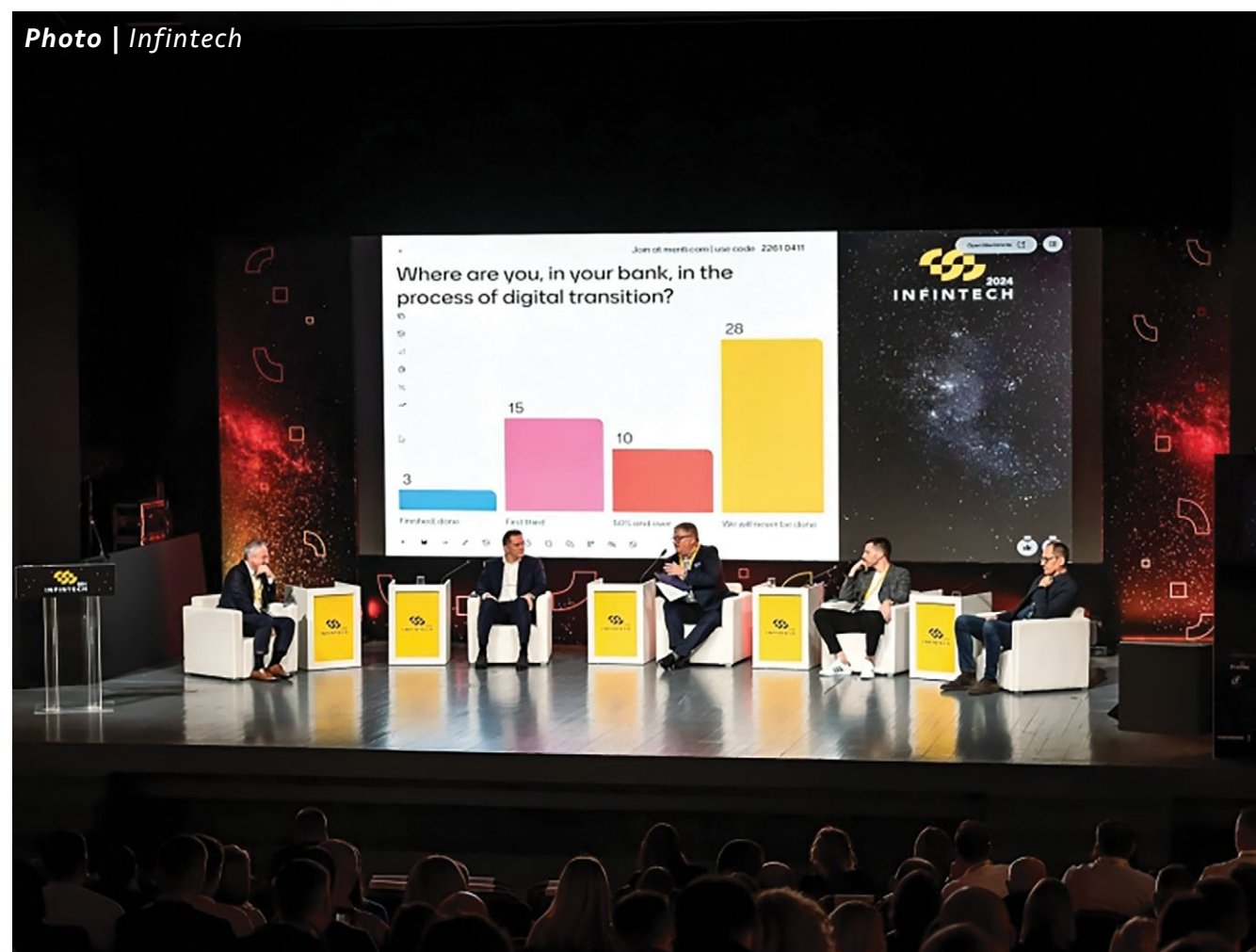
A lively panel discussion, “Governance, People, or Culture – Who Eats Who for Breakfast?”, explored the complex dynamics of leadership, organizational culture, and governance structures in banking. The discussion included insights from Una Sikimić, CEO of Alta Bank; Belkisa Zoronjić, Member of the Management Board at Zapad Banka; and Vladimir Bošković, CMO at NLB Bank Komercijalna, moderated by Hanan Nanić, a producer at Al Jazeera Balkans.

Afternoon Sessions Focused on Digitalization and AI

As the afternoon unfolded, the agenda shifted to the “All Digital” and “Data & AI” tracks, featuring a series of compelling presentations and discussions. Magdalena Kubisa, Director of Business Development at BLIK, shared an inspiring keynote titled “From Zero to Hero: Revolution in Payments,” emphasizing the transformative power of digital payment systems.

Panel Discussion: “Who Wins the App Sweepstakes?” explored the competitive landscape of banking apps, with panelists such as Bojan Burić, Direct Channels Division Director at ERSTE Bank Montenegro; Nikola Milović, Head of Operations and Digital Transformation at Hipotekarna Banka; and Petar Urdešić, Operations Managing

Photo | Infintech



Director at Addiko Bank Montenegro. This session was moderated by Ivica Tatar, highlighting best practices and success stories in the digital banking space.

The “Data & AI” track featured thought-provoking discussions on the role of artificial intelligence in the future of banking. Martin Moeller, Head of AI & Generative AI for Financial Services at Microsoft, delivered a keynote titled “GenAI in Practice - Banking’s New Wave of Transformation,” followed by a panel discussion on the practical applications and transformative potential of AI. The panel included industry leaders such as Daniel Prins from ING Bank and Nemanja Pavićević, Consultancy Director at Solvership, moderated by Maja Mikić, Executive Director for Digital Transformation at BRD Bank.

INFINTECH 2024 featured an impressive lineup of speakers, including CEOs, CROs, and technology experts from institutions such as AIK Bank, NLB Bank, Microsoft, Mastercard, and UniCredit Bulbank. The conference also introduced new speakers who shared their unique perspectives on digital transformation, governance, and the future of financial services.

INFINTECH 2024 was more than a conference; it was a confluence of ideas, a celebration of innovation, and a catalyst for meaningful change in the banking and fintech sectors. As the event continues to grow, it remains dedicated to shaping the future of finance, one transformative discussion at a time.

Looking Forward to INFINTECH 2025

The anticipation for INFINTECH 2025 is already building, with the conference set to return on October 10th and 11th. Next year’s theme, “Sea of Opportunities: Charting the Future of Banking,” promises to offer a comprehensive exploration of the banking industry’s evolution. Topics will include open banking, embedded finance, risk management, and the integration of AI and data-driven strategies.

Written by:
Jovan Radnić
INFINTECH Conference Director

ESG Training for Banks

ESG seminar for financial institutions



Invitation to ESG Training

Do you want your bank to become a leader in sustainable business? Do you want to understand how ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) principles can improve your business and contribute to sustainable future growth? We have a solution for you!

ESG Training for Banks

Our exclusive ESG training for banks will provide you with deep insight into ESG principles, their impact on the banking industry and concrete steps you can take to make a positive impact on society and the planet.



Why sign up for our ESG training:

- Increase Reputation: Understanding ESG principles and applying them in business helps to build a positive reputation among clients, investors and the community.
- Reduce Risk: ESG analysis helps in identifying potential risks and avoiding negative impacts on business.
- Increase Profitability: Integrating ESG factors into the strategy can lead to positive effects on profitability with more efficient operations.
- Achieve Sustainable Growth: ESG principles are the key to sustainable growth and long-term success in today's banking world.

What you will learn at the training:

- Basics of ESG principles and their significance for the banking industry.
- Practical examples of how ESG can improve business.
- How to integrate ESG into banking strategy.
- Contemporary trends in ESG investments



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ESG seminar for financial institutions

Content of ESG training in banking

In person or online



Introduction to ESG

- Overview of ESG principles and their significance.
- Historical perspective and regulatory framework.

ESG Basics

- ESG goals and value systems.
- Application of ESG principles.
- Environmental aspects of ESG.

Social and governance aspects of ESG

- Social aspects in ESG.
- Management aspects in ESG.
- Product design considerations.

Supply chain and ESG

- Supply chain considerations.
- Emission of greenhouse gases (GHG).
- Energy management and sustainability.

Client welfare and business practices

- Client welfare and ESG
- Ethical sales practices
- Impact of digitization and ESG

Employee engagement and business ethics

- Involvement and engagement of employees.
- Business ethics in ESG.
- Characteristics of an active ESG implementer
- Knowledge areas for ESG implementers

ESG Organization and reporting

- ESG organization.
- ESG reporting and transparency.
- Sustainable development goals that are particularly relevant to banking
- Measurable ESG/SDG goals

Group discussions and case studies

- Case studies
- Interactive group discussions on ESG case studies.

ESG Knowledge Test

- Participants take a written test to assess their understanding of ESG principles.
- Award certificates to participants who successfully completed the test and seminar.



Level	Training hours	Certificate
1)Basic	12	
2)Advanced	12	

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Report from the 8th International eSecurity Conference 2024

The 8th International eSecurity Conference, organized by the Association of eSecurity, was held from October 7th to 10th, 2024, at the Hotel Mona Plaza in Belgrade. This year's conference offered a rich program, including hands-on workshops, panel discussions, and a series of engaging lectures delivered by local and international experts. The event also featured some of the top ethical hackers from the region, interactive activities during breaks, and delightful surprises for all participants, courtesy of generous sponsors.

Four Days of Intensive Learning and Networking

The conference unfolded over four days, structured into a “Zero Day” for intensive training, two main “Conference Days,” and a “Workshop Day” dedicated to sponsor-led sessions. As one of the most significant IT events in the region, it brought together more than 260 professionals specializing in ICT, information security, data protection, digital forensics, IT auditing, and cyber risk management, both from Serbia and abroad.

Participants had the unique opportunity to attend a variety of presentations and live hacking demonstrations. Workshops addressed current cyber threats, sophisticated attack techniques, the dark web, the challenges of digital life, and security issues specific to the Balkan region, as well as advanced protective systems.

The event attracted a diverse audience, including IT managers, information security officers, network engineers, IT auditors, cybercrime and digital forensics specialists, and other professionals keen to stay updated on the latest trends and practical advice for safeguarding information systems.

Practical Training and Valuable Takeaways

All conference attendees were treated to attractive gifts from the organizers, which included a hoodie with a unique print, a conference-branded T-shirt, and, for those who participated in the training sessions, special sports bags.

During the “Zero Day” training, participants acquired hands-on experience in threat hunting, with a particular emphasis on identifying and analyzing command-and-control (C2) servers. This practical session equipped them with essential skills to neutralize threats that leverage C2 infrastructures for cyber attacks.

CTF Competition and Thrilling Rewards

A highlight of the event was the Capture the Flag (CTF) game, organized with the support of CPP Services. The competition spanned several months, starting in May and culminating in the grand finale at the conference, where top performers received valuable prizes. The CTF provided a stimulating platform for participants to demonstrate their cybersecurity skills in a friendly yet competitive environment.



Photo | eSigurnost

Conference Opening and Keynote Highlights

The conference was officially opened by Dr. Igor Franc, President of the Association of eSecurity. In his opening remarks, Dr. Franc emphasized the critical importance of information security in today's world. He also extended a warm welcome to all participants and provided an overview of the association's mission and objectives.

One of the standout sessions on the first day was delivered by Julija Novikova, a representative of Kaspersky, the event's general sponsor. Novikova's presentation delved into real-world threats in the digital landscape, highlighting the severity of cyber attacks and outlining actionable steps for prevention and threat detection.

Prominent Sponsors and Engaging Presentations

The conference provided a platform for leading global and regional companies to showcase their expertise and solutions. Participating organizations included Kaspersky, Comtrade Distribution, Trend Micro, Crayon, Seif.ai, Cllico, Check Point, Ernst and Young, Radware, Ingram Micro, SafeViewer, SentinelOne, SolarWinds, Imperum,

Fiksni Online, CPP Services, SECIT Security, BiIT, REAL Security, Brother, Digitron-ist, and Bambi.

In addition to delivering thought-provoking presentations, these companies distributed gifts to attendees, further enhancing the experience.

Key Panel Discussions on Legislation and AI in Cybersecurity

Two panel discussions drew particular interest from the audience. The first panel focused on the Information Security Law, examining the impact and challenges associated with its latest amendments. Experts discussed the evolving regulatory landscape and the implications for organizations striving to maintain robust cybersecurity postures.

The second panel addressed the application of artificial intelligence (AI) in the cyber realm, exploring how AI technologies can enhance data protection and bolster the defense of information systems. Panelists provided valuable insights into the future of AI-driven cybersecurity, emphasizing the need for innovation in the face of rapidly advancing threats.

Networking and Social Events

Recognizing the importance of networking, the conference organizers placed a strong emphasis on facilitating meaningful connections among participants. Both within the conference venue and outside the session halls, attendees and speakers engaged in lively exchanges of knowledge and experiences.

A memorable evening gathering, sponsored by Check Point, provided an excellent opportunity for informal networking. Guests enjoyed delicious food, drinks, and pleasant music, creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere for building professional relationships.

Innovations in Conference Organization

This year’s eSecurity Conference introduced several new features and organizational improvements. The picturesque setting of Hotel Mona Plaza, coupled with the excellent facilities of its restaurant, ensured that participants felt comfortable and well taken care of throughout the event.

The conference’s legacy of delivering well-organized, highly attended, and content-rich sessions continued this year, with a focus on engaging, relevant topics from the



Photo | eSigurnost

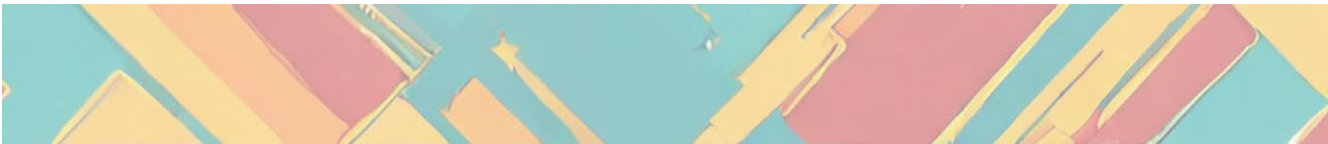
ever-evolving world of cybersecurity. The hands-on elements, interactive panels, and in-depth workshops left a lasting impression on attendees, reinforcing the event’s reputation as a must-attend gathering for IT and security professionals in the region.

Looking Ahead

The 8th International eSecurity Conference successfully brought together industry leaders, tech enthusiasts, and cybersecurity experts, fostering a community committed to combating digital threats. The event not only highlighted current challenges but also provided a glimpse into the future of information security, emphasizing the need for continuous learning and adaptation in an increasingly digital world.

As the eSecurity Conference continues to evolve, it remains a crucial platform for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and the latest advancements in cybersecurity.

Written by:
Luka Milinković
Member of the Board of Directors
of the eSecurity Association



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Technobank Conference 2025 – Pioneering Banking and Financial Technology in SEE

Scheduled for April 9-10, 2025, in Belgrade, the prestigious Technobank Conference and Exhibition, organized by ASIT, is poised to be a premier event for the banking and financial industries across Southeast Europe (SEE). This hallmark gathering, known for its decades-long tradition, continues to attract over 500 industry leaders and innovators, with more than 40 renowned companies actively participating each year.

ASIT – Visionaries in Information and Communication Technology

The Association for Computing, Informatics, Telecommunications, and New Media of Serbia (ASIT) is the driving force behind Technobank. With more than four decades of experience in organizing influential scientific and professional events, ASIT has firmly established itself as a leader in promoting cutting-edge information and communication technologies (ICT) in Serbia and the SEE region.

The association was founded by Miloš-Miša Mirković, a visionary engineer and pioneer in ICT, who recognized the potential of emerging technologies as far back as the 1970s. His groundbreaking work laid the foundation for specialized conferences that became critical venues for discussing technological advancements and fostering business collaboration. Today, ASIT remains committed to connecting the scientific, professional, and business communities, accelerating the implementation of global best practices in local markets, and contributing to the development of standards and regulations.

What to Expect at Technobank 2025

Technobank 2025 will once again be a key meeting point for banking professionals, technology providers, and financial institutions from across the region. The event will feature a blend of specialized panel discussions, keynote presentations, and an extensive exhibition space designed to foster engagement and collaboration. Participants will have the opportunity to explore the latest innovative solutions in banking, payments, finance, and security, all under one roof.

Key Topics: AI, Robotics, and the Future of Traditional Banking

This year's conference will expand on last year's successful discussions about Artificial Intelligence by introducing "Robotisation in Banking" as an integral element of the future of traditional banking. Experts will explore how robotics can be integrated into banking operations, from automating routine tasks to improving customer service and streamlining complex processes. Discussions will cover practical use cases, strategic advantages, and the potential impact of robotics on workforce dynamics and operational efficiency.



Digital transformation will continue to be a central focus, with panels and presentations addressing the latest trends, technologies, and strategies that banks and financial institutions need to adopt to remain competitive. The conference promises insights from leading industry experts and case studies from global markets that have successfully implemented these technologies.

A Platform for Innovation and Recognition

Technobank has always been a hub for innovation, and 2025 will be no different. The conference provides a space for exchanging ideas and experiences, facilitating meaningful connections between industry leaders and solution providers. Exhibitors will have the chance to showcase their groundbreaking technologies, engage with decision-makers, and create new business opportunities.

Awarding Excellence: The Miša Mirković Banking Technology Awards

To celebrate outstanding achievements in the banking technology space, ASIT will once again present the

“Miša Mirković Banking Technology Awards.” This year’s awards include:

- Miša Mirković - Banking Technology Award: Honoring the most innovative technological solution implemented in the banking sector over the past year. Companies that have demonstrated significant advancements are invited to submit their entries.

- Miša Mirković - OSCARD: An individual award recognizing exceptional contributions to the development of banking technology. This award acknowledges leaders who have driven impactful change and innovation in the industry.

Banks and companies are encouraged to nominate their achievements by emailing office@technobank.rs with the subject line “Technobank Award Nominations.” The deadline for nominations is 30 days before the conference. Nominations should include a brief description of the solution, as well as details about the participants involved in the concept design and implementation.

Early Registration and Sponsorship Opportunities

ASIT invites all industry professionals, technology providers, and financial institutions to register early and secure their spot at this unmissable event. Sponsors are welcome to join and take advantage of the opportunity to feature their latest solutions, engage with a high-profile audience, and position themselves as industry leaders in the SEE region.

Why Attend Technobank 2025?

- Access to Top Decision-Makers: Engage with over 500 banking and finance professionals, including CEOs, CTOs, and industry thought leaders.
- Innovative Exhibitions: Explore state-of-the-art technology solutions showcased by over 40 leading companies.

- Invaluable Networking: Build meaningful connections with peers and discover new opportunities for collaboration.
- Insightful Content: Gain valuable knowledge from expert panels and presentations that address the most pressing challenges and opportunities in banking and financial technology.

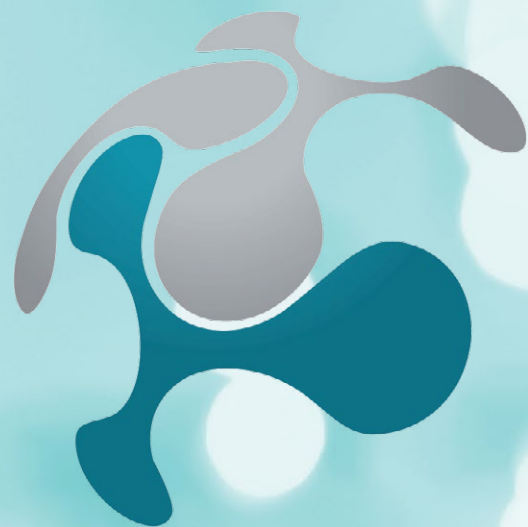
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Bridging the Financial Inclusion Gap: The Role of Fintech in Reaching the Unbanked

Financial inclusion remains a significant challenge worldwide, with around 1.4 billion adults still lacking access to formal financial services. This widespread exclusion has severe implications, affecting individuals' ability to save, borrow, and invest in their futures, as well as limiting overall economic development in emerging markets. Fintech companies have stepped in to bridge this gap by introducing innovative, technology-driven solutions tailored specifically to the needs of underserved and unbanked populations. Through these efforts, fintech is transforming how financial services are delivered and expanding financial accessibility in ways traditional banks have struggled to achieve.

Case Studies of Successful Fintech Initiatives

Moniepoint in Nigeria

Moniepoint has emerged as a major player in Africa's fintech landscape, recently raising \$110 million in funding to bolster its digital payments and banking services. The company operates with a mission to address the enormous challenge of financial exclusion in Nigeria, a country where a significant portion of the population remains unbanked or underbanked. By processing over 800 million transactions monthly, with a value exceeding \$17 billion, Moniepoint offers businesses and individuals alike a seamless, accessible way to conduct financial activities. Their suite of services includes point-of-sale solutions, working capital loans, and an integrated platform that allows merchants to manage and track transactions in real-time, significantly boosting economic participation among small and medium-sized enterprises.

TymeBank in South Africa

TymeBank has revolutionized banking in South Africa as the nation's first fully digital bank. By removing physical branches from the equation, TymeBank has minimized costs, allowing them to offer zero-fee debit cards and savings accounts with competitive interest rates. This approach makes banking services more accessible and affordable, particularly for low-income individuals who

have traditionally been excluded from the formal banking system. With a growing customer base of over 9 million people, TymeBank has also expanded its offerings to include innovative financial products like health and funeral insurance and short-term loans for small businesses. By partnering with large retail chains for in-store banking kiosks, TymeBank effectively overcomes infrastructure limitations and reaches customers where they shop, blending digital and physical banking experiences.

Verqor in Mexico

Verqor provides an innovative solution for farmers in rural Mexico who have long struggled to access traditional lines of credit due to a lack of credit history or collateral. By utilizing alternative data sources, such as trading records and agricultural productivity metrics, Verqor has developed a model that allows it to offer credit in the form of agricultural inputs rather than cash. This system minimizes the risk of loan default while empowering farmers to invest directly in their crops and increase yields. Additionally, by aligning credit issuance with seasonal farming needs, Verqor ensures that loans are tailored to the realities of agricultural cycles, ultimately contributing to greater financial stability and food security in rural communities.

Challenges in Reaching the Unbanked

Despite the impressive strides made by these and other fintech companies, the journey toward complete financial inclusion is fraught with challenges:





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1. Infrastructure Limitations: Many developing regions still suffer from unreliable or nonexistent internet connectivity and limited access to smartphones or digital devices. This digital divide hampers the widespread adoption of fintech solutions and prevents companies from scaling their services effectively.

2. Financial Literacy: A significant barrier to the success of fintech is the lack of financial literacy among potential users. Many people in underserved areas are unfamiliar with digital financial products and remain wary of engaging with them, fearing fraud or misunderstanding how to manage their finances responsibly. Bridging this literacy gap is crucial for the sustained impact of fintech.

3. Regulatory: Operating in diverse markets often means navigating a labyrinth of complex and varying regulatory frameworks. Striking a balance between regulation and innovation is essential, but achieving this balance requires significant collaboration and dialogue with government entities.

Strategies to Overcome Challenges

4. Leverage Mobile Technology: Fintech companies can bypass many infrastructure-related issues by relying on mobile technology. Mobile money services, such as those prevalent across Africa, have demonstrated that even in areas with limited banking infrastructure, financial

transactions can flourish when people have access to mobile devices. By optimizing for low-bandwidth environments and developing offline transaction capabilities, fintech companies can extend their reach even further.

5. Invest in Education and Training: Building financial literacy is not just a social good but a strategic necessity. Fintech companies must prioritize education initiatives, offering workshops, community-based training, and easy-to-understand digital tutorials. By demystifying financial concepts and showing users how to safely and effectively manage their money, fintech can empower individuals to make informed financial decisions, fostering long-term engagement.

6. Collaborate with Regulators: Successful fintech firms actively engage with regulators that aim to facilitate innovation while protecting consumers. Establishing partnerships with local governments, central banks and other financial authorities can create an environment conducive to growth. Additionally, adopting best practices in data privacy and cybersecurity can help fintech companies gain trust and secure regulatory compliance.

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Conclusion

Fintech companies have the potential to transform the financial landscape by offering tailored solutions that cater to the unbanked and underbanked. By harnessing technology, fostering financial literacy, and working collaboratively with regulators, these companies can bridge the financial inclusion gap, enabling economic empowerment and growth. As fintech continues to evolve, it holds the promise of a more inclusive and equitable financial future, where even the most marginalized communities have the tools and resources to thrive.

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