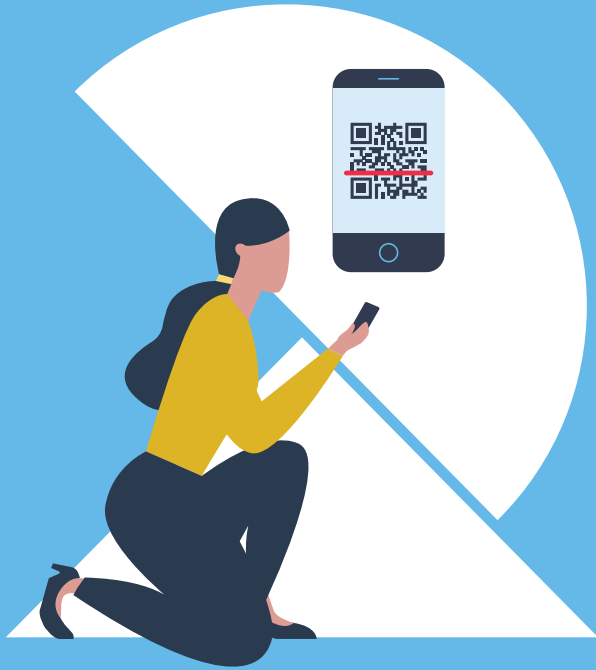


Annual review



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Foreword

2022 presented many **challenges and opportunities** for the financial sector. Our annual report is an opportunity to reflect on all Febelfin's achievements and ongoing projects.

First, 2022 was marked by the start of the **war in Ukraine**. The conflict forced many people to flee and seek refuge elsewhere. The banking sector played a key role by enabling Ukrainian refugees to access **basic banking services** and exchange their **hryvni into euros**. These measures and others allowed them to quickly participate in daily life.

Besides the devastating impact on civilians, this war exacerbated the **energy crisis** already emerging because of the recession caused by the coronavirus pandemic. These successive crises have left the financial sector reeling. Even so, banks continued to assume responsibility and fulfil their **social role**. They continued to provide **credit and assistance** to individuals and businesses in financial difficulty. Five months after the support measures were introduced, the counter stood at more than 10,000 granted payment deferrals.

In the current scenario, our society needs more **ambitious policies** than ever to support sustainable growth. This growth is possible only if **profitability, investment and entrepreneurship** are **encouraged**. To continue supporting the economy, especially in times of economic crisis and uncertainty, the banking sector needs to be **strong and healthy**.

But the sector obviously cannot face all these challenges alone. Indeed, **cooperation with the government** is essential to offer the general public and businesses a promising future in a **sustainable and inclusive society**.

We want to continue being a **reliable and constructive partner** of the government in many areas: financing the economy, transitioning to a sustainable society, innovation and digital inclusion, fighting financial crime, and so forth. Febelfin and its members are working hard on initiatives in these areas and are keen to continue doing so.

That's why I'm delighted to share our actions and highlights for 2022 with you.

I hope you enjoy reading the rest of this report.

Karel Baert



KEY FIGURES

Some key figures on the Belgian financial sector:



Belgium has **81** banks ¹

CORE ACTIVITIES

€287.2 billion

Credit to families



€169.3 billion

Credit to Belgian non-financial enterprises

€60.0 billion

Credit to the Belgian government

(01/2023; on a territorial basis) ¹

45,420 people employed in the banking sector

3,138 people recruited in 2022
(provisional figures) ²



Excluding refinancing, over 250,000 mortgage loan contracts were concluded in 2022. The total value of these contracts was almost

€43 billion ⁴

Excluding refinancing, 324,380 business loan contracts were concluded in 2022. The total value of these contracts was almost

€ 59.3 billion ²



9.0%

return on equity ³



15.1 million

online banking subscriptions

11.5 million

mobile banking subscriptions

(2022 provisional figures) ²



At the end of the first half of 2022, outstanding consumer loans stood at ⁵

€27.5 billion

91.2%

of savings converted into loans ¹



2.77 billion

card payments in 2021 ⁶

of which

66,3%

were contactless payments (2022 figure) ⁷

€300.8 billion



in regulated savings passbooks ¹

- 16.7% of savings were invested in funds in 2022. This is higher than the European average (9.3%). ⁸
- Since 2014, more than €74 billion has been cumulatively invested in funds. ⁸
- 1,796 million Belgians owned a combined total of €20.7 billion in retirement savings funds. ⁸
- Net assets of listed funds in Belgium stood at €263.5 billion at the end of September 2021. ⁶

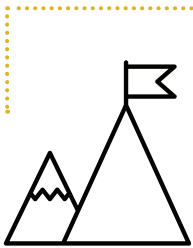


€1,6 billion

in additional bank levies (besides the traditional corporation tax, the banking sector also contributes to public finances through specific levies) ²

¹ source: NBB - ² source: Febelfin - ³ source: EBA - ⁴ source: UPC - ⁵ source: FPS Economy - ⁶ source: ECB - ⁷ source: Worldline - ⁸ source: BEAMA

WHAT IS FEBELFIN'S ROLE?



Mission

Developing a financial sector that is responsive to the needs of society.



Values

- Responsible, cooperative, goal-oriented
- Proactive
- Innovative
- Credible

4 core activities



Adopting positions

for and by members



Lobbying

at regional, national and European levels, as well as through participating in social negotiations and engaging in dialogue with a broad network of stakeholders.



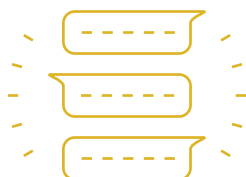
Providing services

- informing
- explaining and advising
- overseeing projects
- training courses through Febelfin Academy



Communicating

with members and the general public and participating in professional, political, social and educational debates.



"As spokesperson for the financial sector, Febelfin answered 537 press calls in 2022."

Strategic objectives



Needs

Meeting daily financial needs at all stages of life.



Financing

Giving individuals, businesses, authorities and their projects the right answers to their financing needs.



Services

Making innovative, secure and high-quality financial services accessible to the general public.



Dialogue

Listening to the needs of society and engaging in dialogue with a broad network of partners and stakeholders who want to work together for a sustainable financial sector.



Openness

Working towards a stable, sustainable and equitable regulatory and business environment.

The strategic objectives have been translated into four priorities, which can be expanded:



**Financing
the economy**



**Security, soundness
of the financial sector
and the fight against
financial crime**



Digital banking



**Sustainable and
socially responsible
banking**

This annual report is structured around these four priority pillars.

Each pillar includes a selection of the main projects that Febelfin's Business Lines worked on in 2022.

Most of these projects are evolutionary in nature and will therefore continue in 2023.

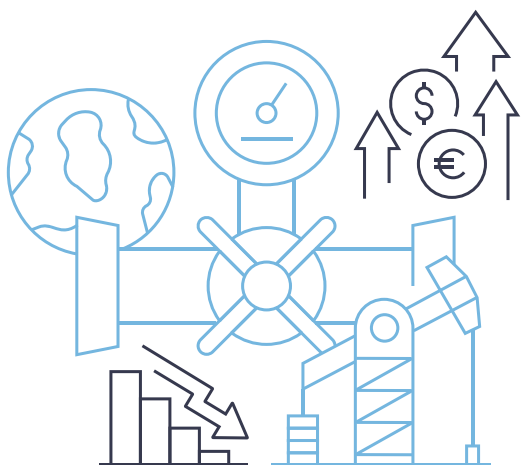
01. Financing the economy

Obviously, the core function of banks is to **finance the economy**. They create opportunities for people and businesses to grow and keep the economy moving.



Retail Banking and Corporate Banking

2022: the energy crisis



In 2022, the banks supported consumers, businesses and the self-employed hit hard by the energy crisis. The banks offered individuals deferred payment terms for mortgage loans under certain circumstances, as well as personalised options and solutions for businesses and households that did not meet the conditions. These support measures formed a unique commitment in Western Europe. Meanwhile, banks continued to lend heavily to businesses and individuals in 2022.

DEFERRED PAYMENT FOR MORTGAGE LOANS

In September 2022, the financial sector undertook to assist individuals to the best of its ability by creating a general payment deferral framework for mortgage loans. People affected financially by the energy crisis could apply for this deferral if they met the conditions.

The payment deferral on mortgage loan capital meant that the borrower did not have to make capital repayments for 12 months. The term of the loan was extended by the period of the payment deferral. The banks undertook not to charge the customary filing or administrative fees. The payment deferral could be requested from 1 October 2022 to 31 March 2023.

PERSONALISED SOLUTIONS FOR INDIVIDUALS

As at 2 February 2023, 10,441 home loans had been deferred, 73% (7,605) of which came under Febelfin. The average payment interruption of affected families was around €468 per month. Individuals in financial difficulty but who did not meet the conditions could also contact their bank to reach an **individual solution**. Febelfin encouraged families to talk to their banks. Febelfin also published and distributed a brochure entitled '**Talk to your banker in time**'. This brochure sets out the options available in case of payment problems.

02. Security, soundness and continued compliance of the financial sector



The fight against financial and organised crime continues to be a major challenge, and banks have a crucial role to play. The **fight against money laundering and online fraud remains a priority** for Febelfin and Belgian banks. Yet it is important to stress that this is a **social problem** that requires **shared responsibility**. Cooperation with the government and various stakeholders is thus essential to achieve this goal. Combating fraud requires cooperation with both the authorities and other key players, including the telecommunications sector. It is vital to strike the right balance between data security and fraud prevention in this context.

Obviously, the security and soundness of the financial sector is not limited to the fight against financial crime. It includes other aspects. The financial sector has to constantly comply with many laws and regulations, both at national and European level, and adapt to them as efficiently as possible.

The financial sector also has to comply with and adapt as effectively as possible to the many laws and regulations enacted at both national and European level.

Regulatory affairs

Follow-up of 'Compliance' files

WAR IN UKRAINE: IMPLEMENTATION OF SANCTIONS AGAINST RUSSIA AND BELARUS

2022 marked the start of the **war in Ukraine**. The war has caused – and continues to cause – untold human suffering, with many residents forced to leave the territory to seek protection in the European Union. They have quickly had to organise themselves to function as well as possible in a totally new environment.

The European Union responded with new **economic sanctions** against Russia as from the first Russian military offensive on Ukrainian territory in late February 2022. Between 23 February and 16 December 2022, European leaders approved no fewer than nine sanctions packages.

The sanctions include both targeted restrictive measures (individual sanctions) and general economic sanctions aimed at the financial, trade, energy, transport, technology and defence sectors. The aim of these economic sanctions is to destabilise Russia in an attempt to prevent further aggression.

These sanctions are constantly reviewed and regularly extended. Banks must be able to adapt to and comply with them immediately. For this reason, Febelfin has **strengthened its contacts with the Belgian and European supervisory authorities** to ensure that these rules are interpreted and applied correctly.



CLOSER COOPERATION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST MONEY LAUNDERING

Since the public-private **AML consultation platform** was established in June 2021, Febelfin has attended seven meetings with the various stakeholders (CTIF-CFI, FSMA, NBB, Finance, Judicial Police, PayBelgium and Assuralia) to discuss various topics relating to the **fight against money laundering**.

Within the limits of what the statutory framework allows, useful information has been exchanged on various topics such as the crisis in Ukraine, the use of cryptocurrencies in certain suspicious transactions, the risk-based approach taken by banks when analysing files, and financial flows linked to drug trafficking.

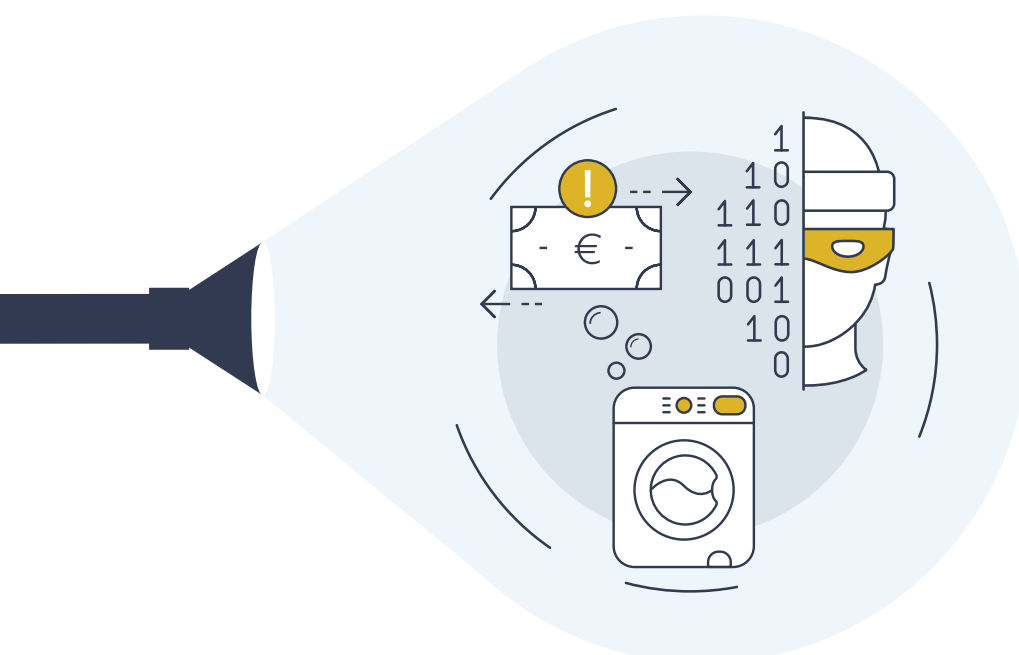
AML PACKAGE

In 2022, Febelfin continued to monitor discussions in the European Parliament and the Council on the four legislative proposals that constitute the '**AML Package**'. This sweeping reform of European law announced by the European Commission in July 2021 aims to strengthen the **European legal and institutional arsenal** in the fight against money laundering.

Febelfin welcomes this opportunity to improve the current European legislative framework and supports the aim of strengthening cooperation

between Member States to achieve a more effective regulatory framework. Although the Commission's proposals are positive steps forward in many ways, it is crucial that these new rules add real value and ensure that genuine suspicions can be better identified for a more effective fight against money laundering.

Febelfin has **commented on the various European amendments in this regard through the European Banking Federation**.



BASIC BANKING SERVICES FOR BUSINESSES

In 2022, Febelfin continued to work on **implementing the Act** introducing a basic banking service for businesses. The government has made some amendments to the initial Act approved in November 2020. **Along with its members, Febelfin has provided feedback to the government** to create the clearest framework possible.

The amended Act was published in the Belgian Official Journal on 16 January 2023. Once the Basic Banking Services Chamber is operational, the banking sector will assume its responsibilities under this Act. That includes granting a basic banking service account to bona fide businesses if they meet the statutory conditions (after designation by this Basic Banking Services Chamber).

UPDATE OF FEBELFIN'S CODE OF CONDUCT – BZB (INDEPENDENT BANKING AGENTS)

Five years after the code of conduct between credit institutions and independent banking agents was signed, Febelfin and the BZB (the professional association of independent intermediaries in banking and investment services) negotiated an updated version in 2022. This update is based on the review period provided for in the original code of conduct. Both sides agreed to the proposed changes in late 2022. These changes came into force on 1 January 2023.

Follow-up of 'Legal' files

EU DATA & DIGITAL STRATEGY PLAN

Several European legislative proposals on digital services and data sharing exist, including the Data Governance Act, Digital Markets Act, Data Act and Artificial Intelligence Act.

Febelfin wants to **raise awareness and prepare the financial sector for the arrival of these 'cross-sector' novelties.**

These digital and data strategies, which the European Commission launched during 2020, represent a small revolution at European level and affect all sectors. Among other things, they aim to create an **internal market for data** (personal and non-personal data) to support sustainability initiatives, innovation, European

digital sovereignty, and so forth. The financial sector is naturally involved and affected by these new developments, as was the case with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation, although this is not about privacy or consumer protection. Certain texts have already been adopted since 2020 and will be directly applicable in Belgium, by analogy with the Data Governance Act, which enters into force on 24 September 2023.

Febelfin **has been following the discussions** within the European institutions (Parliament and Council) since the outset and **responds to the consultations with experts' support** throughout the legislative process. An impact assessment has meanwhile been launched to analyse the texts' impact on the sector.

Follow-up of 'Prudential' files

BANKING PACKAGE

Ensuring a healthy and strong financial sector is crucial. This year, several regulatory initiatives also focused on corporate governance and rigorous risk management of financial institutions. The sector **actively participates in these initiatives**, including the review of the European directives on interest-rate risk, the practical application of the revised rules for issuing covered bonds, the updating of good governance manuals, the qualities required of directors, and so forth.

Over the past year, Febelfin has **worked tirelessly for an efficient and balanced transposition of the international Basel standards**, known as the 'EU Banking Package'. This initiative should continue to strengthen banks' risk management.

In this context, it is essential to strike the right balance between capital requirements and financing the economy, with a view to digital transformation and a sustainable transition. More specifically, risk sensitivity, i.e. the relationship between capital requirements and underlying asset risk, must be maintained to ensure optimal lending. Febelfin also continues **advocating for a level competitive playing field at European level** and for the **consideration of specific elements of the Belgian market**, such as low-risk mortgage loans and the use of the mortgage mandate. During the various phases of the European legislative process, Febelfin engages in dialogue with regulatory and supervisory authorities to present these priorities. In 2023, Febelfin will also see the **finalisation of the EU Banking Package** and continue to monitor its subsequent implementation.

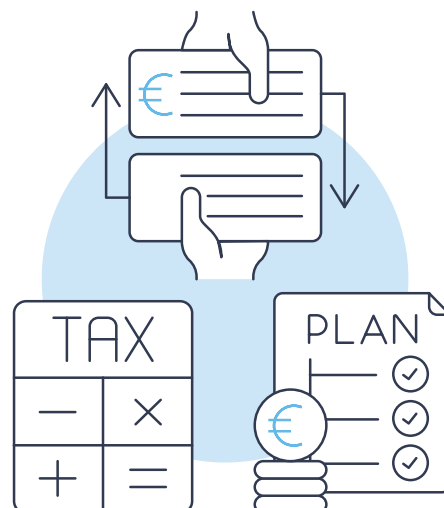
Tax Affairs

A hectic year: monitoring and implementing tax initiatives at Belgian and European level

On the tax front, 2022 did not bring about the expected status quo or simplification. Instead, a whole series of provisions have been drafted and adopted, both at Belgian and European level. Several initiatives, each of which was not necessarily spectacular, have ended up making our tax landscape much more complex than it already was. Lastly, the government's budgetary needs have also led to increased tax and social security pressure on businesses, and thus also on the banks, adding to the push for equal tax treatment with our neighbours. In close cooperation with the VBO-FEB and the FBE, Febelfin is committed to maintaining a balanced and attractive tax framework, while ensuring the highest possible degree of legal certainty.

Several initiatives are also being prepared at European level. These initiatives relate mainly to tax transparency and the exchange of

information between Member States. These directives often have important operational implications. Europe also continues to work on transposing the OECD proposals for a new international corporation tax framework. The aim is to set rules for a minimum tax base to avoid as much tax competition as possible. In this context, Febelfin asks the Belgian authorities **to refrain from unnecessary overregulation, while also asking them to perform specific impact assessments and support the economy through clear implementation principles.**



Payments and transactions

PSD II



The Payment Services Directive, published in 2015, regulates payments for consumers and businesses in the European Union. The review of PSD2 started in 2022. Febelfin **shared its position on this review** with the various stakeholders and also participated in an interview with the research agency CEPS, which is analysing the current market on the European Commission's instructions. Febelfin will **continue to defend the sector's views in 2023** and **actively cooperate with policymakers on this review.**

Anti-fraud cooperation and initiatives

Combating online fraud requires cooperation with all stakeholders: the financial world, the telecommunications sector, the police, the public prosecutor's office and the government. Febelfin consults with these parties, **calling for more efficient cooperation** to protect the general public and properly combat ever-changing forms of crime. Banks can submit their optimisation countermeasures within Febelfin's technical working group.

Febelfin **advocates legislation** that would allow banks to share **a client's identity** with other banks if a **payment or credit incident** occurs, so those other banks can consider it in their risk management.

Febelfin also expects telecommunications operators to implement the Act that allows text-message content scanning and blocking of these text messages in case of fraudulent content.

Febelfin has launched a **project specifically to combat invoice fraud**. This happens when fraudsters falsify an invoice and enter a different account number. Belgian banks are thus working on a system to check whether the IBAN number matches the beneficiary's name.

Lastly, Febelfin has ensured that retail banks can also be reached by telephone **24/7** to block the banking application if fraud occurs.

Raising awareness of online fraud

Preventing online fraud is also vital in the fight against online scams.



'EASY MONEY, EASY TARGET' CAMPAIGN

Febelfin has launched an 'Easy money, easy target' campaign to **make young people and parents aware of the dangers of online fraud and the phenomenon of money mules**. After all, young people spend more time than ever on social media, where they are confronted daily with advertisements or posts promising them ways to make quick money.

Young people are highly susceptible to accepting and taking on the role of money mule. In fact, a study by Febelfin conducted with the research agency IndiVille¹ found that as many as 16% of young people (aged 16 to 30) would lend their bank card and PIN in exchange for money. The aim of the 'Easy money, easy target' campaign was both to help young people and

¹ IndiVille survey in February-March 2022 on a representative sample of the Belgian population of 2,164 NL/FR speakers, aged 16–79.

assist their parents by making them aware that earning a lot of money in a short time is an illusion.

With its **billboard on Place du Bourse/Beursplein** in Brussels displaying a dubious advertisement, Febelfin brought the online

advertising that young people regularly face to life. By visiting www.moremoney.be people could watch a video with Arto's story and the message: 'Easy money? There's no such thing.' To boost the campaign, they also **worked with TikTok influencers** who interviewed young people on the street about online fraud.

Campaign billboard on Place du Bourse/Beursplein



Street interviews by the campaign's influencers



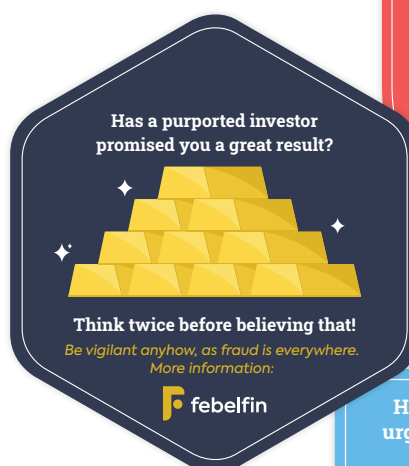
ANTI-PHISHING CAMPAIGN COMMERCIAL RELAUNCH

In 2022, the anti-phishing campaign '**Outsmart a phisher**' was relaunched. This collaboration between Febelfin, the Centre for Cyber Security Belgium (CCB) and the Cyber Security Coalition, initially launched in late 2021, emphasised that the general public can fight phishers by never giving out their bank codes through a link in an email, a text message or on social networks, or by sharing them over the phone.

RAISING AWARENESS OF OTHER FORMS OF FRAUD

Febelfin has also highlighted other fraud practices throughout the year, such as CEO fraud, help request fraud and investment fraud. Febelfin warned that fraud with secured safe accounts and bank card phishing at home are on the rise. The sector again stressed that a bank or its employees will never ask their clients for their code or prompt them to make transfers.

For this purpose, Febelfin developed **new awareness-raising material** in the form of **stickers and posters**.



INFORMATION FILE 'DON'T FEED THE PHISH'

In 2022, Febelfin created a storytelling brochure on phishing entitled 'Don't feed the phish', outlining online fraud and highlighting its evolution and current forms. It also includes the results of the annual online fraud survey conducted with the research agency IndiVille.



Cover of phishing storytelling document

MONEY MULE EVENT FOR STAKEHOLDERS

Besides the general public, Febelfin also wants to inform various stakeholders about the different forms of fraud. That's why Febelfin organised a money mule event in conjunction with the **Antwerp police** and the **governor of the province of Antwerp**. Police officers, care providers, policymakers, people from the banking sector and others... more than 140 people participated in this meeting. Participants were

able to attend presentations by Rudy Vereecken, fraud expert at Worldline and Stijn De Ridder, Commissioner of the Antwerp police zone.

The event showed that each organisation is enthusiastically trying to contribute to the fight against online crime with the best intentions, but that each is facing certain challenges in a context where forms of fraud are rapidly evolving. It is thus essential to remain open to all options and continue cooperation.



Campaign for Card Stop's new number

Card Stop's new number **078 170 170** was officially introduced in January 2022.

Card Stop's services allow consumers to block their payment card(s) by phone if theft, loss or fraud occurs. A charge of €0.30 per minute applied to the old number, 070 344 344. The new number 078 170 170 is a normal number with no additional charges.

The decision to change Card Stop's number was prompted by changes in the new telecommunications legislation. The banking sector also wanted to **end the extra charges** for calling Card Stop. This was impossible with

the 070 number but could be done using a 078 number.

Card Stop's new number was announced to the general public as a public service message with FPS Economy's express support. This message was broadcast on numerous channels. Several radio stations also broadcast spots announcing the new number, as well as the slogan 'Different number, same reflex'. The campaign was additionally supported through social media, as well as through Febelfin, FPS Economy and banks' own channels (ATMs, website, and so forth).

**Card Stop heeft een
nieuw telefoonnummer.**
Ander nummer. Zelfde reflex.

**CARD
078 170 170
STOP
24/24**

Iemand heeft
mijn betaalkaart
gestolen.
**Was jij het?
Of ben je enkel
mijn hartendief?**

economie
FOD Economie, K.M.O., Middenstand en Energie

febelfin
EEN INITIATIEF VAN

Asset Management and Private Banking

PRIIPS-Key Information Document: essential information for investors



Over the past year, the sector has been preparing to provide **investors** with a key investor information document, **called PRIIPS-KID**, as from 1 January 2023. This document of up to three pages contains all the information an investor needs about an investment fund in an

understandable, concise and non-misleading manner. The standard format of this document also makes it easy to compare all investment funds. The document is provided before the decision to enable the investor to make an informed investment decision.

Sector consultation

As a sector association, **BEAMA** has also responded over the past year **to some consultations of the Belgian supervisory authority FSMA**. This has covered topics such as the reporting of certain statistics to the supervisory authority, disclosure requirements for investment funds, questions and answers on

the moratorium on structured products, and a practical guide on outsourcing. In addition, BEAMA, through EFAMA, the European umbrella association of asset managers, **also follows the European consultations** and contributes when relevant to the Belgian sector.

Financial Markets and Infrastructure

Capital Markets Union, a permanent objective

Febelfin continues to monitor the European Commission's **consultations and regulatory proposals** on the **Capital Markets Union** and keeps its members informed. First, there are the Commission's Retail Investment Strategy (RIS) initiatives based on the investor's journey and a personalised asset allocation strategy. The foundations have also been laid for a European Single Access Point (ESAP) data portal, a set of measures to improve investor access to corporate and commercial business data. Lastly, the

Financial Markets and Infrastructure Business line is also **actively following the review of the Central Securities Depositories Regulation** (EU Regulation 909/2014, CSDR) and the **Shareholder Rights Directive II** (EU Directive 2017/828, SRD II).

Febelfin **actively supports the sector in defining positions** and **participates in various European initiatives** around this topic.



Monitoring sector developments to support the Belgian market

Febelfin's Financial Markets & Infrastructure Business Line is concerned not only with **regulatory oversight**, but also with developments that could affect its areas of activity, including the **Securities Value Chain**, i.e. the services offered to all securities clients (Investment Services). 2022 was a transitional year in which developments related to the shortening of securities settlement cycles accelerated: the US began moving to T+1 settlement in 2021 (with full migration expected in March 2024) and Canada and India, among other countries, are following suit. In the UK, a government task force is investigating these developments and preparing further steps.

In the European Union, the current T+2 settlement cycle is laid down in the CSDR and has been mandatory since October 2014. The CSDR is currently under review. In view of developments in these jurisdictions, Febelfin is **analysing how market infrastructures, financial institutions and their clients** can prepare in Belgium and the EU for **T+1** and the future **settlement of transactions**.

Analysing these potential developments will also need to include assessing whether settlement discipline and efficiency functions (such as automation) in Belgium and the EU are operating effectively now and are suitable for accelerated settlement, as this will be an important factor in determining whether any acceleration of the settlement cycle will be successful.

03. Online banking



Online banking and digital payments continued to develop and grow in 2022.

The demand for online and mobile banking subscriptions thus increases each year, showing that Belgians appreciate being able to conduct banking transactions from their smartphone or PC. Electronic payment use moreover remains at a high level. This trend is also confirmed by digital payments being available everywhere in Belgium from 1 July 2022.

Obviously, **technological innovation** and **changes in client behaviour** are important **social developments**. Banks are looking at how to **best** respond to their clients' needs.

This is also clear from their commitment to guide everyone through the digital transition. Financial institutions are aware of the need to engage all people in the digital age. In 2022, **initiatives** were launched to **help people** struggling to adapt to this evolution.

Payments and Operations

Barometer and promoting digital payments

The Digital Payment Day partners – **Bancontact Payconiq Company, Febelfin, Mastercard, Visa and Worldline** – again published the Digital Payments Barometer, a study conducted by Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB). This 2022 edition shows that the coronavirus crisis has had a lasting impact on Belgians' payment behaviour: contactless card payments, in particular, and, to a lesser extent, mobile payments have become increasingly popular.

The barometer was also an opportunity to promote 1 July as Digital Payment Day. This is an

initiative by the partners to encourage consumers to pay for their purchases digitally by card, smartphone or another device. This date was not chosen arbitrarily; it marked the beginning of all consumers being able to pay digitally anywhere in Belgium.

Since 1 July, businesses have had to offer at least one form of digital payment in addition to cash.

Febelfin answered the most frequently asked questions about this new obligation in a **brochure**.



Instant Payments

In total, 148,171,753 instant transfers were processed in 2022, increasing their share to 18.5% of the total number of transfers processed by the Centre for Exchange and Clearing (CEC). Since November 2021, most clients have also been able to receive and, in some banks, initiate instant international transfers in their accounts. In total, 8,397,147 international transfers were processed in 2022, of which about 47% were sent from Belgium and 53% were received from SEPA (Single European Payments Area).

In July 2022, the European Commission announced a legislative proposal to continue promoting the use of instant transfers in Europe. Febelfin welcomes the legislative proposal on instant credit transfers. These transfers are a major part of the future European payments market, and statistics show that not all Member States are equally advanced in introducing them in their markets. However, the proposed obligations are too broad and not sufficiently balanced. Febelfin has **shared its position on this topic** with the various stakeholders and will **continue its lobbying** in 2023.

Fin Café on cryptocurrencies

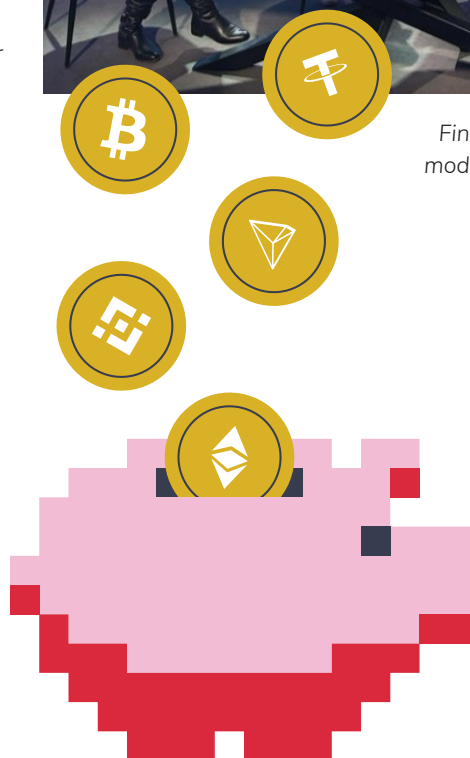
In December 2022, Febelfin and Digital Payment Day partners – Bancontact Payconiq Company, Mastercard, Visa and Worldline – organised a virtual Fin Café on cryptocurrency trends, challenges and opportunities.

The event featured prominent speakers such as Christian Rau (Senior Vice President Fintech and Crypto Enablement Europe at Mastercard), Johan Maes (Head of Trust & Intelligence Lab at Worldline), Thomas Douchez (Business Development Director at Visa) and representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Finance and the organisation Wijzer in Geldzaken. The latter came to present their **'Smart in Crypto'** campaign. More than 300 members registered for this webinar.



Fin Café speakers and moderator in the studio.


fincafé

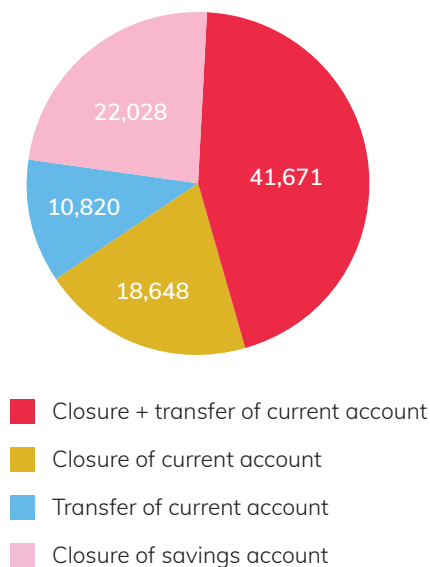


Bankswitching

In total, 93,167 bank switching requests were made through the free bank switching service **Bankswitching** in 2022. This project, **coordinated by Febelfin** allows clients to transfer their current and savings accounts to another bank quickly and easily, without interrupting current payment orders.

Since the end of 2020 and the extension of interbank mobility to savings accounts, many clients have used this service. In 2022, 22,028 clients decided to switch banks and close their savings accounts. This accounts for almost a quarter (23%) of the total number of requests submitted through the Bankswitching service.

Types of bank switch



Shortage of 5, 10 and 20c coins

In 2022, Belgium faced a shortage of 5, 10 and 20c coins. Since the coronavirus crisis, consumers have been using these small coins increasingly less to pay for their purchases and these are likely to be forgotten in a piggy bank.

The war in Ukraine and sanctions against Russia are also causing a shortage of raw materials, preventing the authorities from supporting

currency replenishment. This has caused a shortage of 5, 10 and 20c coins.

That's why Febelfin, Unizo and Comeos called on consumers who use cash to pay digitally as much as possible in shops, even for small amounts, and to pay as appropriately as possible when using cash or to take the small coins back to the bank.

Retail banking

Digital inclusion

The digital transformation of our society is well underway. Although the banking sector is fully behind these developments, it knows that not everyone is comfortable with this digitalisation. Eliminating digital inequality as much as possible is thus a major challenge. Many initiatives were taken in this area in 2022.

'ROUND-THE-CLOCK BANKING' BROCHURE

In March 2022, Febelfin published the storytelling brochure **'Round-the-clock banking'** following an online survey conducted by the research agency iVOX on Febelfin's instructions. This document gives an overview, with figures, of how Belgians go about their banking today.



'Round-the-clock banking' brochure

INFORMATION SESSIONS AND WEBINARS ON ONLINE BANKING, DIGITAL PAYMENTS AND SECURITY

Febelfin **undertakes** to help people who **have difficulty using digital tools** directly and to work with the organisations that support them.

Information sessions and webinars were organised for this purpose with various partners such as the Brussels Theft Prevention Advisers, WeTechCare Belgium, the Independent Federation of Senior Citizens, Paradigm (formerly CIRB), Ligo, libraries, municipalities, retirement homes, and so forth.

Depending on the target audience, the focus was how online banking works and/or online security.

In total, more than 50 sessions and webinars were held in French and Dutch in 2022.

Focus on the 'I'm going to bank online' sessions – First draft of the cooperation agreement with the Brussels Capital Region

The **Brussels-Capital Region**, represented by **Paradigm** (formerly CIRB) and **easy.brussels**, and **Febelfin** have committed to a **project** to help Brussels residents use digital technologies more independently, by offering them **training on online and mobile banking** and by running awareness campaigns. An **agreement** was signed in June 2022 to formalise this cooperation.

The first project to result from this agreement was 'I'm going to bank online'. Febelfin organised free information sessions on banking services and digital payments in eight Brussels municipalities. The sessions were complemented by a section on the different types of fraud. **Representatives from various banks** were also present to guide participants individually by answering their questions, helping them install their bank's app, and so forth.

'At a time when the world is becoming increasingly digital, the financial sector is constantly focused on digital inclusion. Banks make sure that no one is left behind. As a segment of the population needs more personalised support to make the transition, these actions aim to address that specifically.'

— Karel Baert, CEO Febelfin

'DIGITAL INCLUSION' BROCHURE

Febelfin has compiled a **brochure** containing all the material it makes available on digital inclusion and online safety. This practical and structured overview for tutors and consumers sets out everything they need to know to pay and manage their finances easily and securely online.

SIGNING OF THE DIGITALL CHARTER FOR DIGITAL INCLUSION

On 16 June 2022 **Febelfin signed the Charter for Digital Inclusion**, an initiative by **DigitAll**. DigitAll consists of a broad coalition of private and public enterprises, governments and associations and aims to bridge the digital divide in Belgian society by developing a network. It wants to raise awareness of the importance of digital inclusion and to develop practical solutions that will have a positive impact both now and in the future.

LAUNCH OF THE UNIVERSAL BANKING SERVICE

The **Universal Banking Service** (UBS) was launched on 1 January 2022. Although the digitalisation of society is happening quickly, not everyone is necessarily keeping pace with these developments. Special attention needs to be paid to the group of people who are less or not digital.

The UBS is the result of a 2021 agreement with federal Ministers Van Peteghem and Dermagne and State Secretary De Bleeker. The UBS offers manual transfers at a reasonable cost for people less familiar with digital technology, enabling them to participate fully in economic life and manage their finances.

The conditions and basic principles of the UBS were laid down in a Charter. This Charter also includes an undertaking to better inform consumers about the banks' offer and the associated fees. This transparency should give consumers even better choices. Febelfin has also prepared a **'Question and Answer'** about the UBS to provide the best possible information to any client wishing to use this service.



04. Sustainable and socially responsible banking



The **financial sector** is well aware of the importance of addressing **sustainability issues** in its activities. It **plays a key role** in financing the transition to a more sustainable society. The sector can help businesses and households make sustainable decisions and support them through their credit and investment policies.

Febelfin also presented some of its environmental, social responsibility and governance (ESG) activities, highlighting its commitment to sustainability. These are linked to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and were included in a **sustainability report**.²

The financial sector is also committed to **more inclusion and diversity in the sector**, with more specific initiatives in 2022 to achieve this goal.

Promoting the financial literacy of the general public, especially young people, is also part of sustainable banking for society. Financial education was the focus again this year.

Febelfin continued to **pay attention to training, developing competences** and the **well-being of employees in the financial sector**. The sector's attractiveness as an employer was also promoted through various campaigns.



² Febelfin's sustainability report is attached.

Regulatory Affairs and Retail Banking

War in Ukraine

As soon as the war broke out in Ukraine, the banking sector stepped in to help Ukrainian refugees.

BASIC BANKING SERVICE

Access to a bank account is essential to be able to function in our society. That's why, Belgian banks launched a **basic banking service** and **offered it to Ukrainians** forced to leave their country because of the war.

This service includes a current account with a debit card, allowing them to perform some basic transactions. Refugees can also open ordinary bank accounts.

To make it easier for refugees to understand how to manage their banking affairs in Belgium, **specific and practical information** was developed in **different languages**. For example, **Febelfin's leaflet** on the basic banking service is available in Ukrainian, Russian, French, English, Dutch and German.

The leaflet answers questions, including what is the basic banking service, who can benefit from it and what documents are required to apply for this service. This leaflet was distributed through Fedasil and the government's information website, among other channels.

Between February and July 2022, Ukrainian refugees opened 23,309 bank accounts in Belgium. More specifically, 12,888 basic bank accounts were opened, representing 57% of the total number of bank accounts that Ukrainian refugees opened. The remaining accounts opened by Ukrainian citizens are ordinary accounts.



'Allowing Ukrainian refugees to open a bank account was another initiative demonstrating the banks' involvement. Cooperation with the Minister of Finance and the National Bank made this project possible, showing once again how much can be achieved with combined efforts.'

— Karel Baert, CEO Febelfin

EXCHANGE OF HRYVNI

From June to November 2022, Ukrainian refugees could **also** deposit **their hryvni** in cash into their Belgian bank accounts and **exchange** them for **euros**. Under this scheme, the Belgian banking sector wanted to support Ukrainian refugees during their stay in Belgium.

Febelfin published **articles** in Ukrainian to explain this possibility.

Retail Banking

Financial education

The financial sector has a long-standing commitment to financial education and believes it is vital that it receives due attention in young people's education. Strengthening young people's financial training is a shared responsibility in which, alongside the financial sector, government, education and all other relevant stakeholders must play an important role. Febelfin wishes to continue supporting all stakeholders by developing free informative content and educational materials.

Many financial education projects were implemented in 2022 to improve the financial literacy of the general public and of young people in particular.

A study that Febelfin conducted with research agency IndiVille shows that young people need more financial information. According to the study, Belgians think they have adequate financial knowledge to manage their day-to-day affairs. However, it turns out that they often overestimate themselves.

The study also emphasises a lack of financial literacy among young people aged 16 to 30, who score lower than the rest of the population on all the examined points. Yet basic financial literacy is essential to handle money well and build wealth. On a positive note, young people have indicated through this study that they are looking for information to develop their financial literacy.



³ National survey by Febelfin and research agency IndiVille of 2,164 Belgians aged from 16 to 79, of whom 746 were aged between 16 and 30 (March 2022).

REVAMP OF THE MIJNGELDENIK.BE WEBSITE

In **response to the demand for information from young people**, Febelfin launched the revamped website mijngeldenik.be. UX students from the Karel De Grote University of Applied Sciences considered what the ideal site should look like

and what content would be relevant to them. Mijngeldenik.be is thus a website geared towards young people made by young people.

Febelfin highlights various aspects of daily financial life on this website: payments, saving and investing, borrowing and living, and much more.

Meest gelezen

[Zie alles →](#)



DEVELOPING EDUCATIONAL MATERIAL ON CRYPTOCURRENCIES WITH ED TV

Febelfin worked with [ED TV](#) to produce new educational material on cryptocurrencies. The aim is to guide young people and explain to them objectively what they should and should not do in the world of cryptocurrencies. Alternative investment solutions are also presented to them.

The teaching material consists of a series and ready-to-use lesson sheets that correspond to the learning outcomes. The material is intended for young people in the third cycle of secondary

education. Although the material is currently only available in Dutch, a French version will also be available during 2023.

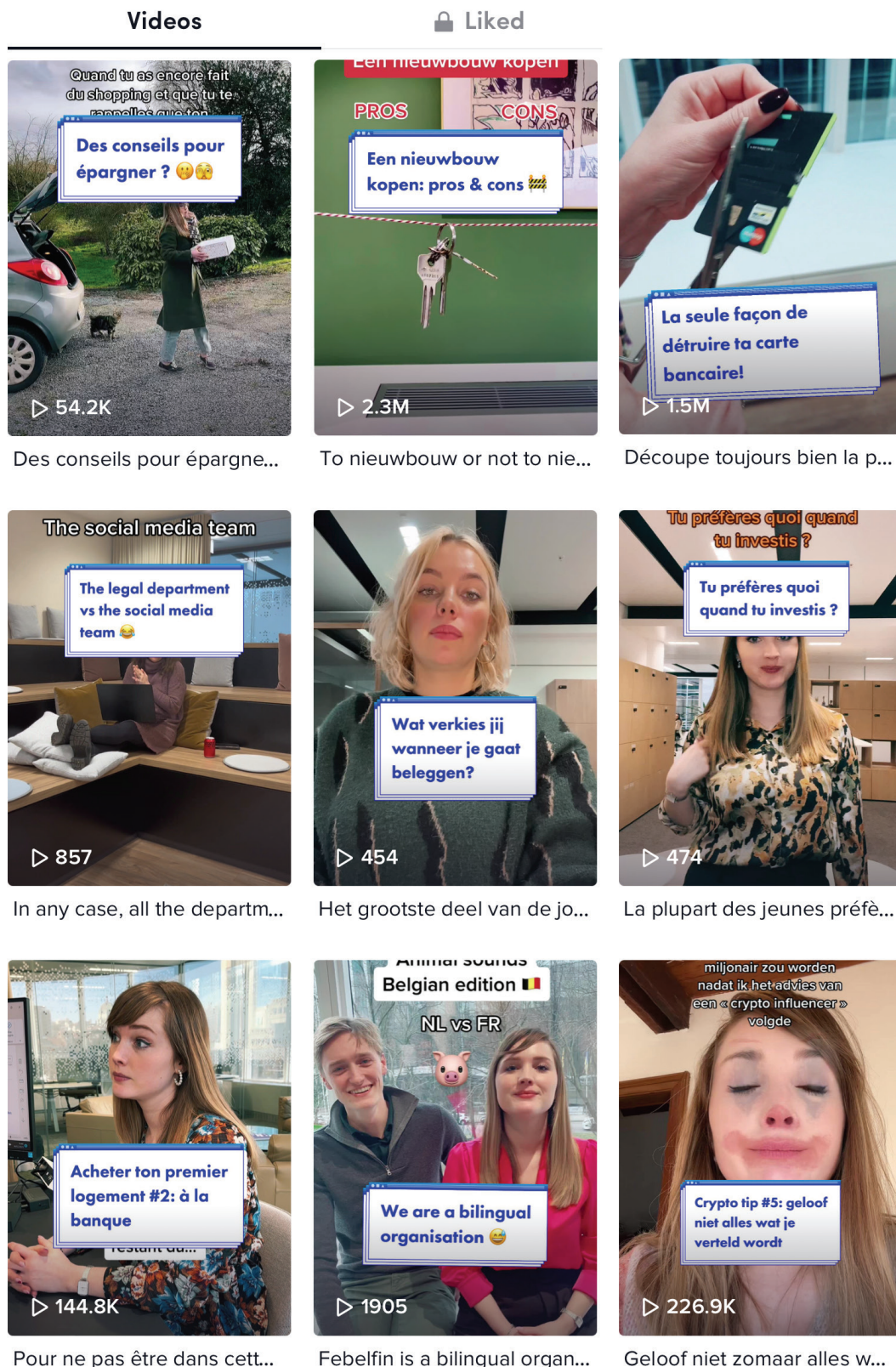


Start of the first episode of the 'Bits of Coins' series

LAUNCHING A TIKTOK ACCOUNT

As another way of reaching the younger generation, Febelfin has created a **new TikTok channel that informs young people** about all

kinds of topics: online fraud, cryptocurrencies, digital payments, and so forth. In line with the new trends, this account is full of informative tips and advice. And it has been a success: some videos have gone viral, each with over 1.5 million views.



Examples of videos from Febelfin's TikTok account.

COOPERATION WITH TADA

Under the Digital Skills Fund Belgium, Febelfin has **organised workshops on money** in cooperation with **TADA** (ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir). TADA is a learning network. It aims to empower and

integrate socially vulnerable youth by involving the general public and businesses.

Over two weekends, 12 Febelfin colleagues gave workshops on online banking, digital payments and online fraud to around 120 young people in the Brussels Capital Region.



Workshops led by Febelfin in cooperation met ToekomstATELIERdelAvenir



A **booklet of educational games 'The FinFun Games'** was also launched with crosswords, word searches, and tips on online banking, payments and security.

Banking services and
online security play book

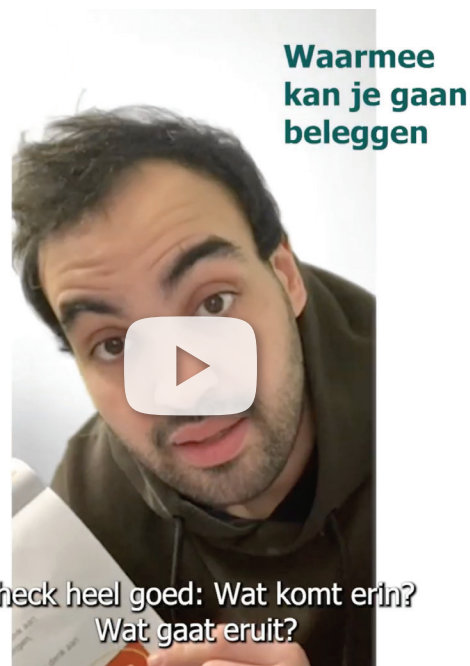
Asset Management and Private Banking

Financial education on investments

Febelfin and its constituent association, the Belgian Association of Asset Managers (BEAMA), encourage everyone, particularly young professionals, to **learn about savings and investment products and the associated risks**. Knowledge of financial concepts and the financial skills to apply this knowledge are both essential when it comes to making good decisions for managing your savings.

The sector thus undertook several initiatives last year to promote financial education for investors, including producing the 'Investing for a better future' brochure that contains five tips to do more with your savings. A video was also made on this theme.

The **BEAMA website** was also completed revamped, with a section specifically dedicated to **financial education**.



'5 tips to do more with your savings' video

Beleggen voor een betere toekomst

5 tips om meer te doen met je spaargeld



Corporate Banking and Sustainable Finance

Businesses and sustainability

Sustainable development is one of the main issues and challenges facing society today. Businesses have a significant responsibility to make society as a whole more sustainable. Several initiatives in this area were thus taken in 2022.

'HOW ESG REPORTING CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE FOR YOUR COMPANY'S BROCHURE

Increasingly more businesses use sustainability or ESG criteria for their reporting. ESG is based on three pillars: environment, social and governance. Essentially, ESG reporting allows businesses to simply and transparently communicate the social and environmental impacts of their operations and management. This reporting allows businesses to show that they are contributing to a more sustainable world.

But how do you initiate this innovation in your business? And how do you measure and manage the transition to greater sustainability? Febelfin has prepared a **practical brochure for businesses** that outlines the key principles of **ESG reporting**, lists the benefits of such reporting and provides some specific examples.



FIN CAFÉ ON 'SUSTAINABILITY AND ESG REPORTING FOR BUSINESS OWNERS'

In February 2022, Febelfin and the VBO-FEB organised a virtual edition of the **Fin Café** on the theme 'Sustainability and ESG reporting for business owners'.

Some of the most experienced experts on sustainability and the related legislation were invited on this occasion to discuss the importance of sustainability reporting and the impact on investment and financing activities. Vanessa Biebel (COO and Executive Manager of the Competence Centre Sustainability & Circular Economy at the VBO-FEB), Catherine Delanghe (SME Consultant at Guberna), Tom Van den Berghe (Sustainable Finance Director at Febelfin) and Johan Eyckmans (Professor of Environmental Economics at the KUL) sat around the table. The debate was supplemented by inspiring testimonies from business owners.



Cover of the brochure on ESG reporting



Z-SUSTAINABLE FINANCE

Febelfin worked with the **VBO-FEB** and **Kanaal Z** to highlight the topic of sustainable business: the **Z-Sustainable Finance series** explored the possibilities around sustainable businesses and ESG reporting. Experts and SME owners explained why a strategy based on sustainable objectives and ESG reporting is useful and necessary.

ESG PAPER: THE CLIMATE AND THE BELGIAN ECONOMY

The European Union has to be carbon neutral by 2050. This objective of the European Commission is to be achieved through a series of measures.

Together with the **UWE**, the **VBO-FEB** and **VOKA**, Febelfin has prepared a paper to explain the **impact of the European climate plan on businesses**, the consequences for the **labour market**, **competitiveness** and so forth. This ESG Paper, which summarises the main points, was distributed through the channels of Febelfin and its partners and sent by email to the relevant federations.



THE CSRD (CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING DIRECTIVE)

The CSRD amended the requirements of the Non-Financial Reporting Directive (NFRD). The scope of the CSRD also extends to large companies and companies listed on a regulated market. It also requires the auditing of reported information and introduces more detailed reporting requirements. Lastly, the Directive requires companies to digitally label information reported to the European Single Access Point.

This is an **important regulatory document for Febelfin**, as financial institutions usually fall within the scope of the CSRD and thus require a practical approach. Financial institutions

moreover use ESG data: they need their clients' data to meet their own prudential and reporting requirements, and the CSRD regulates this. SMEs also represent a large part of Belgian banks' professional client base. While they do not come under the scope of the CSRD, any 'lighter' reporting may also be important for them in their stakeholder relationships.

Febelfin aims for a **reporting framework that is pragmatic** (the bank as the reporting entity), **targeted** (the bank as the user of the company's ESG data) and **proportionate** (also feasible for SMEs).

Institutions covered by the Directive have to apply the new CSRD standards to their 2024 reporting from 2025.

THE CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY DUE DILIGENCE DIRECTIVE (CSDDD)

This European Commission proposal aims to promote sustainable and responsible behaviour by businesses in their operations and management. The new directive will ensure that companies address the adverse impacts of actions in their value chains, both in and outside the EU.

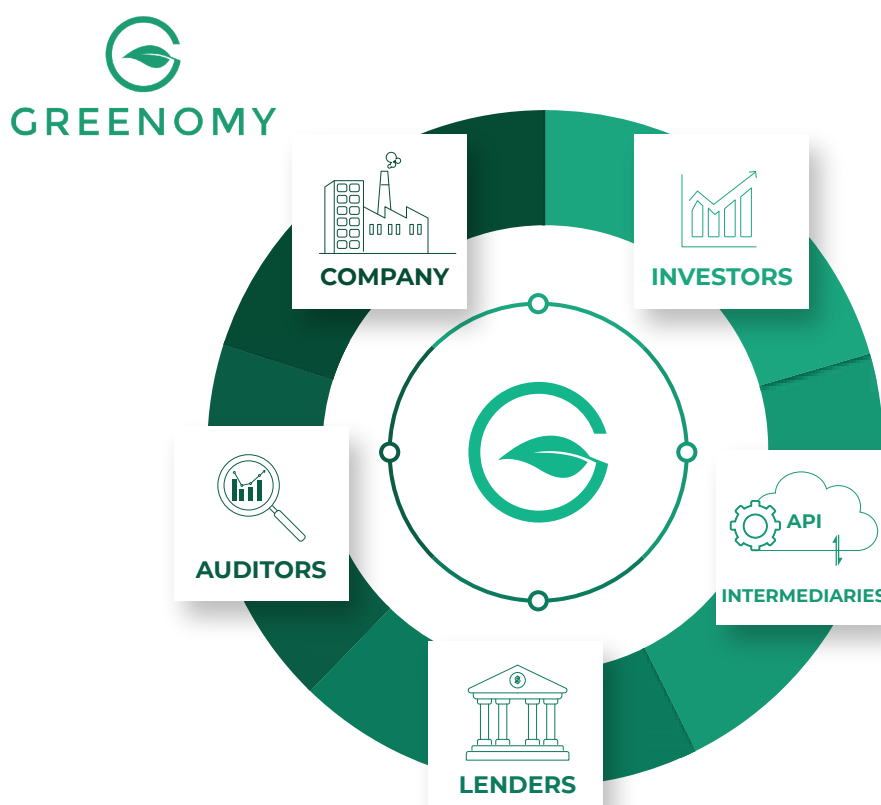
Febelfin **supports the objectives of the proposal:** respecting human rights and promoting

environmental protection, creating a level playing field and preventing fragmentation between Member States. Nevertheless, it highlighted a lack of clarity in the text and specific concepts, which could lead to multiple interpretations, legal uncertainty, and actual fragmentation between Member States. Member States are moreover given a wide margin to manoeuvre in transposing the future directive, which could create the risk of over-regulation. The legislative process should therefore continue to be closely monitored in 2023.

GREENOMY

Febelfin is also the **initiator of a pilot project on ESG reporting**. The project with Belgian 'Regtech' Greenomy gives businesses a tool to comply with their ESG reporting obligations, particularly regarding those related to the European Taxonomy. We are now in the testing phase of the tool to check whether it meets the expectations of the banks involved and the several dozen of their professional clients invited

to participate. The emphasis during this testing phase will continue to be on reporting in relation to the European Taxonomy, as this is the type of reporting that companies are already required to do. The Greenomy platform may be able to accommodate four pieces of European legislation in the future: European Taxonomy, EBA Pillar 3, CSRD and SFDR. It is a tool that any business can access by contacting Greenomy directly.





FINANCING THE CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Febelfin is **a member of the steering committee of Circular Flanders** and, together with PMV, **leader of the Lever Financing** also at Circular Flanders.

To this end, **Febelfin**, along with representatives of banks and leasing companies, **cooperated** in a study on **financing the circular economy** commissioned by Circular Flanders and conducted by KPMG. This study aims to identify what is needed to intensify and accelerate the circular economy, in connection with the Lever Financing under the Circular Flanders programme.

As a follow-up to this study, work is continuing under the auspices of the Lever Financing initiators to broaden the range of financing available and to standardise and circular-proof the risk assessment frameworks.

Sustainable Finance

Policy options for a Belgian strategy on sustainable finance

This project, launched by Ministers Khattabi and Van Peteghem in October 2021, aims to **develop policy options** for a **Belgian sustainable financing strategy**.

This future strategy has three objectives:

- Making the financial sector more sustainable, by helping to bring it into line with ESG considerations and integrate ESG risks into its decisions, all with a clear vision and framework.
- Strengthening federal government and institutions as sustainable investor(s), to become a catalyst for ESG alignment and implement international and European commitments (such as the Paris Agreement).
- Supporting coherence and compliance with the European sustainable finance agenda by Belgian players, providing them with adequate tools and regulatory support, even though the aim remains to go beyond the EU regulatory framework.

Although it remains to be seen which policy options will translate into actual and specific policy choices by the Belgian government, this is an important initiative for Febelfin because it is necessary to closely **monitor whether these policy options are reasonable and feasible**.

Even so, it is positive that the government wants to play a more active role in sustainable financing. Some policy options could reflect existing financial sector demands on public authorities, such as access to EPC databases, SMEs' ESG data, and so forth. But these options should not add additional requirements to EU legislation on sustainable finance.

Towards Sustainability label

In February 2019, the Towards Sustainability initiative was launched under Febelfin's leadership and agreed with various stakeholders inside and outside the financial sector.

The primary objective was to set minimum requirements for sustainable financial products through a quality standard. It also provided individual and institutional investors with a tool – the label – to guide them in their search for sustainable investment solutions. In 2021, this quality standard was revised and strengthened to refine the label's criteria and bring it in line with European regulations. The **revised version came into force in 2022**. Febelfin's **support for this process** confirms that the **Belgian financial sector is at the forefront of sustainability in Europe**. The aim of this enhanced standard is to



continue increasing the impact of the label and to bring more financial institutions and investors on board the path to a sustainable economy. By the end of 2022, there were over 700 labelled products, managed by over 100 financial institutions in 10 different countries, representing more than €470 billion.

Febelfin Connect 2022: an edition devoted to sustainability

After two years dominated by the coronavirus pandemic, Febelfin's annual Connect event could again take place on 28 March 2022. This edition, devoted to sustainability in the financial sector, was broadcast by Kanaal Z.

Several distinguished speakers followed each other to present on this important topic. The introduction was given by Febelfin CEO Karel Baert, followed by keynote speeches by Vincent Van Peteghem, Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Finance, and Andrea Enria, Chair of the ECB's Supervisory Board. Enria outlined the sector's current challenges. This was followed by a debate on sustainability with Hilde Vernailen, President of Assuralia, Dirk Wouters, Vice-President of Febelfin and Marie Lambert, Professor of Sustainable Finance at the University of Liège. Johan Thijs, President of Febelfin **delivered the closing speech**.

The event demonstrated the financial sector's **major responsibility in the transition to a sustainable society**. Each speaker on stage had their own ideas on managing and organising the transition, but they all agreed on its importance and urgency.

In any event, this edition was a success: more than 300 people accepted the invitation.



After-movie of the Febelfin Connect event – 2022 edition

Regulatory Affairs, Asset Management and Private Banking

Sustainable investing: overview of clients' sustainability preferences



Since 2 August 2022, the new European Delegated Regulation **MIFID II** has imposed additional rules on investment firms when investors seek investment or asset management advice. Besides the traditional questions about the client's knowledge and experience, financial capacity and investment objectives, **investment firms must now also include questions about the client's sustainability preferences** in the **profile assessment tests** and offer products tailored to these preferences to clients who require this.

Febelfin **obviously supports the objectives of this legislation**, which takes the objectives of the European Green Deal one step further. Convinced of the financial sector's pivotal role in transitioning to a sustainable society, **Febelfin teamed up with Assuralia to publish a brochure explaining these new rules** and informing investors about the existence of sustainable financial instruments.

Overview of the brochure on the new MiFID/IDD rules.

Sustainable investments are becoming more appealing: according to a recent study by IndiVille commissioned by Febelfin in 2022, almost one in three Belgians (28%) considers sustainability the most important aspect of an investment. Young investors even attach more importance to sustainability (48%) than the return (38%).

In autumn 2022, asset managers prepared as best they could to provide distributors with the information needed to rank products according to sustainability preferences. The lack of data needed by asset managers themselves to apply the legislation is one of the main challenges in this regard.

Retail Banking

Climate targets: credit-sector initiatives

The lending sector has been committed for several years to helping achieve the energy targets set at European, national and regional levels. These targets include significantly improving the energy efficiency of private homes.

The **Professional Credit Association**, a constituent association of Febelfin, **has been involved in developing the Energy Efficient Mortgages Initiative (EEMI) and the Energy Efficient Mortgage Label (EEML)**, an initiative of the European Mortgage Federation (EMF) with support from the European Commission. This initiative aims to improve the energy performance of buildings through incentives linked to mortgage loans.

The energy crisis has also highlighted the need for policy decisions to promote energy reform. The Flemish government has decided that as from 2023, homes with an EPC E or F label must be renovated to at least a D label within five years of purchase.

The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) is considered the key element for an objective and accurate assessment of a home's energy efficiency. Access to EPC databases is crucial for the lending sector to obtain automated and secure information. The Flemish Region provides access to its database of energy performance certificates. However, a limited retention period of three months and a ban on using the data for reporting to the EU institutions or the National Bank of Belgium limits its use. These restrictions should be removed.

The National Bank of Belgium is also placing increasing importance on energy-efficient homes being used as collateral by lenders. A circular from the end of 2020 requires banks and insurers under its supervision to collect and store data on the energy efficiency of these homes. In 2022, meetings were held with the Wallonia authorities and the Brussels-Capital Region to determine the specific steps needed to also access their regional databases.

Social Affairs

Diversity and inclusion

The banking sector wants to be a model of inclusive and diverse thinking, leadership and decision-making. Several initiatives have been adopted, and are still being adopted, for this purpose.

In 2022, Febelfin signed **signed a new cooperation agreement with Actiris** to boost **multicultural inclusion** in the financial sector. Recruitment efforts, addressing prejudice and microaggressions, and mentoring are key elements of this action plan.

To attract more women to IT professions in the financial sector, Febelfin, **Agoria and the ULB-VUB have launched the 'S.HE Goes Digital: Executive Master in Digital and IT Essentials'**. The goal of this one-year programme, which includes a work placement and mentoring, is a student population of at least 50% women.

Wo.Men in Finance, an association of all major financial institutions, was also extremely active in 2022. Following the surveys on multicultural inclusion in finance (2020) and on LGBTQIA+ inclusion (2021), Wo.Men in Finance launched a **survey in 2022 on the factors hindering women's careers in the financial sector**.

The conclusions of this survey were presented to the sector's CEOs. It highlighted three main reasons why women, especially in senior management, consider leaving their positions: corporate culture, political games and leadership style. Although important, work-life balance was not a factor in considering leaving their jobs.

Wo.Men in Finance's public and political visibility increased further in 2022: at their international conference in June, the Prime Minister, European Equality Commissioner Helena Dalli, and

European Parliament Vice-President Evelyn Regner spoke about the uniqueness of this initiative. More than 700 participants attended this conference.



Wo.Men in Finance now has 50 member institutions. They measure their glass ceiling and progress at all levels every year. The sector has crossed the threshold of 30% women in senior management for the first time.

Read more in the [latest annual report](#) of Wo.men in Finance (in English).

Right to disconnect

The Act of 3 October 2022 containing various provisions on employment allows workers to be offline (right to disconnect).

Under the Act, the terms of the right to disconnect and the mechanisms for regulating the use of digital tools must be the subject of a collective labour agreement at company level with a view to complying with rest periods and a work-life balance.

The banking sector was the first to enter into a supplementary CLA, applicable to companies that did not have a CLA or provisions in their labour regulations by 1 January 2023.

An e-learning course on the right to disconnect is also being prepared and is expected to be introduced during 2023. It will explain the statutory framework, the most common types of risks and offer prevention tools.

Burnout

Burnout is a social problem. To tackle this problem, the financial sector is among others chosen to participate in a pilot project. As a result, the financial sector **became one of the first to work with the government to tackle**

this problem professionally and humanely. The Federal Agency for Occupational Risks (Fedris) launched this project in January 2019. It involved a specific support programme (sessions with a psychologist, as one example) for employees suffering from, or at risk of, burnout. Although this scheme initially only applied to hospitals and banks, access was extended to other healthcare sectors (paramedics, physician specialists, and so forth) in 2021. It has also been extended for 2022 and 2023.

'Since 31 December 2021 and the start of the project, the administration has received 1,050 screening application forms in total, of which 229 (21.8%) are from the banking sector.'

— *Wien De Geyter - Secretary-General of Febelfin*

The Search for Talent in the Financial Sector

The financial sector is searching for **new talent**. To address this issue, the Belgian Finance Centre (BFC), in partnership with Febelfin and Assuralia, organised a major evening debate entitled **'Search for Talent in the Financial Sector'**. The debate took place at the end of June 2022.

Karel Baert, CEO of Febelfin, was the keynote speaker at the event. The panel of guests included Bruno Colmant (President of the BFC), Heidi Delobelle (CEO of AG Insurance), Ian Knapen (Corporate Relations Director of Capitant), Corentin Wéra (President of Capitant

Liege), Manon George (Projects Board Member of Capitant Liege) and Lieve Mostrey (CEO of Euroclear). The evening's main themes were the image of the financial sector, ongoing digitalisation, diversity and inclusion, and sustainability. Around 250 people attended the event.

Lastly, still on the search for talent, Febelfin **interviewed** Wien de Geyter, Secretary-General of Febelfin, and Barbara Van Speybroeck, Communications Director at Assuralia, and distributed the interview through various communication channels.



Search for talent in the financial sector



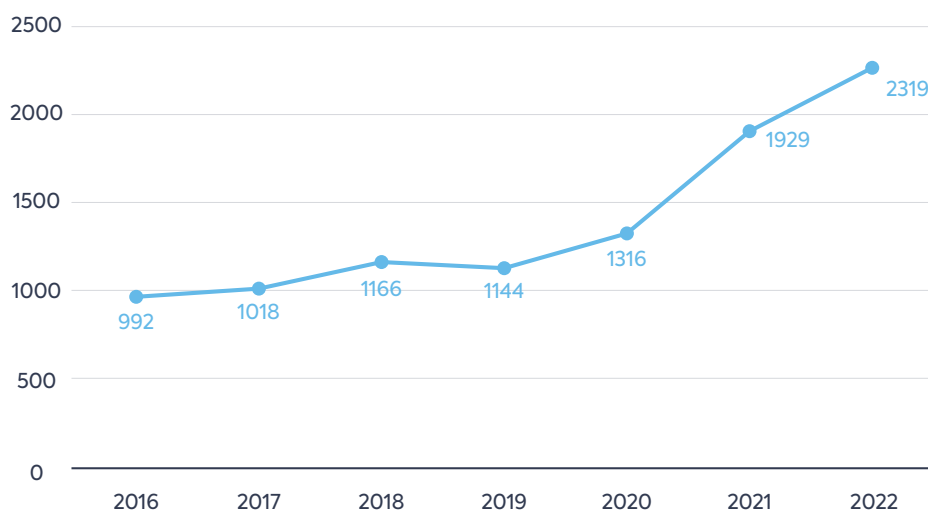
Fin Talent

Fin Talent is a set of sectoral initiatives supported by Febelfin. The Febelfin Academy develops the training for these initiatives. The aim is to better develop the talents of people working in the financial sector.

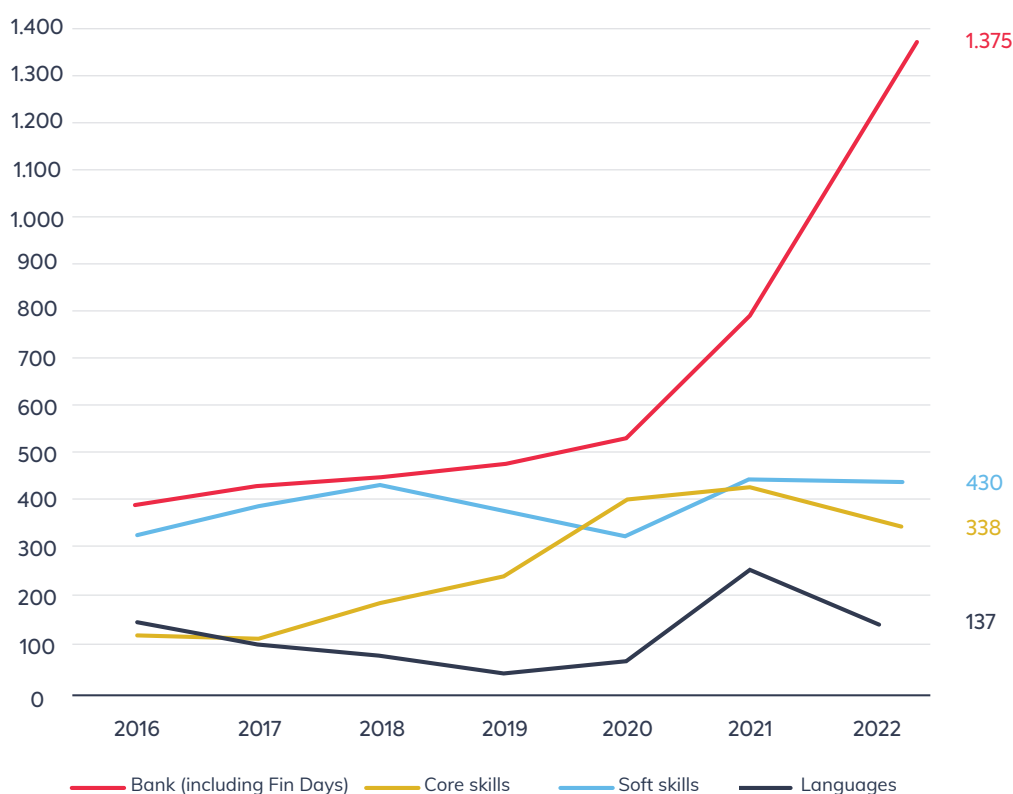
ELAN+

The **Elan+** training initiative is aimed at all staff in the banking sector. The Febelfin Academy and the banking sector's social partners also teamed up to offer adapted training in 2022.

Elan+ Subscriptions per year



Number of subscribers per initiative:

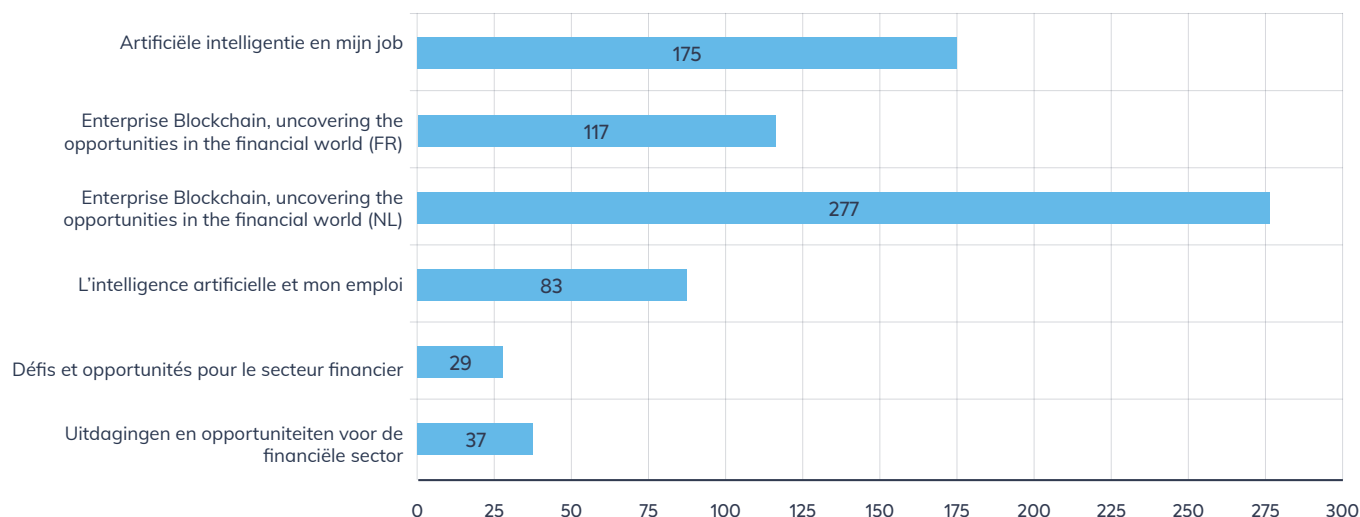




FIN DAYS

Fin Days consist of **half-day training sessions** on **major challenges** that banks face now or in the future. Based on the various themes discussed, participants are asked to link the potential impact of each challenge to employees' work. In 2022, the themes of the sessions were challenges and opportunities for the financial sector, artificial intelligence, and blockchain.

Number of entries for each Fin Day



FIN COMPETITION

At the end of 2022, Febelfin Academy organised the third edition of the Fin Competition. The Fin Competition is a financial-sector initiative that aims to bring business and academia closer together and give students a real insight into the world of finance.

This **competition between universities of applied science** determines which of the participating teams is Belgium's 'best digital bank'. Over the course of two months, the teams competed against each other in seven banking-themed trials. The best teams (one per university) were allowed to participate in the Grand Final. The Artevelde University of Applied Sciences eventually emerged victorious.



The ultimate leap in finance



Conclusion

Time to take stock. 2022 was clearly a year full of projects, achievements and commitments. The sector has been working diligently to address the human, geopolitical, and socio-economic challenges of the past year. Now it's time to focus fully on 2023, which also promises to be a challenging year.

We want to be a thriving sector in a more sustainable society, contributing to a reliable, efficient and secure economy through innovation and digitalisation.

To this end, we will continue sharing our expertise and experience with governments, policymakers and other stakeholders to find effective solutions for the future together.

Lastly, as a federation, we will continue to support our members with initiatives aligned with our strategic priorities. We will remain committed to supporting our members and society.

Because we are building the world of tomorrow together.



APPENDIX: FEBELFIN'S SUSTAINABILITY REPORT

Sustainability, in the broadest sense, has long been at the heart of Febelfin's work.

In 2022, the Febelfin team re-examined how we can make a sustainable contribution through our core activities. As a financial sector federation, Febelfin also highlighted the efforts and initiatives through which it can help and support its members to maximise their positive impact on society and thus strengthen the financial sector's social contribution to a sustainable transition. We continue to work with our members on solutions to the social challenge of 'becoming

more sustainable' (for example, by offering green renovation loans and sustainable investment products), as well as social initiatives to promote inclusion.

Febelfin does not just think sustainably. It wants to be sustainable and communicates this transparently to its members and stakeholders.

We explain some of our ESG (environmental, social and governance) achievements in the overview below. And we link them to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

ENVIRONMENT

13 CLIMATE ACTION



General:

- Supporting members in integrating European taxonomy
- Supporting energy renovation of buildings (residential and commercial) through mortgage loans
- Helping members integrate sustainability preferences into investor profiles and investor protection rules (MiFID)
- Making businesses aware of the importance of sustainability and ESG reporting and individual support to businesses by members on climate transition and investment planning

Internal governance:

- Internal mobility policy initiatives: electric bicycle; possibility of charging bicycles and electric cars; flexible mobility budget and so forth
- Internal energy-saving measures: focus on saving electricity, heating and lighting, solar panels, green roofs, limited use of printers, sustainable waste disposal and recycling policies, and so forth.

12 RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



- Managing and developing a standard for 'sustainable financial products' (Towards Sustainability label)
- Developing financing solutions in support of the circular economy, particularly through financial leasing: charter on the circular economy
- Supporting members in the increasing integration of ESG aspects (e.g. communication on ESG reports, and so forth)

SOCIAL

1 NO POVERTY



- Developing and providing coronavirus and energy crisis support measures to individuals and businesses
- Many studies, actions and partnerships relating to digital inclusion, especially for vulnerable groups
- Responsible lending and combating over-indebtedness
- Maintaining the accessibility of banking services by offering basic banking services to individuals and introducing the universal banking service (UBS) and the ten action points to promote digital and wider inclusion, signing the Digit All Charter and so forth.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION



- Many financial and digital literacy initiatives for different target groups
- Raising the general public's awareness of cyber security
- Information sessions on online banking, digital payments and online security

5 GENDER EQUALITY



10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES



- Actions and campaigns to improve gender diversity and inclusion in the sector (e.g. inclusion campaign and developing instruments to improve inclusion)
- Actions and initiatives to combat all forms of discrimination (background, religion, and so forth)
- Participating in the 'Round Table on Access to Finance for Women Entrepreneurs'
- Working with other sectors and businesses on greater gender equality (e.g. inclusive panels)
- Wo.men in Finance project
- Appointing an inclusion coordinator to continue developing the inclusion policy, internally and externally
- Initiatives for clients with disabilities
- Organising events with balanced representation of male and female speakers

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



- Creating tools to channel investment towards economic transition and recovery
- Efforts to position the financial sector as an attractive employer
- Investing in ongoing staff training
- Initiatives to control work-life balance, including the structural remote working framework
- First sector in Belgium with a CLA on disconnecting
- Initiatives to support staff in digital transition
- Efforts to negotiate salaries and maintain a competitive pay package
- Internal staff policy: possibility of remote working; flexible working hours; attention to diversity; gender-neutral vacancies; training; attention to ergonomics, possible stress factors at work, and so forth

GOVERNANCE

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



- Febelfin internal governance: investing an ever-increasing proportion of available reserves in sustainable products (funds)

16 PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



- Initiatives and new legislation to combat financial crime and money laundering
- Supporting members in applying international embargoes
- Supporting initiatives to continuously update internal control and compliance procedures
- Assisting members in applying national and international tax legislation for the proper collection of taxes payable

17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



- Many partnerships with federal, regional and local governments, NGOs, social organisations and other institutions to achieve and develop the above objectives
- Creating the 'Sustainability Director' position to develop and expand the sustainability policy as much as possible, both internally and externally

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