

# EWS Webinar

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22.2.22

# Agenda

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- Welcome and introduction
- Project presentation
  
- **Scientific background and managerial challenges**
- **Feedback from the panel interviews**
  
- Next steps
  - Project roll-out and time-line
  - **Questionnaire**
  
- **Q&A**

# Project presentation

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**Prof. Dr. Dino DOGAN, LSB**  
**Nico HOFFELD, MindForest**

# Our team

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# The EWS project

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- In today's market, the frequency of change and the corresponding impacts on companies are constantly increasing. A reactive mode is no longer appropriate. However, discontinuities, do not emerge without warning: weak signals can be used to anticipate opportunities, risks, and threats. This is why companies need to have structures, processes, procedures and competences in place to use weak signals.

The EWS project aims to

- Understand whether and how companies collect weak signals from the ecosystem to defend current positions, detect opportunities and threats.
- Assess to what extent companies analyze and use this information
- Identify business best practices and analyze them in the light of most recent research
- Share knowledge and inform the Luxembourg business community

# Managerial challenges

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**Prof. Dr. David W. VERSAILLES**

# Weak signals

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- *Functional definition:*
  - **Strategic early warning systems (SEWS)**  
aim at assisting organizations in dealing with discontinuities or strategic surprises and at allowing organizations to react ahead of time
  - SEWS elaborate on **Early warning signals (EWS)**.
- **The underlying assumption is that discontinuities do not emerge without warning.**  
The main theoretical reference is the concept of “weak signal” identified by ANSOFF (1975) to point out events or data whose detection could lead to the identification of strategic surprises.
- **The anticipation of disruptions is always difficult,**  
**Retrospective interpretation is facing the paradox of “knowing the unknown”**

# Weak signals are only “weak” because of the observer

## References:

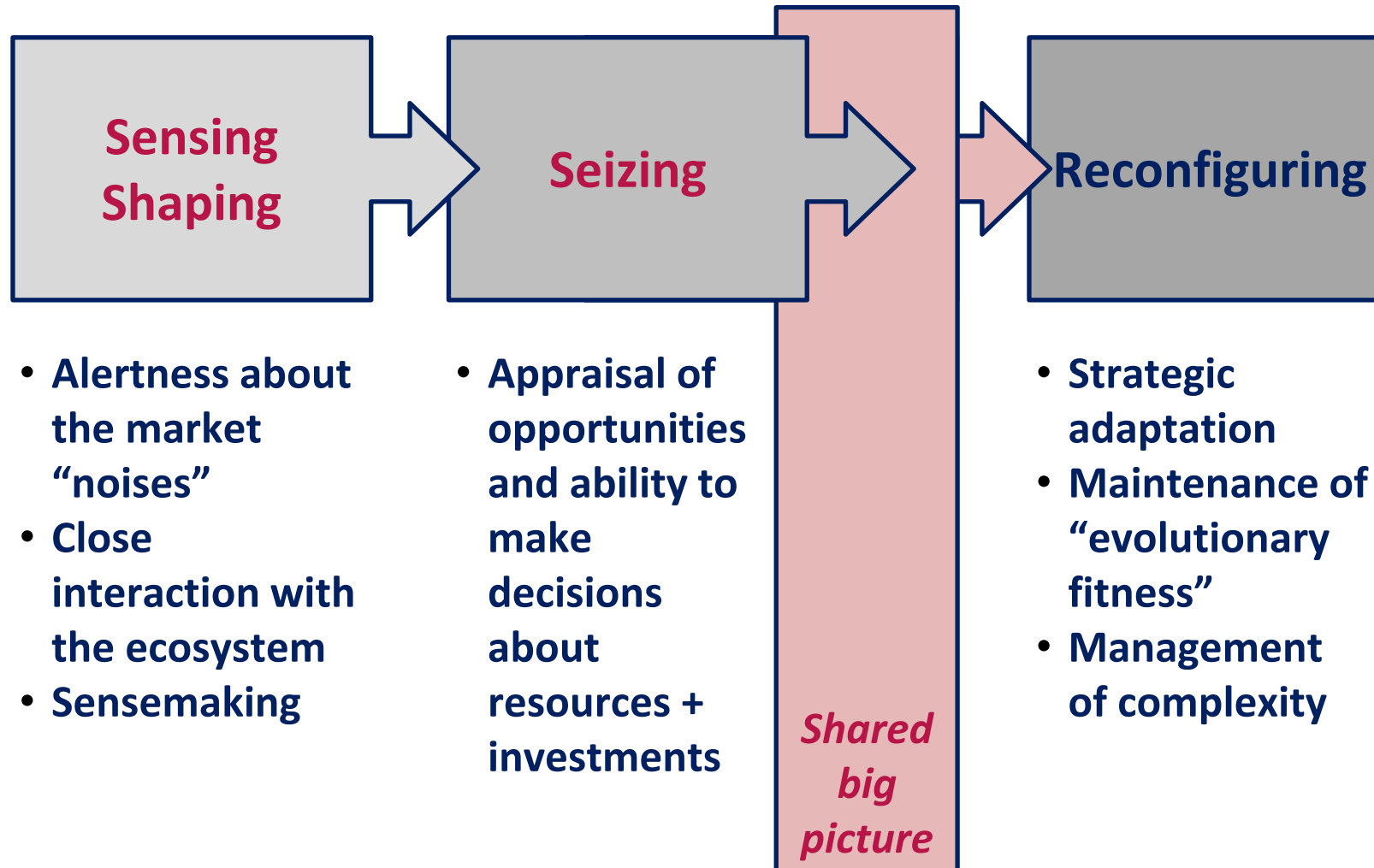
- Cevolini, A. (2016),  
“The strongness of weak signals: self-reference and paradox in anticipatory systems”, *European Journal of Futures Research*, vol 4/4, pp 1-13

- The notion of “weak” versus “strong” signal does not refer to the future as such, but to the observing system itself: **a signal is “weak” because of a lack of consistency between the “event” and the observing system’s cognitive map.**
- Signals are relevant (strong) because observers know the end of the movie and make sense of processes and signals retrospectively
- **Warning:** *Cognitive maps are contingent on time in social systems*  
Comprehensive early warning signaling systems are complicated to set up and the interpretation of early warning signals is a permanent challenge





# From *Weak signals* to *Dynamic capabilities (DC)*



# Managerial challenges with DC and EWS

## RESEARCH GAPS

*Who is pedaling?*

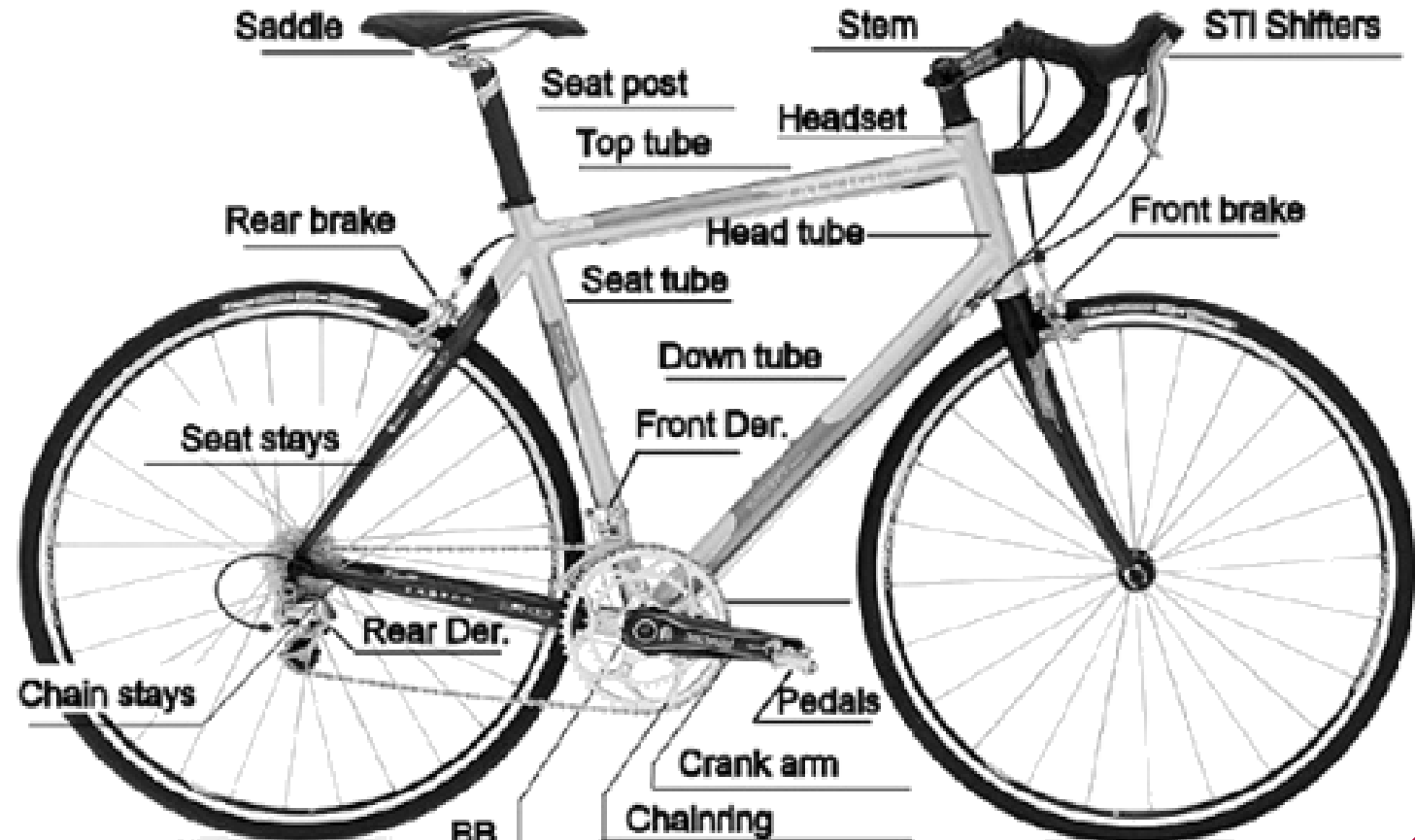
*Who is activating the gears,  
crank arms, derailleur, brakes?*

*How does the chain work?*

*How to coordinate sensing,  
pedaling, etc.?*

## References:

- Teece, 2007; 2014
- Levina & Vaast, 2005
- Kor et Mesko, 2013
- Di Stefano, Peteraf, Verona, 2014
- Peteraf, Di Stefano, Verona, 2013
- Versailles and Foss, 2019



# Lessons learnt

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**Prof. Dr. Dino DOGAN, LSB**

**Prof. Dr. David W. VERSAILLES, LSB**

## Initial findings (1/2)

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**Some companies do not refer to EWS at all.**

**No-one saw the pandemic or the flooding coming, but some said... "*We were not per se prepared, but we were ready for it.*"**

**Broad range of EWS management: from entrepreneurial "gut feeling" ... to formal processes, including LMS, IS or AI.**

**Building macro-economic scenarios seems more difficult than working about competition.**

**Being a subsidiary as part of a group or a MNE increases the chance of using EWS.**

## Initial findings (2/2)

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**Active listening:**  
*“The signals are there.  
You have to listen to them,  
and you have to  
communicate about  
them.”*

**Lessons learnt are easier  
to translate inside  
organizations when they  
already cope with safety  
or security regulations**

**Individual recognition of  
EWS is nothing without  
the ability to gain  
management attention**

**Some companies either do  
not see the need to adapt  
or do not know how to  
take action**

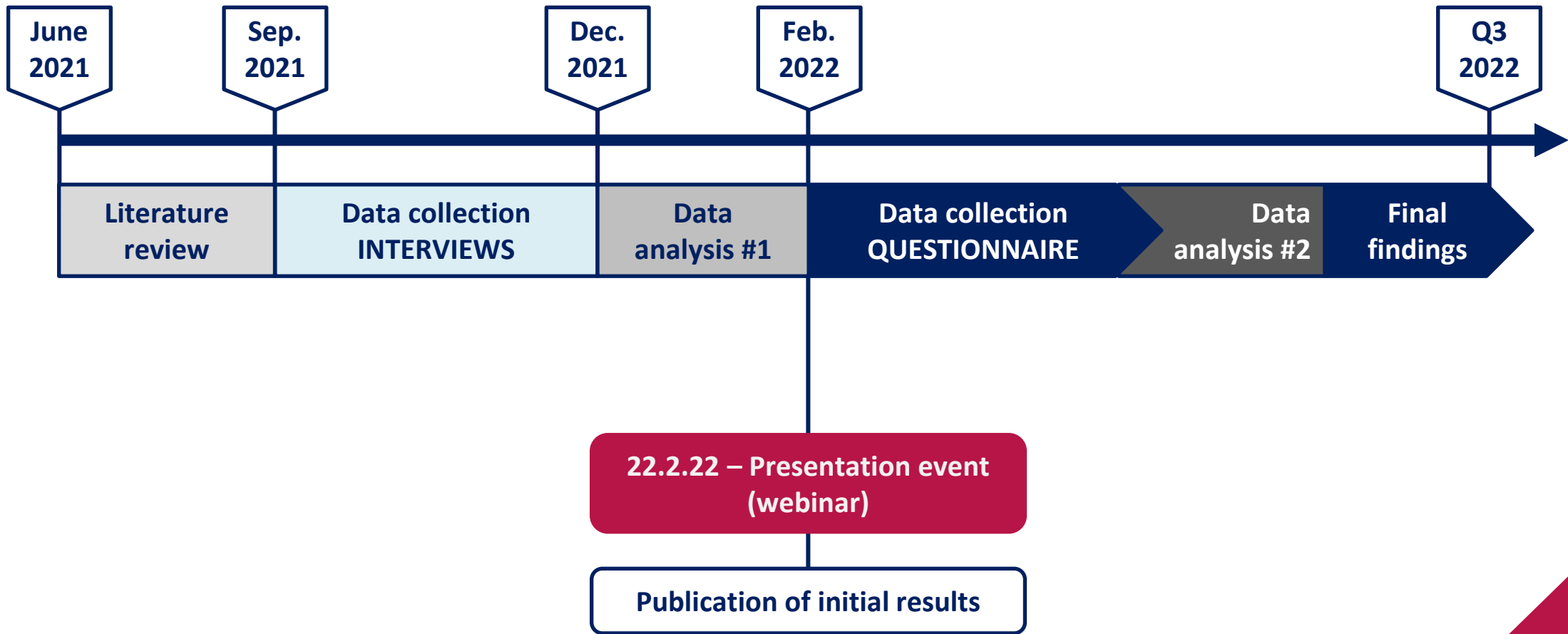
**The first prerequisite is  
the willingness to learn.**

# Next steps

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Questionnaire

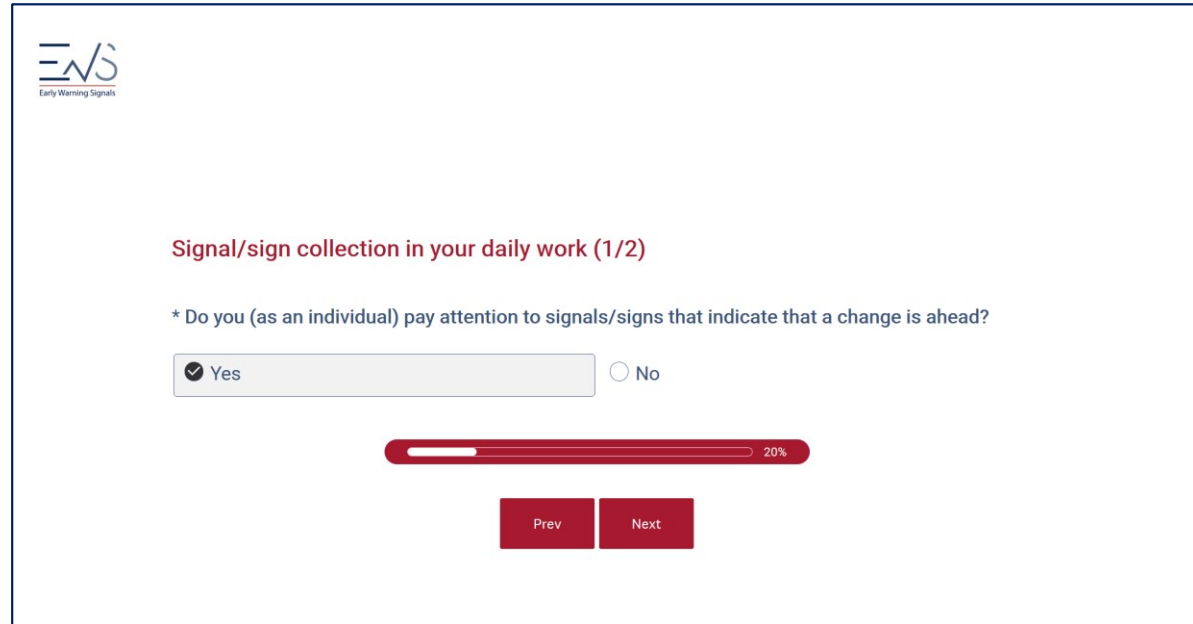
# Project roll out and timeline




# Questionnaire

Visit our website:  
[www.ews.lu](http://www.ews.lu)

Contact:  
[contact@ews.lu](mailto:contact@ews.lu)



 EWS  
Early Warning Signals

Signal/sign collection in your daily work (1/2)

\* Do you (as an individual) pay attention to signals/signs that indicate that a change is ahead?

Yes  No

20%

Prev Next



# Q&A

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# Q&A

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*"We were not per se prepared, but we were ready for it."*

Active listening:  
"The signals are there. You have to listen to them, and you have to communicate about them."

Lessons learnt are easier to translate inside organizations when they already cope with safety or security regulations

Broad range of EWS management: from entrepreneurial "gut feeling"... to formal processes, including LMS, IS or AI.

Being a subsidiary as part of a group or a MNE increases the chance of using EWS.

Individual recognition of EWS is nothing without the ability to gain management attention

Building macro-economic scenarios seems more difficult than working about competition.

Some companies either do not see the need to adapt or do not know how to take action

The first prerequisite is the willingness to learn.

## Details – Project team

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