



## **SUMMARY NOTES**

### **THIRD OITB WORKSHOP**

# **“Workshop on the Future of Open Innovation Testbeds”**

**Lund University  
14 June 2023**



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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The third workshop “Workshop on the Future of Open Innovation Testbeds” was jointly organised by the projects Convert2Green, FlexFunction2Sustain and SAFE-N-MEDTECH in close cooperation with the European Commission (EC) and was hosted by the Lund University as a satellite event of the EuroNanoForum 2023 (ENF2023).

The workshop was aimed at discussing crucial issues that are unfolding during the OITB projects’ implementation. This workshop also explored future actions that can strengthen the community and ensure the long-term viability of the OITB ecosystem. Participants had the opportunity to engage with fellow OITB members, exchange valuable insights and shaping the future of the OITB ecosystem.

The notes provided in this document offer a condensed overview of the presentations and discussions conducted during the workshop. For more comprehensive information, reference can be made to the PowerPoint presentation thoughtfully shared by the participants. It’s important to note that stringent data protection measures are in place to safeguard the confidentiality and security of the shared content.

## 2. SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

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### 2.1. Welcome Session



**oghoo** ■ **Welcome - context, scope and objectives of the workshop**  
**/ogh15** — **Magda Krokida**  
Professor at National Technical University of Athens, Coordinator of Convert2Green project

**Antonio Ferrandez**  
Policy Officer at DG Research & Innovation, European Commission

The workshop started with the welcoming notes from Professor Magda Krokida, Coordinator of the Convert2Green project.

#### 2.1.1. Welcome by the European Commission

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António Ferrández Garcia, the representative from EC/DG Research and Innovation, initiated the session by providing a political context. He then proceeded to share a series of draft recommendations formulated after two webinars held with the OITB network on April 26th and May 3<sup>rd</sup>. Lastly, he outlined the upcoming steps for the OITBs.

The report “**Open innovation test beds for advanced materials: Examples and lessons learnt from one type of technology infrastructure**”<sup>1</sup>, which has been released a couple of weeks after the workshop in Lund, explores the challenges, opportunities, best practices and recommendations to stakeholders to support the further implementation of the OITB. This report presents a first analysis of OITBs based on facts and figures extracted from the CORDIS Result pack on OITBs<sup>2</sup> of May 2022 and its update of June 2023; two webinars with the coordinators of the projects end of April and early

<sup>1</sup> European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, Open innovation test beds for advanced materials : examples and lessons learnt from one type of technology infrastructure, Publications Office of the European Union, 2023, <https://data.europa.eu/doi/10.2777/28908>

<sup>2</sup> <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/436434-open-innovation-test-beds-to-accelerate-european-innovation>

May 2023; a questionnaire to the coordinators; past workshops and conferences; meetings with experts; several articles and analysis; the monitoring of the projects; and exchanges of insights between Project Advisers from HaDEA, coordinators from the projects and Policy Officers from DG R&I. This report elaborates on the draft recommendations and possible next steps summarised below, presented by António Ferrández Garcia during his Lund presentation.

### *Updated draft recommendations (form the Policy Report on OITBs)*

#### **OITBs should:**

- Offer technology expertise, competences on business models as well as financial advice.
- Focus on SMEs and their needs as their main clients and target them accordingly via Open Calls.
- Improve proximity of customers with the assistance of internal marketing departments of consortium members, a network of translators in MS with no presence, the Enterprise Europe Network (EEN), the M.ERA-NET network, national certification bodies, and National Contact Points.
- Promote internally and to their customers and SMEs at large the Code of Practice on the management of intellectual assets for knowledge valorisation in the European Research Area for efficient IP licensing for market uptake and societal value creation. The OITBs should dedicate part of their funding for IP protection and exploitation.
- Include their service investment advice for SMEs, for example to harness additional private or public funding, and provide investment and market readiness evaluations for investors.
- Put in place a single-entry point (SEP) during the first year after the start of a publically funded project, including a financing strategy and a permanent location.
- Identify of unique features and needs of their customers. This should be done along the entire lifecycle (testing, pilots, support pre-market introduction, etc) and prioritise their services accordingly.

#### **The network of OITBs should:**

- Inform their members about most relevant development on regulations and standards. The OITBs should in particular, cooperate with technical committees to promote new standards or revision of relevant existing ones.
- Cluster and jointly develop a label for OITBs together with the European Enterprise Network (EEN), national certification bodies and National Contact Points (NCPs).
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#### **Member States should:**

- Consider existing opportunities to support the financial sustainability of an OITB after end of the EU funding, for instance under the exemptions foreseen under the revised state aid rules and the European Regional Development Fund.

### *Possible next steps (Future of the OITBs)*

#### **Coordinated plan on advanced materials:**

- Develop a strong, coherent and inclusive materials ecosystem in Europe:
  - Accelerate the uptake of advanced materials.

#### **ERA Policy Agenda Action 12:**

- Technology Infrastructures – 3 activities in 2023:
  - Commission Expert Group -Advisory Group.
  - Workshop on Technology Infrastructures access conditions.
  - Study to address and support Technology Infrastructures at national levels.

## 2.2. Session 1: Experiences from first generation OITB

### ogh15 /10h40 ■ Session 1: Experiences from first generation OITBs

- Potential discussion items:
- How to keep OITBs sustainable after the end of the project?
  - Legal structure and business model of the SEP
  - OITB sales and marketing strategy
  - How do you envisage integration of OITB services in the catalogue of other distributed SEP?

Moderator: **Marina Dias**  
Coordinator for EU funding at INL - International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory

**Sandrine Lebigre**  
R&D Deputy Director at IPC Centre Technique Industriel de la Plasturgie et des Composites  
OASIS: Open Access Single entry point for scale-up of Innovative Smart lightweight composite materials and components

**Maria Taxiarchou**  
Professor at National Technical University of Athens  
LIGHTCOCE: Building an Ecosystem for the up-scaling of lightweight multi-functional concrete and ceramic materials and structures

**Lorenzo Pastrana**  
Research Group Leader at INL, Member of the Board of Directors of the European Sustainable Nanotechnology solutions Association (ESNA)  
FlexFunction2Sustain: Open Innovation Ecosystem for Sustainable Nano-functionalized Flexible Plastic and Paper Surfaces and Membranes

**Xavier Borrás**  
R&D Project Manager, AC2T research  
i-TRIBOMAT: The European Tribology Centre

**Andrea Haiek**  
Business Development Manager, CIDETEC  
TB MED: An Open Innovation test bed for the development of high-risk medical devices

*Open Discussion*

### 2.2.1. Summary of presentations

Sandrine Lebigre, R&D Deputy Director at IPC, outlined the configuration of the **OASIS** Single-Entry Point (SEP). Rather than establishing a new legal entity, a collaborative agreement has been established among all OITB members. For SME customer contract signings, an OITB member will assume the lead. The objective is to maintain a streamlined structure while simultaneously operating with a decentralized regional workforce, where each OITB member serves as a regional SEP. Recognizing the significance of securing funding to address R&D risks is a vital consideration. The presence of a regional SEP facilitates access to national funding sources.

Professor Maria Taxiarchou, Professor at NTUA, described the new legal entity created to act as SEP of **LIGHCOCE**. Though the initial SEP concept initially revolved around establishing a non-profit organization, it changed over the implementation of the project and the SEP was finally established as a Spin-off (established in Greece). The predominant reason for this shift in legal structure pertains to concerns surrounding financial liability of contractors. Costs related to the preparation and establishment of the SEP, as well as preliminary dissemination measures, were already planned in the proposal.

Lorenzo Pastrana, Research Group Leader at INL outlined the non-for-profit entity created within the context of **FlexFunction2Sustain**: ESNA, the European Sustainable Nanotechnology solutions Association. ESNA forms an active platform for the exchange and cooperation of inventors, scientists, technologists, producers, sellers and all future relevant partners for development and implementation in joint projects. The association will not engage in direct contract signings with SME customers; instead, it is currently in the process of contracting with entities that function as commercial SEPs.

Xavier Borrás, R&D project manager at AC2T, introduced the newly established European Tribology Centre, the **i-TRIBOMAT** SEP, which has been established as a profit-oriented entity. One of the aspects highlighted during the presentation was the fact of having an entity outside the consortium joining the as shareholder of the legal entity (3 shareholders in total). Two fundamental framework agreements form the cornerstone: the shareholders' agreement and the bilateral service agreements inked between the company and the service providers. Services are categorized into distinct groups: non-overlapping (services provided exclusively by one service provider) and overlapping (services that can be conducted by multiple service providers). While overlapping services constitute merely 10% of the requests, they pose the most significant challenge in terms of equitable distribution among providers. To address this matter, a transparent allocation system had to be established, factoring in elements such as feasibility, capacity, customer interaction, language preference, and more. Pricing also merits attention and must be presented for deliberation. Furthermore, there exists a third category of services referred to as external services, which encompasses outsourced arrangements. One of the learning is about service providers: they are also SEP customers. It's important to ensure a win-win situation and keeping them happy.

Andrea Haiek, business development manager at CIDETEC, presented the go.Med – the commercial result of the **TBMED** OITB – which provides services to high-risk medical devices. The primary lesson gleaned from the OITB experience was the necessity for focused efforts. Given the extensive scope of medical services, encompassing all aspects is a challenge. Therefore, it became crucial to strategically define the specific areas to be addressed (a market niche) and services to be included (e.g., support to funding is not included). Externally, the most prominent challenge lies in developers potentially overestimating their level of advancement. This makes consultancy a very important service to be included in a portfolio, potentially the most relevant in the OITB business. Andrea also mentioned the importance of being a trusted provider to be in the venture capitalists' market. From a legal perspective, it's essential to contemplate a model that offers flexibility, allowing new service providers to seamlessly join the network and effectively cater to the evolving demands of customers.

## 2.2.2. Main outcomes from the open discussion

### *About the legal model of the Single-Entry Point (SEP)*

- The model that allows the creation of regional SEPs is believed to bring SEPs closer to customers while also enabling valuable guidance on available funding mechanisms, both on a national and regional scale.
- Having a legally executed agreement among OITB members serves as a binding mechanism. The association is viewed as an effective solution, as it facilitates the establishment of a legal entity and enables the formation of regional SEPs, thereby connecting the OITB members to a network of regional contact points. One potential drawback from the association model could be the incapability to enter into contracts with its associates.
- There might not be a universally ideal model for the SEP's legal structure. Each consortium needs to identify the most fitting model based on the partners' circumstances and constraints.

### *Views on the value proposition offered by the SEP to customers*

- **Sharing knowledge and expertise**, as well as efficiently **guiding customers to service providers** that align precisely with their requirements, regardless of their geographical location, underscores the added value of having a SEP.
- Perceiving the SEP solely as an entity for consolidating services could have its limitations. Numerous companies may seek technological services from a single provider, while others might view the SEP as an added expense on top of service costs. Of paramount importance is the establishment of a methodology and workflows that **facilitate the reduction of costs and time in the development cycle** for each service or set of services. While this could present challenges for service providers, the legal framework that underpins the SEP entity

(regardless of its format) streamlines collaboration, simplifies IP sharing, and expedites the dissemination of results that can expedite market entry.

- Given that service providers will be offering their services to the SEP, **quality control** stands out as a significant advantage. The SEP will undertake initial assessments, making it a pivotal aspect.
- **One contract to access a combination of different services** provided by different provider entities at multiple locations.

### *Views on the value proposition offered by the SEP to service providers*

- Favourable framework for **joint development activities**.
- **Amplified visibility** of SEP-affiliated service providers among companies beyond their regular customer network, opening doors to explore **new market opportunities**.
- Service providers linked to the SEP have the potential to **expand the service offerings** beyond their internal capabilities, making these services accessible to established customer networks. This enhancement can contribute to **bolstering innovation support within existing markets**.

## 2.3. Session 2: Best Practise: Collaboration between OITB

10h40/11h00 Coffee-break + Networking

11h00 /12h20 ■ Session 2: Best Practise: Collaboration between OITB

Potential discussion items:

- Landscape of the OITB ecosystem
- Opportunities for joint activities – complementarity of services
- Cross promotion, joint marketing activities
- How to foster effective users' access? (funding models, operations, etc)
- Future actions require setting up new OITBs and improve interconnections about those already implemented.

Moderator:  
**Angel del Pozo**  
Deputy Manager of Programs Strategy en Biokeralty Research Institute

**John Fahlteich**  
Managing Director, KET Market  
A landscape of the OITB ecosystem

**Christian May**  
Manager Sustainable Technologies for Energy and Electronics, Fraunhofer FEP  
Support in access to funding channels and sources

**Ulla Forsström**  
Principal Scientist at VTT, Coordinator of INN-PRESSME project,  
The importance of providing companies with all data and life cycle value chain modelling tools

**Open Discussion**

### 2.3.1. Summary of presentations

#### A landscape of the OITB ecosystem

John Fahlteich, Managing Director of KETMarket, the SEP from the **Convert2Green**, has initiated a discussion on how OITBs can collaborate to maximise their impact on SMEs' customers. He began his presentation by introducing the concept of a thematic innovation ecosystem(s). This approach encompasses engagement with local participants from all four primary stakeholder groups: Academia, Government, Industry, and Community. Its objective is to unite these stakeholders within innovation networks that are tailored to specific missions such as the Green Deal and digital transformation.

OITBs aren't the sole instrument envisioned by the EC for open innovation aimed at SMEs. It's important to also take into account the distributed **Open Access Pilot Lines** and the **Digital Innovation Hubs**. As for the OITBs, there are currently 28 ongoing projects, as depicted in the figure below.



Figure 1. OITB ecosystem in June 2023 (Source: John Fahlteich, 2023)



To initiate the exploration of how OITBs can address SME challenges, John Fahlteich underscored the insights derived from an EC survey that investigated the fundamental hurdles faced by companies in bringing innovative products and services to the market.<sup>3</sup> Among the central obstacles identified were a market dominated by entrenched competitors (65% of respondents), insufficient financial resources (58% of respondents), the intricacies and expenses associated with meeting regulations or standards (57% of respondents), limited human resources (49% of respondents), and the discovery and utilization of new technologies (35% of respondents). OITBs may answer these challenges by providing some key services such as:

- Assist SMEs in crafting business models that align with prevailing competitive landscapes.
- Provide guidance on securing IP protection.
- Facilitate access to investors and financing.
- Offer regulatory support, engage in standardisation activities.
- Contribute to R&D planning to alleviate the internal resource burden on SMEs (with the SEP serving as an external R&D department).
- Open access to new technical facilities and pilot lines.

The OITB ecosystem already provides the services outlined above. However, the existing organization of OITBs, each with its individual digital platform and service catalogue, presents a barrier for resource-constrained SMEs to access the comprehensive range of offerings they provide. So, there are a set of aspects to consider:

1. How can we organise OITB interaction, make use of synergies, bundle information?
  - Cross-promote services (e.g. OITB with IP services offer those to other OITB)
  - Central place for all information about OITB
2. How can we share resources?
  - SEP working for multiple OITB as regional contact point
  - Share OITB resources (document templates, procedures, etc)
3. How can we attract more SMEs?
  - Joint marketing activities and trade fair attendance
  - Involvement of external networks (EBN, EEN, etc)

### *Support in access to funding channels and sources*

Christian May, Manager of Sustainable Technologies for Energy and Electronics at Fraunhofer FEP, coordinator of **FlexFunction2Sustain**, provided insights into the open call for pilot case projects under FlexFunction2Sustain, which selected a total of 17 cases across three open calls. He also presented an overview of the three-level business model and sustainability plan for the OITB, encompassing the OITB Members, the Association (ESNA – European Sustainable Nanotechnology Solutions Association), and Single-Entry Point(s) to be contracted. Additionally, it is noteworthy that a new open call is being considered within the partnership, outside the scope of EC funding.

### *The importance of providing companies process data for life cycle assessment and modelling in the future*

Ulla Forsström, Principal Scientist at VTT and coordinator of the **INN-PRESSME** project, started by giving a landscape of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation OITB. Ulla emphasised the significance of gathering data not only from the materials and characterising them but also from the processes. This approach is crucial for facilitating the scaling up of work and designing industrial processes on a larger scale. Furthermore, in order to achieve sustainability, it is imperative to gather pertinent data from pilot projects, including details like energy consumption and energy sources, along with other case-specific parameters. The establishment of accurate and consistent data, as well as material characterisation according to standardized methods, ensures data comparability and enhances its value for modelling and artificial intelligence (AI) applications.

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<sup>3</sup> source: Innobarometer 2016, issued by European Commission, ISBN: 978-92-79-58112-0

### *Opportunities for joint activities among OITBs*

Collaborative dissemination and marketing activities at international conferences and joint efforts in evaluating open call proposals exemplify the ongoing cooperation between OITBs. Exploring the complementarity of services is an avenue worth considering. However, in this context, there might be some cross-country barriers within the ecosystem that need to be addressed. One example is the development of materials that need to be reusable or recyclable (or recycle ready) and materials processed and reused as raw materials for new products, where national laws and practices may create barriers.

### **2.3.2. Main outcomes from the open discussion**

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#### *Considerations about creating an overarching OITB organisation*

The concept of establishing an overarching OITB organization above the SEP (regardless of its legal structure) holds the potential to greatly benefit the entire ecosystem, especially in facilitating users in their search for suitable service providers. When a SEP receives a customer's request, the initial task is to effectively translate the customer's needs into a detailed service specification. This process plays a crucial role in refining the selection of potential service providers. Thus, this translation process stands as a distinct value proposition that a broker can provide, significantly reducing the potential for conflicts of interest and bringing clarity to the table.

#### *Views on funding channels to support SMEs access to OITBs*

The primary hurdle between SMEs and OITBs seems to be financing. Alongside providing technical consultancy, OITBs should also factor in assistance for SMEs to access funding avenues. In some cases, the market might not yet be prepared for specific technologies, leading to difficulties in attracting privately funded customers. This emphasises the significance of offering access to public sources of funding. Certain OITBs are exploring novel funding models, wherein SMEs get financing from a third party in exchange for equity shares. This third party is stipulated with a condition that purchasing services from the OITB network is contingent upon this arrangement. The benefit lies in the fact that both the SME and the investor will receive technical quality assurance for the services they are acquiring.

## 2.4. Session 3: Round table: Addressing specific challenges

12h20/13h20 Lunch break • Networking

13h20 /14h40 ■ **Session 3: Round table: Addressing specific challenges**

— **Introduction of the session**

**John Fahlteich**

Managing Director at KETMarket GmbH

**Standardization activities and OITBs**

**Fernando J. Utrilla**

Asociación Española de Normalización – UNE

**Open Discussion**

Potential discussion items:

- Did your OITB identify items that are subject to standardisation? What are these items?
- Revision of existing standards?
- Implementation of new standards?
- Is your OITB (members) already directly involved in standardization bodies? If yes, which/how?
- What would you expect from an inter-OITB coordination activity for standardization?

**IP Management in OITBs**

**Robert Harrison**

Valorisation and Innovation Manager, IPC

**Open Discussion**

Potential discussion items:

- What are the IP ownership provision and access rules for foreground in your OITB?
- How do you handle joint IP with customers?
- Do you offer your customers IP services?
- IP consulting / monitoring / Freedom-to-Operate analysis.
- IP filing / patent infringement prosecution
- If you do not offer IP services yet, why? And are you interested to collaborate IP services with other OITB?
- Is licensing of joint (OITB owned) IP part of your business model? If yes, what are the conditions?
- What support would you expect from European Commission or a inter-OITB support intermediary? (e.g. guidelines, mediation services, document templates)

**EU expectation and overall SME reach out**

**Tommaso Zerbi**

Business Area Manager, STAM

**Open Discussion**

Potential discussion items:

- What is the particular core target group of your OITB?
- Where do you expect joint marketing/activities?

### 2.4.1. Summary of presentations

#### *Standardization activities and OITBs*

Fernando Utrilla, Head of Research and Innovation at the Spanish Association for Standardization (UNE), representing **INN PRESSME**, **FORM PLANET**, **BIOMAT**, **OASIS** and **INNOMEN**, started his presentation his presentation by providing a concise understanding of the concept of standardization. He defines standardization as an agreement of consensus on common technical specifications- the standard- of voluntary use, complying with market needs of interested stakeholders, in the frame and with support of Standardisation Organisations (e.g. CEN, CENELEC, ETSI, ISO, IEC, ITU).

In the context of Standardization activities within R&I projects, UNE functions through two primary approaches: firstly, by identifying the relevant standardization landscape and applicable standards; and secondly, by actively participating in ongoing and future standardization endeavors. Particularly concerning OITBs, there are two additional noteworthy activities: providing guidance to SME

customers on utilizing standardization effectively and ensuring the integration of standardization topics in OITB coordination and collaboration efforts.

### *IP management in OITBs*

Robert Harrison, founding partner of SONNENBERG HARRISON, patent and trademark attorney, and serving as Valorisation and IP Manager at **FlexFunction2Sustain**, kick-started the discussion by conducting an impromptu survey among the attendees aiming to gauge their familiarity with IP within their respective OITBs. Main outcomes are described in the next section.

### *EU expectation and overall SME reach out*

Tommaso Zerbi, Business Area Manager at STAM SRL and participant in seven different OITBs, began his presentation by highlighting the expectations of the EC regarding the pathway of OITB projects towards SMEs. These expectations revolve around establishing a European Ecosystem of Testing Beds, fostering a unified strategic vision among OITBs, and achieving a tangible and lasting economic and technological influence on SMEs to generate concrete impacts. From his perspective, organizing OITBs based on their service domains, each equipped with its SEP(s), and engaging with end-users (customers) already represents a significant achievement. Nevertheless, if we can establish common or interconnected SEPs and coordinate the provision of services to address shared markets, we can truly establish a robust innovation ecosystem. The innovation ecosystem approach offers several advantages, including the ability to: 1) develop a complementary offering that addresses the gaps present in individual operating OITBs; 2) create a collaborative offering that combines services from various sources; 3) cultivate an ecosystem enriched by synergies with other EU initiatives outside the scope of OITBs, such as Digital Innovation Hubs. By adopting this approach, we can harness the full potential of collaboration and integration within the innovation landscape. The central question is: How can we transition from a situation where OITBs operate independently to embracing an innovation ecosystem approach? This model would necessitate several initial steps, which include:

- Leveraging Digital Marketing Tools: Implementing digital marketing tools to enhance visibility and engagement.
- In-Depth Analysis of Existing Offerings: Conducting a thorough study of the current offerings, as a comprehensive understanding of the separate offerings is vital before discussing joint strategies.
- Performing GAP Analysis: Identifying gaps in the existing offerings to determine what is lacking or needs improvement.
- Cross-Market Analysis: Examining the potential for cross-market opportunities.

Towards the end of his presentation, Tommaso emphasized the significance of OITB networking workshops. He also suggested that, in addition to these workshops, the SEP should convene to deliberate on a collaborative strategy for commercializing OITB services.

## **2.4.2. Main outcomes from the open discussion**

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### *Role of the SEP in support of standardisation activities*

Enforcing standardization is an essential service within OITB projects, regardless of the adopted legal framework for the SEP. It's a service that must be provided to SME users. The OITB holds the responsibility of organizing and identifying the node(s) within the network that will provide standardization services. The EC takes it a step further and recommends that OITBs collaborate with technical committees from standardization bodies, which can indeed pose significant challenges.

The integration of standardization services undoubtedly brings advantages to the SEP, providing clarity regarding existing standards and utilizing them to the fullest extent possible. This integration enhances the value of the services rendered and contributes to fostering innovation. Another advantage pertains to quality assurance and compatibility aspects when integrating services from various providers within the OITB ecosystem.

An important point was raised about differentiating between the standard operating procedures established within OITBs and international standards. This distinction is crucial in maintaining a clear understanding of how the internal processes of OITBs align with globally recognized standards. It is of course very relevant that OITBs not only adhere to their own defined procedures but also meet the broader benchmarks set by international standards organizations.

### *Considerations about IP management in OITBs*

The majority of OITBs commence their journey with established background intellectual property, either in the form of existing patents or pending applications. Typically, OITBs focus on scaling up existing knowledge rather than creating entirely novel concepts. Nonetheless, it's worth noting that in numerous instances, researchers might not prioritise patenting until they engage with a potential customer. Typically, researchers give precedence to publication over patenting.

The engagement of SMEs in the different open calls has revealed that the majority of companies lack clarity regarding the freedom to operate and the patent landscape associated with the solutions they are seeking. Hence, it's highly recommended for companies to leverage the IP services offered by the OITB. This type of support also fosters trust among customers when dealing with requests involving the management of non-patented IP.

One of the forthcoming challenges for OITBs pertains to the existing patent landscape, where a significant portion of intellectual property protection originates from outside of Europe. A pressing concern for the upcoming period is the potential presence of patents from non-European sources that could impede the commercialization of collaborative efforts between OITBs and third parties.

The costs related to IP protection tend to escalate as projects progress toward their conclusion. This presents a highly critical aspect that necessitates careful consideration from the European Commission. Dealing with patenting expenses can indeed pose a significant challenge without adequate support mechanisms in place. Therefore, finding ways to address this issue is of paramount importance for the successful development and protection of innovative technologies.

### *Considerations about the overall SME reach out*

Implementing the innovation ecosystem model comes with its fair share of challenges, with one notable hurdle being the management of a substantial administrative workload. To address and mitigate the potential risks associated with this challenge, one effective approach could involve the establishment of a well-suited governing structure with a few representatives from each OITB.

## **3. WORKSHOP WRAP-UP**

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Our intention is to continue hosting the annual OITB networking workshop, preferably in conjunction with larger EU-level events. In the interim period, we encourage the OITB community to engage in other workshops that focus on critical aspects common to the entire OITB ecosystem:

- Online workshop for standardization aspects: This workshop will delve into standardization matters.
- Dedicated Session on IP Management for OITBs: This session will feature participants from various OITBs and include case studies to illustrate emerging opportunities. Robert Harrison will lead this session. We propose that OITB coordinators nominate representatives for IP-related matters to ensure effective participation.
- The SEP is encouraged to assemble for in-depth discussions regarding a collaborative strategy for the commercialization of OITB services. This endeavour is aimed at creating value for our customers and establishing sustainable businesses for the SEPs. Tommaso Zerbi will lead these efforts.