



Community-Based Living labs to Enhance SMEs Innovation in Europe (CO-LLABS) – Thematic Network under ICT PSP/2007/1

Objectives of the Thematic Network

The over-all objective of the CO-LLABS Thematic Network is to achieve a European-wide adoption of ICT-based Living lab services and practices to allow SMEs to improve their innovation capabilities and processes and become part of “open innovation” environments. Thus, this proposal addresses Work Programme Objective 4.1b “to improve the capacity of businesses and in particular SMEs to benefit from ICT-based innovations in their products and services”. To that end CO-LLABS Thematic Network brings together a selection of Europe’s most advanced Living Labs on the one hand and regional SME-innovation oriented organisations on the other to exchange practices of LL support services, and identify and develop specific pilots in domains such as e-health, e-business and e-inclusion. The work will be grounded in thorough understanding of current Living labs practices and experiences and strengthened by creating better insight in successful business models of future SME-oriented Living labs. The Thematic Network will support interaction with policy makers at regional, national and European level to establish consensus on the Living labs approach as a cornerstone of European innovation policies, in particular at the regional and cross-regional level.

The underlying motivation is that Living Labs provide services to SMEs that would otherwise not be available to them. Focus is on how SMEs and their business partners can be involved in Living Labs in the best way in order to collaborate in open innovation, and on sharing experience among Living Labs initiatives and beyond as regards SME involvement in co-creation of Living labs practices.

Description of the activities and outcomes foreseen in the Thematic Network

The foreseen activities and outcomes in the CO-LLABS thematic network include the following:

- Best practices on how Living Labs and Experience research services are supporting SMEs innovation: identification, evaluation and exchange of such practices in European regions.
- Pilots development of SME-oriented Living Lab initiatives in domains of e-business, e-inclusion, e-health, and stimulating the collaboration among Living Labs, innovation agencies and business stakeholders to develop these pilots.
- Living labs business models and governance structures development for networks of Living labs supporting SMEs.
- Network mobilisation, exploitation and dissemination to create an active community stimulating SMEs for open innovation and exchange experience in how to use the living labs concept for SME innovation.
- Policy initiative development to stimulate Living labs, Innovation Agencies and Research organisations to work with SMEs on open innovation.
- Elaboration of a joint action plan to establish self-sustainable pilots and ensure viability of the CO-LLABS network after its formal project duration.

Short description of the consortium and role of the participants in the Thematic Network

The CO-LLABS consortium brings together a synergetic combination of:

- 1) Reputed research organisations devoted to ICT-based innovation and used to working with business. Their role is to, in close collaboration with Living labs and SME organisations, analyse and exchange practices, develop ideas for Living labs services, and generate ideas for LL pilots;
- 2) Advanced Living Labs across Europe. Their role is to exchange and validate concrete experiences of SME innovation practices and services to offer to SMEs for open innovation.
- 3) Experienced SME Innovation Organisations and agencies. These will establish the communication and exchange with SMEs in their region and country and enable cross-country collaboration.

CO-LLABS covers 20 partners from 13 countries, including 3 New Member States. It is grounded strongly in collaboration between Living labs, Research organisations and Agencies stimulating SME innovation in these countries. All, rooted in regions, have a strong interest in cross-border innovation. The CO-LLABS consortium is supported by 14 Support Partners (Innovation Agencies, Living Labs and Authorities), who are already closely working with the listed CO-LLABS Consortium partners in their country or region, and who have offered to strengthen the CO-LLABS impact. Additionally, CO-LLABS is supported by 15 Living Labs from the second wave of the European Network of Living Labs.



Expected impact of the Thematic Network

CO-LLABS aims to achieve a European-wide adoption of IC-based living labs services and practices to allow SMEs to improve their innovation capabilities and processes. To that end CO-LLABS Thematic Network brings together a selection of Europe's most advanced Living Labs on the one hand and regional SME-innovation oriented organisations on the other to identify and develop specific pilots in domains such as e-health, e-business and e-inclusion. CO-LLABS key partners have built up a close relationship with the ENoLL (European Network of Living Labs, www.openlivinglabs.eu) and the Living Labs Open Innovation Community (AMI@Work Family of Communities, which has 2000 members, www.ami-communities.eu). ESoCE-Net, coordinating CO-LLABS, is chairing the AMI@Work Family of Communities. This will enable CO-LLABS to build up and expand its Community Network very soon and very effectively. The CO-LLABS Community Network initially consists of the core CO-LLABS consortium partners, the CO-LLABS Support Partners, and the interested parties from ENoLL and AMI@Work.

Expected impacts can be identified at the level of individual Living Labs and at the level of the Network of Living Labs operating in a co-ordinated and synergic fashion. Major expected impacts of the Thematic Network of Living Labs are the following:

1. The CO-LLAB Thematic network results will enable public authorities and major stakeholders in the EU to implement mutually interoperable Living Labs systems, thereby providing an innovation platform to European Industry, and economy of scale for Living Lab services
2. Improved competitiveness of European businesses and particular SMEs by providing them with the tools to access the innovation services at a regional and European scale
3. Development of markets for innovative ICT solutions and services for supporting the Innovation and the Open Innovation process
4. Identification of large scale pilots demonstrating the Living Lab approach and the synergy, scalability offered by the European network

CO-LLABS addresses the needs of SMEs through the formation of regional clusters of Living labs, SME-oriented Innovation Agencies and research organisations. The SME-oriented Innovation Agencies will establish - and be responsible for - the relation with SMEs in their region. CO-LLABS does not work directly with individual SMEs, but Innovation Agencies and also Living Labs will do so. COLLABS will not itself establish Living Labs, it investigates how local and regional partners can work together in order to improve the regional innovation system and support SMEs. In doing so, SMEs will benefit from the project in multiple ways, in particular:

- Pilots will be developed to initiate and validate open innovation, where SMEs can participate. Pilots will demonstrate strategies how SMEs can participate in Living Labs.
- Policy initiatives will be developed to stimulate Living labs, innovation agencies and research organizations to work together with SMEs on open innovation.
- Business models will be explored governing collaboration between Living labs, SMEs and research organizations. This will benefit the provision of services to SMEs by Living labs.

The significant Living Labs movement which has been growing in the last year since the launch of the European Network of Living Lab by the Finnish Presidency, on November 20 2006, provides a reasonable assurance of reaching the expected impacts. In particular there has been an involvement of the Portuguese European Presidency, accepting 32 new Living Labs during the Second Wave Living Labs event, held in Brussels on October 17, 2007. A 3rd wave of new Living Labs accessing the network is expected during Slovenian presidency. The momentum is significant and the CO-LLAB network results can sustain the expectations by identifying and preparing for large scale pilots demonstrating the Living Lab approach and the synergy, scalability offered by the European network. Pilot cases will have a strong potential of actually involving large number of users and also some distinct potential for SMEs, as co-creators, providers of innovative solutions and as main beneficiaries of the innovation.

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