

Euro-Mediterranean Network Facilitating Market Uptake of Innovations from SME

Project Acronym: EMPHASIS

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A.6.1.1 Euro-Mediterranean Open Innovation Network Handbook development

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Abstract	The experience and the feedback gained from these workshops will be integrated into a “EuroMED Open Innovation Network Handbook” which will be offered to policy makers, intermediaries, and agencies in EU & MPC countries. Correction measures and actions will be integrated for fine-tuning, guiding, or even shifting (if necessary) the delivery mechanism or the nature of services offered addressed. Feasibility and financial sustainability planning including roadmap for post project activities.

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EURO-MEDITERRANEAN OPEN INNOVATION NETWORK HANDBOOK

June 2023

Partners

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 EMPHASIS project

a) What is EMPHASIS and its objectives

The EMPHASIS project is an initiative that sought to strengthen the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in partner countries to innovate by creating a collaborative Euro-Mediterranean Open Innovation ecosystem. The focus was on collaboratively creating a Mediterranean Open Innovation (OI) ecosystem, where knowledge flows across borders and is used to develop marketable innovations.

The project planned to co-design, implement, and validate a Mediterranean OI service platform, with the goal of connecting the fragmented innovation systems of the region. This platform has facilitated meaningful cross-border knowledge exchange and empower SMEs with the necessary skills to leverage external knowledge for value creation. Additionally, it has identified areas where sustainability challenges, such as agri-food, energy, and materials, can be transformed into business opportunities.

The project has also supported SMEs by assessing their readiness for OI, providing advisory services in the form of vouchers, and helping to enhance their innovation capacity through partnerships. Taking a joint transnational approach, the project aimed to effectively promote the uptake of research outputs and address sustainability goals.

The developed a joint multinational approach to address sustainability challenges by harnessing innovative solutions and transforming research findings into marketable innovations. This type of innovation builds upon the existing assets of an organization and enhances them using practical and efficient methods.

EMPHASIS aims to utilize the results of various projects to identify SMEs, evaluate their readiness to engage in Open Innovation, and provide them with advisory services in the form of vouchers. These services are intended to enhance their innovation capabilities and establish partnerships at different stages of their innovation journeys.

b) What has been improved

The implementation of EMPHASIS will establish a productive collaboration among cross-border partnerships. These partnerships will focus on sharing knowledge and working together to create new products and services in real-life settings, with the user at the center. The goal is to enhance the innovation capabilities of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and their willingness to engage with innovation partners. This will enable SMEs to convert external knowledge into new opportunities for products, services, and business growth. Additionally, the project aims to validate the Open Innovation approach and involve policymakers and stakeholders to ensure its wider adoption. EMPHASIS will cater to SMEs across different sectors, including those that traditionally do not benefit from policy interventions, such as non-high-tech industries, considering that high-tech SMEs make up a small percentage of the overall SME population.

c) Who has benefitted from?

In addition to SMEs, start-ups, and spin-offs involved in the submission of Open Innovation opportunities, the following groups has also benefitted from the EMPHASIS project:

1. Clusters and networks of SMEs and spin-offs: These organizations can benefit from the opportunities for collaboration and networking that the project provides. They can connect with other like-minded businesses and share knowledge and resources to drive innovation.
2. Researchers and research units developing solutions in the field of sustainability: The project aims to bridge the gap between research and market implementation by connecting researchers with SMEs that can commercialize their findings. Researchers and research units can benefit from the project's support in transforming their innovations into market-ready products and services.
3. Innovation policy authorities: The project's activities can provide valuable insights for innovation policy authorities, helping them to develop more effective policies and strategies to support the growth of SMEs and foster innovation.
4. Business support structures: Organizations that provide support and services to SMEs, such as incubators, accelerators, and innovation hubs, can benefit from the project's activities and resources. They can use the knowledge and tools provided by the project to better support their clients and enhance their own services.

d) Definition of Open Innovation

Open Innovation involves actively seeking and utilizing knowledge from external sources to drive internal innovation and explore external opportunities for inventions. This means that businesses should incorporate both internal and external ideas, as well as utilize both internal and external channels to market their technology.

Open innovation is a collaborative approach to innovation that involves actively seeking and incorporating external ideas, expertise, and resources into the innovation process. It challenges the traditional closed innovation model where companies solely rely on their internal capabilities and research and development (R&D) departments to generate and commercialize new ideas.

In open innovation, companies engage with external partners, such as customers, suppliers, universities, research institutions, and even competitors, to co-create and co-develop new products, services, and technologies. It involves sharing knowledge, exchanging ideas, and collaborating to solve problems, improve processes, and drive innovation.

Open innovation can take various forms, including:

1. External sourcing of ideas: Companies actively seek and acquire ideas, technologies, or intellectual property from external sources through mechanisms like licensing, acquisitions, joint ventures, and partnerships.
2. Collaboration and co-creation: Companies collaborate with external partners to jointly develop and commercialize new products, services, or technologies. This can involve sharing resources, expertise, and risks to drive innovation.
3. Crowdsourcing and open platforms: Companies leverage the collective intelligence of the crowd by actively soliciting ideas, feedback, and contributions from a large and diverse group of individuals, often through online platforms and communities.

By embracing open innovation, companies can access a wider pool of knowledge, expertise, and resources, which can lead to increased creativity, faster time to market, reduced R&D costs, and

improved customer satisfaction. It enables companies to tap into external insights, trends, and market opportunities that may be inaccessible within their own organization. Open innovation also promotes collaboration and knowledge sharing, fostering a culture of innovation both internally and externally. However, implementing open innovation also requires careful management of intellectual property, effective communication and collaboration mechanisms, and alignment of interests among partners. It involves navigating complex legal, cultural, and organizational barriers to ensure that all parties benefit from the collaboration.

Overall, open innovation represents a shift from a closed, internally focused approach to innovation towards a more open, collaborative, and inclusive approach. It offers companies the opportunity to leverage external knowledge and resources, expand their innovation capabilities, and stay competitive in an increasingly globalized and dynamic business environment.

1.2 Euro-Mediterranean Open Innovation Network Handbook

a) Objectives

The knowledge and expertise gained from the project is integrated into the present handbook. This comprehensive handbook will serve as a valuable resource for policy makers, intermediaries, and agencies in both EU and MPC countries. It aims to consolidate the lessons learned from the deployment activities and create a robust delivery mechanism for future ventures.

The handbook will contain practical guidelines and insights that can be used to enhance the effectiveness of open innovation initiatives in the EuroMED region. It will showcase successful case studies, highlight best practices, and address challenges commonly faced by stakeholders in this field.

By compiling and synthesizing the experience gained from the project, the handbook will serve as a valuable tool for decision-makers, enabling them to make informed choices when implementing open innovation strategies. It will also provide guidance on how to engage with key stakeholders, foster collaboration, and develop sustainable innovation ecosystems.

Furthermore, the handbook will act as a bridge between different countries and regions, fostering knowledge exchange and collaborative learning. It will promote dialogue and cooperation between EU and MPC countries, facilitating the transfer of best practices and the adoption of successful models.

Ultimately, the “EuroMED Open Innovation Network Handbook” aims to create a solid foundation for future exploitation of open innovation in the region. By disseminating knowledge and lessons learned, it will help in scaling up open innovation activities and maximizing their impact. Policymakers, intermediaries, and agencies can use the handbook to design effective strategies, allocate resources efficiently, and overcome barriers to innovation.

The handbook will also serve as a resource for capacity building, providing guidance on the skills and competencies required for successful implementation of open innovation initiatives. It will highlight the importance of a multidisciplinary approach, emphasizing the need for collaboration among different stakeholders such as academia, industry, and government.

Moreover, the handbook will address the specific challenges faced by Mediterranean Partner Countries (MPC) in adopting open innovation practices. It will offer tailored recommendations

and solutions that take into account the unique context and constraints of these countries. This will help promote inclusive growth and economic development in the region.

To ensure the relevance and usefulness of the handbook, extensive consultations and feedback loops were established with the partners throughout the development process. This will ensure that the handbook reflects the needs and aspirations of the target audience and is aligned with the evolving trends and dynamics in the field of open innovation.

Overall, the integration of the experience gained from delivering services into the “EuroMED Open Innovation Network Handbook” will provide a comprehensive and practical guide for fostering open innovation in the EuroMED region.

b) Target group

The main outputs delivered in this work package will be utilized by various stakeholders. Business support organizations will benefit from these outputs as they can use them to provide assistance and guidance to SMEs and spin-offs. SMEs themselves will find value in the outputs as they can use them to enhance their operations and address challenges within their respective industries.

Researchers will also benefit from the main outputs as they can use them as a basis for further investigation and development of innovative solutions. Institutions, such as universities and research centers, can utilize these outputs to enhance their educational and training programs, ensuring that students are equipped with the latest knowledge and skills.

Policy makers will find value in the main outputs as they can use them to inform their decision-making process and shape policies that support the growth and development of SMEs and spin-offs. Additionally, the partners involved in this work package will benefit from the outputs as they can use them to improve their own understanding of the needs and requirements of the target stakeholders and adjust their strategies accordingly.

In summary, the main outputs delivered in this work package will have a wide range of users, including business support organizations, SMEs, spin-offs, researchers, institutions, policy makers, and the project partners. These outputs will provide valuable insights, knowledge, and tools that can support the growth, development, and success of these stakeholders in their respective fields.

c) Methodology

The methodology section of the Euro-Mediterranean Open Innovation Network Handbook outlines the approach that has been taken to describe the EMPHASIS mechanism. This mechanism aims to deliver and establish an Open Innovation Ecosystem and Network at a Mediterranean cross-border level, with the potential for implementation at any other level.

The methodology employed in this handbook focuses on providing a clear and comprehensible explanation of all the activities and implementation steps involved in each phase of the project. The language used is straightforward and accessible, aiming to ensure that readers can easily understand and apply the concepts and strategies presented.

The handbook details the various components of the EMPHASIS mechanism, including the steps involved in creating an open innovation ecosystem, establishing a network, and fostering collaboration among diverse stakeholders. Each phase is described in a step-by-step manner, accompanied

by practical examples and case studies to illustrate the application of the methodology.

Furthermore, the methodology highlights the adaptability of the EMPHASIS mechanism to different contexts and levels. While the focus is on the Mediterranean cross-border level, the handbook emphasizes that the principles and approaches can be implemented in any other setting, ensuring its relevance and potential impact beyond the specific region.

Overall, the methodology used in this handbook is designed to provide a comprehensive and user-friendly guide for establishing an Open Innovation Ecosystem and Network. By describing the activities and implementation process in a clear and accessible manner, the handbook aims to enable readers to easily understand and apply the EMPHASIS mechanism in their own contexts.

2. DESIGN & SETUP OF EMPHASIS OPEN INNOVATION NETWORK & SERVICES

2.1 Analysis of the needs and capacities of the Euro-Mediterranean SMEs in the field of sustainability

The design and implementation of tools and methodologies to create a Mediterranean Open Innovation (OI) ecosystem and promote international cooperation have included various activities. These activities have been aimed at developing tailored services for SMEs selected by the EMPHASIS Project.

To begin, the project partners have prepared a regional synthesis and national data to identify the needs, challenges, opportunities, threats, and obstacles faced by SMEs, Research & Technology Organizations, University, Intermediaries, and the Public Sector. This analysis has also considered the key stakeholders and existing clusters in each country.

Additionally, experts have been selected for the Focus Groups, and Information & Communication Technology platforms have been identified and utilized to provide SMEs with access to external knowledge and research results from across the Mediterranean.

Furthermore, templates have been developed to describe the solution/offer or innovation need/request of SMEs. A toolbox has been established to assist in assessing the innovation potential (audit) of an SME/Start-up. Joint partnerships with research/industry have been designed, and dedicated missions have been facilitated to facilitate the matching process.

a) Challenges & Priorities Identification

The Challenges & Priorities have been identified and categorized, as well as the methods for providing advanced service to SMEs. Additionally, the key stakeholders and clusters in each country have been identified based on the triple helix model of innovation, which involves interactions among academia, industry, and government. These findings will be used by experts in focus groups. The report includes a regional synthesis that combines national data, policies, and SWOT analyses for the countries involved in the Emphasis project (Italy, Greece, Spain, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon). The roles played by Research & Technology Organizations (RTOs), intermediaries, business support structures, clusters of SMEs, and the public sector are also highlighted. These actors help facilitate SMEs' access to external knowledge and the utilization of research findings.

2.2 Identification of existing clusters and networks and engagement in the EMPHASIS Open Innovation community

The report has identified and examined the key players in each country, including small and medium-sized enterprises, spin-offs, major corporations, universities, and government entities such as municipalities and regional authorities. This analysis has been conducted using the quadruple helix model, which promotes collaboration among actors from academia, government, industry, and civil society. The insights gained from this report will serve as a foundation for future activities and will be valuable for the Focus Groups.

a) Identification and engagement of actors and “Focus Group” Meetings

The EMPHASIS partners have involved the key actors of the ecosystem in Focus Group meetings carried out in all the countries involved in the project. This was done for two main reasons:

- Firstly, to keep the stakeholders informed about the project’s activities.
- Secondly, to gather feedback from the Focus Group participants on the challenges and priorities that SMEs face in the innovation and internationalization process.

It is also important to create an environment that supports entrepreneurship and innovation, as this can lead to the creation of new markets and jobs, and the improvement of products and services.

The focus group also discussed the transformation of sustainability challenges, such as agri-food, energy, and materials, into business opportunities.

b) Overall outcomes

- All EMPHASIS partners identified the main challenges and priorities for each country involved in the project.
- All EMPHASIS partners created a list of key actors and stakeholders to be part of the EMPHASIS Open Innovation community.
- All Emphasis partners successfully organized EMPHASIS Focus Groups Round Table Meetings in each country.

2.3 Open innovation Platform

The [EMPHASIS OI Platform](#) has been created and made available. It includes a range of online tools that assist the community in sharing their needs, offers, and challenges in a marketplace. The platform is designed to foster partnerships and facilitate the generation of new ideas. It enhances the ability of small and medium-sized enterprises to access external knowledge and research outputs, while also addressing issues related to Open Innovation, such as patent and intellectual property rights, entry costs, and proactive partner search. The platform builds upon the infrastructures developed during NETKITE, I KNOW, and the tools developed in INSPIRE.

2.4 Best practices carried out in all the activities

In the Design & Setup of EMPHASIS Open Innovation Network & Services” phase of the project, the common sectors of the countries involved in EMPHASIS were identified, including agro-food, sustainable energy,

environment and sustainable development, transport and logistics, and culture, tourism, and cultural and creative industries. Additionally, the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the ecosystems were defined. This information was valuable for determining the services to be provided and implementing an effective Open Innovation policy. The focus groups were also useful in monitoring the project's impact.

The developed platform functions as a tool for SMEs and open innovation advisors to enhance idea generation and enables the community to post their demands, offers, and challenges for partnerships and new opportunities in Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, the platform allows easy access to external knowledge, research results, and technologies for SMEs and helps address challenges associated with open innovation methods.

a) Challenges faced during the activities' implementation

One of the main difficulties encountered during the implementation of the work package activities related to the "Design & Setup of EMPHASIS Open Innovation Network & Services" has been establishing contact with potential client projects. Despite the challenges that arise when collaborating in a Mediterranean context, it can be seen as a strength.

b) Takeaways

The key takeaway is that SMEs and Start-Ups require the assistance of knowledgeable advisors to enhance their business' growth process by improving their internationalization strategy. This involves clearly defining the services needed, identifying international opportunities, developing a strategy, and executing actions, in order to achieve tangible results.

3. OPEN CALL FOR THE SELECTION OF 24 BENEFICIARIES

The open call for identifying open innovation opportunities from SMEs was launched in February 2022. The purpose of the call was to encourage SMEs from EMPHASIS countries to publish their innovation needs and offers, allowing them to connect with peers across borders and seek external expertise. The goal was to gather a minimum of 80 open innovation opportunities and select 24 beneficiaries who would receive support through innovation advisory services.

3.1 Evaluation process

The evaluation of the applications aimed at supporting the partnership to select the 24 beneficiaries that would develop cross border open innovation projects. The evaluation process involved forming two teams; an Evaluation Team and a Monitoring Team.

Monitoring Team. The team was comprised of the deputy members of the EMPHASIS Steering Committee. One person per partner organization is participating in the team and was responsible to do the first screening of the application, checking if the eligibility criteria were fulfilled, and preparing the evaluation sheet.

Evaluation Team. The team was comprised of the representatives of the EMPHASIS Steering Committee. One person per partner organization is participating in the team and was responsible for the in-detail screening and evaluation of the applications, as well as the curation of the projects. More info is in the section "Evaluation Process".

The members of the Evaluation Team and the Monitoring Team must have no conflict of interest¹ with applicants that may affect the submission, the evaluation, and the selection of the final beneficiaries. All members of the of the two teams signed a confidentiality and not conflict of interest declaration prior to joining the Boards.

The Evaluation Team and the Monitoring Team fully supported the evaluation process. The process started from the time of the launching of the call by the time of the selection of the solutions. The process starts in February 2022 and the ending month was July 2022.

The Evaluation process comprises of 3 core steps as depicted in the graph and presented below.

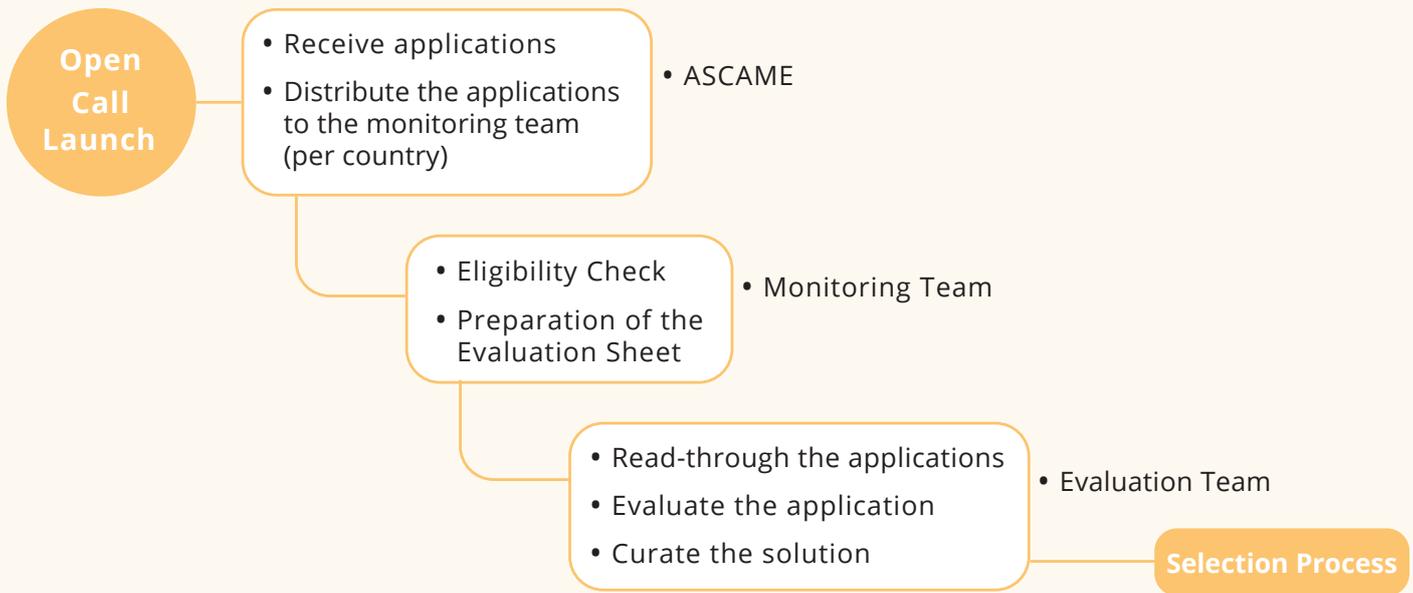


Figure 1 Evaluation Process

Each Member of the Monitoring Team was responsible for the submissions received from SMEs, startups, or spin-offs based in his/her/its country. The Monitoring Team was in charge of filling Section A - General Info and Section B – Eligibility for each application received. Having filled out the eligibility criteria, the monitoring team checked if the applicant was eligible. If all the answers of Section B – Eligibility was “Yes”, then the applicant was eligible, and the application was ready for the evaluation of the technical and open innovation characteristics of the proposal. If there were criteria that were not fulfilled, then the proposal was excluded.

Section A - General Info		Comments
Country	(list)	
Emphasis challenge addressed	(list)	
Name, Surname of applicant		
Proposal		
Proposal ID		
Section B - Eligibility		
Exclusion criteria	Score	Comments
SME/Start-up/Spin-off	(Yes/No)	
Greece, Italy, Spain, Lebanon, Egypt or Jordan	(Yes/No)	
English Language	(Yes/No)	
TRL>=4	(Yes/No)	
Need for Cross-Border Open Innovation	(Yes/No)	
Response to the challenge	(Yes/No)	
Filled Application	(Yes/No)	
RESULT		

Figure 2 Section A and Section B of the Evaluation Excel

The Monitoring team member handed over the evaluation sheet and the applications passed the eligibility evaluation to the respective member of the Evaluation Team. Each Member of the Evaluation Team was responsible for the submissions received from SMEs, startups, or spin-offs based in his/her/ its country. The evaluation team was responsible to read-through the application and assess it, filling the Section C - Technical and Open Innovation Evaluation.

When the assessment of the solution was over, the Evaluation Team is filling the tab “List of Applicants” of the evaluation excel with the requested info.



Applicant's Name and Surname	Applicant's Email	Name of Organization	Institutional Email	Institutional Website	Country	Weighting Score + Bonus	Ranking

Figure 3 List of Applicants

Finally, the members of the Evaluation team were responsible to curate the solutions, developing a one-page report with feedback and suggestions for improving the proposal.

3.2 Selection Methodology

When all the submissions were assessed in each EMPHASIS country, the Evaluation Team sorted the applications from highest to lowest scores. Based on the results of the ranking, each Project Partner selected the top 4 applications.

After the Project Partner ended up with the 4 applications, he/she also chose the next 4 applications as backup, having selected a total of 8 applications. The selected top 8 applications were presented to a peer-to-peer meeting for the final selection of the top 24 SMEs (6 per country).

For the selection of the final 24 beneficiaries, a peer-to-peer meeting was organized by JUST with the participation of the Monitoring Team and the Evaluation Team. Each country listed in the meeting the top 8 applications and briefly presented them, emphasizing the top 6. All the participants discussed and provided feedback on the 4 top applications of each country.

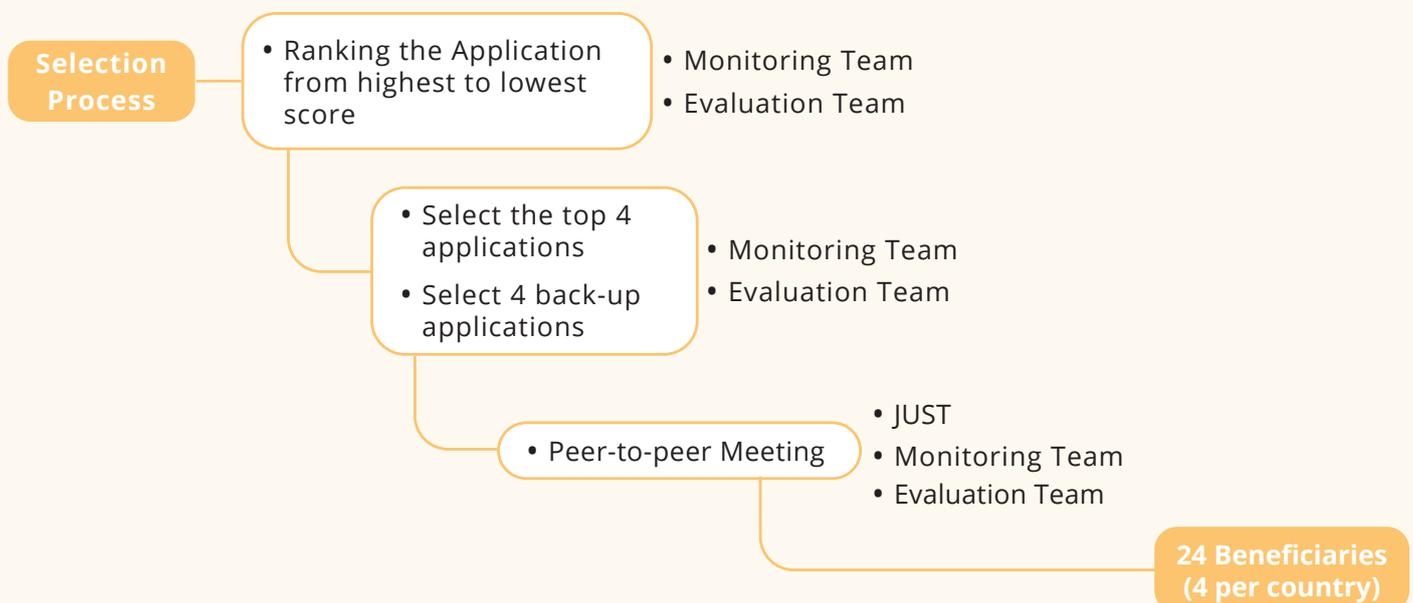
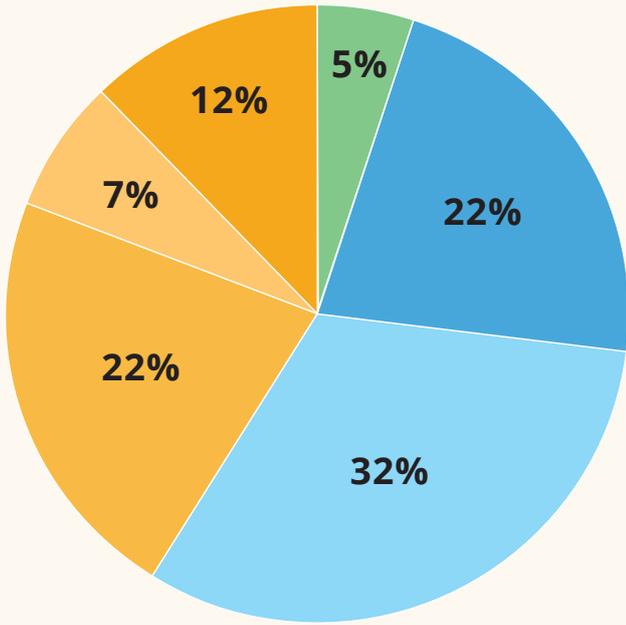


Figure 4 Selection Process

After the finalization of the evaluation process, each applicant received an email with the results of the evaluation and the one-page curation report. The applicants that were selected as beneficiaries received an in-detail email with the next steps.

3.3 The Selected Beneficiaries

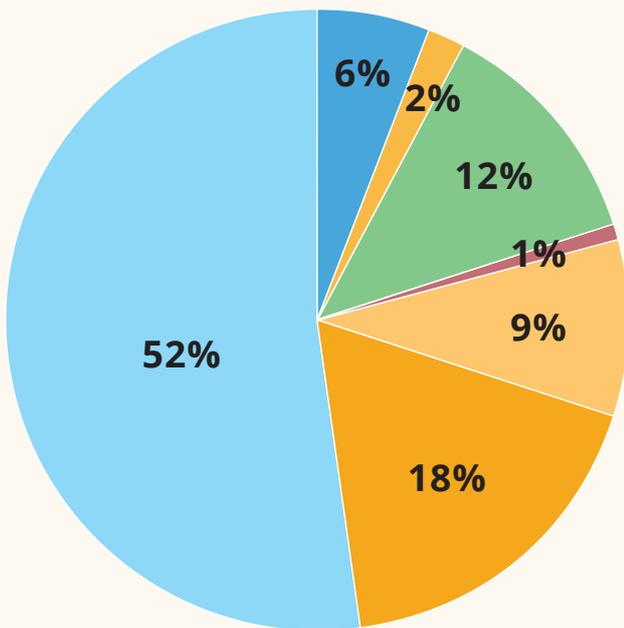
There was a total of 83 applications received. Figure 5 illustrates how these applications are distributed among the EMPHASIS partner countries and among the identified sectors. More than half of the applications, as shown in Figure 6, are in the agri-food sector.



% of applications per country



Figure 5 Percentage of applications received per country



% of applications per sector



Figure 6 Percentage of applications received per sector

The monitoring and evaluations teams evaluated all the applications received and each country selected the best four SMEs as the winners of the call, in addition to 2 SMEs on the reserved list, except for Lebanon, which received only 4 applications, and Egypt which received 10 applications, 6 of them were not eligible. Table 4.1 summarizes the winners and the reserved-listed SMEs of the Emphasis Open Call.

Table 4.1 The winners of the EMPHASIS open call

Country	Selected SME	Emphasis challenge addressed
Greece	1. ELVAN ROBOTICS S.A.	Energy Efficiency, Renewable Energy
	2. Solmeyea	Sustainable agriculture
	3. RECYTRUST	Waste management
	4. NoWaste21	Waste management
	5. (reserved) isMOOD Data Technology Services (isMOOD)	ICT, agri-food
	6. (reserved) Altus LSA S.A.	Environment and waste management
Spain	1. Graniot Satellite Technologies	Agri-food, Environment & Sustainable Development
	2. BRIOAGRO TECH SL	Agri-food, Environment & Sustainable Development
	3. Nax Solutions SL	Agri-food, Environment & Sustainable Development
	4. Discoolverworld S.L.	Culture – Tourism – Cultural & Creative Industries
	5. (reserved) Gandolapp	
	6. (reserved) AREYTechnologies AI	
Italy	1. TERACOM	ICT, Tourism
	2. SmartMe.IO	ICT Smart Cities
	3. Software Engineering Italia Srl	MetalMechanics
	4. Park Smart srl	ICT, Energy
	5. (reserved) MO.I.ME. di Mole G. & C S.A.S.	
	6. (reserved) M2D Technologies S.R.L.	
Jordan	1. Smart Green for AgriTech Solutions	Smart Green
	2. Petra Green Community Enterprise	Wastewater treatment, sustainable development
	3. Bookagri brand, website & Mobile App	Agri-tourism, sustainable development, agri-food
	4. Soqia Innovative Environmental Solutions	Waste Management, sustainable development
	5. (reserved) eRecycleHUB	Waste management, sustainable development
	6. (reserved) Limonene	Agri-food, waste management

Table 4.1 The winners of the EMPHASIS open call

Country	Selected SME	Emphasis challenge addressed
Egypt	1. HD rental	Transport & Logistics
		ICT Information & Communication Technologies
	2. Semsemia	Culture – Tourism – Cultural & Creative Industries
	3. Tourzmart	Culture – Tourism – Cultural & Creative Industries
	4. Digital Vision	Environment & Sustainable Development
Lebanon	1. Glovi	Environment & Sustainable Development
	2. Agro Cedrus	Agri-food
		Environment & Sustainable Development
	3. Said Saifan	Agri-food
	4. Hala Balaa	Sustainable Energy
		Environment & Sustainable Development
		Culture – Tourism – Cultural & Creative Industries

4. IMPLEMENTATION OF SUPPORT SERVICES OFFERED TO SMES TO ENHANCE INNOVATION PARTNERSHIPS AND JOINT R&D&I OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 Advisory services to raise innovation capacities

4.1.1 Innovation Audit

a) Activity's concept

The Innovation Audit Service supports 24 small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by assessing their potential for innovation. This involves conducting meetings with the SMEs in person, over Skype, or on the phone to evaluate their innovative solutions or offerings. The service also evaluates the technological and market readiness of these innovations and creates reports for each beneficiary and the EMPHASIS project. It covers areas such as defining problems, defining value propositions, and developing business models.

The goal of the service is to provide high-quality business support to the beneficiary SMEs in the partner regions of the project. By using the innovation audit methodology, the service helps SMEs assess their potential for innovation and the technologies they are using. The service is provided nationally by the Project Partners, following the methodology of KiNNO and coordinated by IRI within the project.

To achieve the desired results, the SMEs Innovation Audit service examines four key factors:

- a) The company's products and services.
- b) The technology/product/service/innovation in terms of market application, technology readiness level, scaling challenges, intellectual property rights, team competencies, competition, market analysis, and business model.
- c) The open innovation needs of the company, including potential partners and countries of interest.
- d) The company's potential

After completing the service, the SMEs receive an innovation profile with recommendations for technological and innovation improvements, acquiring necessary technologies and expertise, and establishing open innovation partnerships.

b) Benefits for Beneficiaries

The Innovation Audit Service helps companies explore their innovation potential and capacity, providing guidance to improve the performance of their innovations, technologies, products, and services. The service also assists in fostering cross-border collaborations for open innovation.

Specifically, the beneficiaries of the service will receive:

- A clear and accelerated path to enhance the performance of their innovation, technology, product, or service.
- Customized support from innovation experts to assess the company's potential for innovation and determine the necessary steps for improvement.
- In-depth analysis of the company's open innovation needs, including partnership aspects.
- Knowledge about what is working well and areas that need improvement, providing a comprehensive view of the company's capabilities, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities.
- A detailed Innovation Audit Report prepared by the service provider.

4.1.2 Exploitation Road mapping

a) Activity's concept

The Exploitation Roadmapping Service helps small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) identify new business opportunities by assessing the feasibility of their technology and market potential. Through coaching and mentoring sessions, either in person or through Skype or telephone, the service supports SMEs in exploring potential partnerships, exploitation opportunities, and commercialization options for their innovative products or services.

The main goal of this service is to provide guidance and support to SMEs in finding suitable partners and creating an action plan with specific steps and deadlines for cross-border open innovation partnerships. In the framework of EMPHASIS, the service was provided nationally by the Project Partners, following the methodology of KiNNO as outlined in the project.

To achieve the desired outcomes, the service provider will collaborate to:

- Compile a list of potential partners in the relevant region for each SME beneficiary, along with potential joint project ideas.
- Develop a roadmap and action plan with clear steps and deadlines for the cross-border partnerships during the project.

b) Benefits for Beneficiaries

By utilizing this service, the beneficiary will gain the following benefits:

- Access to a list of potential partners who could support the further development of their technology.
- Well-defined project ideas for collaboration with identified partners to enhance the growth of the SME.
- A detailed action plan specifying the activities, people involved, and timeline for achieving cross-border collaboration partnerships.
- A comprehensive Exploitation Roadmap Report prepared by the service provider.

4.2 Training SMEs to raise their innovation capacities

4.2.1 Capacity building Events

a) Activity's concept

The objective is to provide 6 regional Training Seminars on Entrepreneurship, Innovation Management, Open Innovation, Commercialization & Technology Transfer. These seminars aim to improve the skills of participants in areas related to innovation and technology transfer. Each training session lasts at least 6 hours and covers different aspects of innovation to help attendees understand challenges and find solutions.

b) Training Outline

The recommended sections for the training are as follows, and the selection should be based on the specific needs of the SME beneficiaries:

TRAINING 1 - ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND INNOVATION

- Understanding entrepreneurship, innovation, and the importance of innovation
- Case study examples

TRAINING 2 - SOLUTION, VALIDATION AND BUSINESS MODEL

Social entrepreneurship:

- Identifying market failures and creating solutions with social impact
- Exploring economic incentives and market discipline in social ventures

Market Validation:

- Applying design, engineering, finance, and business skills to test new business ideas
- Case study of successful market validation

Develop Your Business Model:

- Introduction to the business model canvas
- Lean Canvas approach: identifying opportunities, developing solutions, and case studies
- Customer segmentation and channels
- Case study examples

TRAINING 3 - LEGAL STRUCTURES, IP AND AGREEMENTS

Legal structures and tax implications:

- Overview of available legal structures as per the code of commerce
- Understanding tax implications for individuals and companies

Intellectual Property rights:

- Trademarks, patents, and copyrights for design protection

Commercial Agreements:

- Local distribution channels and regular distribution agreements
- Export authorization and incoterms for international trade

TRAINING 4 - FUND RAISING

Financing Your Project - Finding Investors:

- Understanding investor expectations
- Preparing key items for funding and stages of funding
- Critical success factors and essential documents for closing deals
- Doing it yourself or seeking help?

TRAINING 5 - INNOVATION TO REAL LIFE

- ICT From Lab Technology to Product or Service - UX/UI:
- Applying Design Thinking methodology and UX/UI process
- Sample case studies

TRAINING 6 - PITCHING

Pitching:

- Understanding what a pitch is
- Creating effective pitching presentations
- Hands-on exercise for pitching skills

4.3 Active brockage and partnering

4.3.1 Twinning and facilitation of the joint concepts' development

a) Activity's concept

The purpose of the "Joint R&D Concepts and Projects Methodology Elaboration" service is to assist local SMEs in creating market-focused concepts or high-risk research and development (R&D) concepts in collaboration with partner organizations.

The goals of this methodology are:

- To introduce the key concept, objectives, and expected outcomes of the service.
- To provide guidance for preparing Project Partners to design and deliver the service locally.
- To offer detailed instructions and tools for implementing the service at a local level.
- To ensure efficient implementation and coordination of the service.
- To establish a standardized transnational approach.

The methodology is divided into four main sections:

- **Twinning Service Rationale:** This section explains the scope, objectives, and methodological approach of the service.
- **Service Provision Methodology:** This section outlines a step-by-step implementation plan for the service, including guidelines, recommended tools, and additional resources.
- **Indicative implementation time plan:** This section provides a suggested timeline for implementing the service.
- **Templates and tools for service implementation:** This section includes pre-designed templates and tools that can be used to facilitate the implementation of the service.

b) Twinning Service Definition and Scope

The aim of the "Twinning and Facilitation of Joint Concepts Development" service is to connect SMEs with potential partners in the Euromed region in order to collaboratively develop innovative concepts. This service focuses on acquiring external expertise from industrial and research partners to design market-oriented or high-risk R&D concepts related to sustainability.

The service was provided nationally by the Project Partners using a methodology developed by KiNNO. Implementation will involve data collection and analysis, facilitating collaboration through meetings, tools, and coaching. Each country will implement the service for four SMEs, resulting in a total of 24 beneficiary SMEs.

The confidentiality of participating beneficiaries will be strictly maintained. The main challenge lies in effectively utilizing input from previous services provided to SMEs, selecting the most suitable SMEs for Twinning Activities, and delivering a valuable service to them.

5.3.2 Open Innovation mission organization & facilitation of cross border strategic partnership development

a) Activity's concept

The service called “Open Innovation mission organization and facilitation of cross-border strategic partnerships development” aims to connect SMEs with potential partners for innovation across borders. It brings together both internal and external innovation activities through open innovation projects. The service assists SMEs in managing and implementing these projects by providing tools, methods, and guidance. Open innovation is crucial for SMEs to access external knowledge and expertise, create more job opportunities, and foster creativity. The service encompasses various forms of open innovation, including collaborations between private and public sectors and the involvement of innovation intermediaries. However, there are challenges in diffusing, managing, and supporting open innovation for SMEs.

The key factors that Open Innovation projects consider include strategic challenges, market gaps, product concepts, internal and external positioning, production and suppliers, routes to market, and the integration of internal and external innovation activities.

b) Benefits for Beneficiaries

The service helped SMEs scale up their technology/product/innovation/service through open innovation, leveraging internal and external expertise and collaboration opportunities. The benefits include decision-making support, brokerage services for both internal and external innovation activities, reaching potential external partners, increased awareness of open innovation tools, and an Open Innovation project report with practical recommendations.

The service was provided nationally by the Project Partners, following the methodology of KiNNO. They function as brokers, offering tools, methods, and access to a community of participants, while providing consulting for successful implementation of the concept.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this Handbook on Open Innovation provides a comprehensive understanding of the principles, strategies, and implementation that EMPHASIS used to implement an OI ecosystem in the Mediterranean. Through the exploration of various case studies, frameworks, and real-world examples, it becomes evident that open innovation can greatly benefit businesses in today's rapidly changing and interconnected world.

By embracing open innovation, organizations can tap into a wider pool of ideas, expertise, and resources beyond their internal boundaries. This not only enhances their ability to develop innovative products and services but also fosters collaborations and partnerships that can lead to greater competitiveness and growth.

However, it is important to note that implementing open innovation requires careful consideration of various factors, including organizational culture, intellectual property rights, and effective communication and collaboration mechanisms. Organizations must also be willing to embrace change and take calculated risks in order to fully leverage the potential of open innovation.

As this handbook demonstrates, open innovation is not just a theoretical concept but a practical approach that can be applied across industries and sectors. It offers a roadmap for organizations to navigate the complexities and challenges of open innovation, providing guidelines and tools to effectively manage open innovation processes and leverage external knowledge and resources.

In the rapidly evolving business landscape, where technology advances and market dynamics continue to reshape industries, open innovation has emerged as a key strategic imperative. With its potential to drive innovation, spur growth, and enhance competitiveness, organizations that adopt open innovation will be better positioned to thrive in a dynamic and uncertain environment.

In conclusion, this handbook serves as a valuable resource for organizations seeking to embrace open innovation. By providing insights, best practices, and practical guidance, it equips businesses with the tools and knowledge needed to effectively implement open innovation strategies. As organizations navigate the ever-changing landscape of the business world, open innovation will undoubtedly play a critical role in their success. By embracing openness, collaboration, and external knowledge, organizations can unlock their full innovative potential and position themselves at the forefront of their industries.

With this handbook, organizations can embark on their open innovation journey with confidence, knowing that the principles and strategies outlined here have been proven to drive successful outcomes. Ultimately, open innovation is not just a concept but a mindset that can revolutionize the way organizations approach innovation, and this handbook will undoubtedly serve as a valuable companion on that transformative journey.



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EURO-MEDITERRANEAN OPEN INNOVATION NETWORK HANDBOOK

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Partners

