

**Outcome / Summary  
of the round table discussion that was part of the joint  
workshop of the EU-projects ECOINNO2SME / USEandDIFFUSE  
and PRESTO in Brussels, January 29<sup>th</sup> 2010:**

**Benefiting from EU research projects  
– successful participation and commercialisation of results -**

Within the framework of the above mentioned workshop, a round table discussion was held late in the afternoon, shown on the workshop agenda as:

*Recommendations and conclusions by stakeholders and SMEs – Round table discussion, moderated by Antony Davies, Beta Technology, UK*

A number of Best Practice presentations had been given earlier in the day by SMEs from a range of member states, including Germany, UK, Hungary and Spain, outlining their experiences in EU collaborative projects, and more importantly their recommendations. These presentations provided the platform for the round table discussion which followed and which was also opened up to the rest of the audience.

Some of the key messages to emerge from the discussions included the importance that should be attached to the management of intellectual property going into, and arising from the project. It was recognised that many SMEs are not as knowledgeable about IPR as they would like to be, and that an early part of any project should include IPR capacity building activity for the SMEs involved. Equally, there was a strong feeling that the project partner taking lead responsibility for exploitation should be one of the SME participants, as the exploitation of project results has most relevance for the SMEs rather than the research performers. An experienced exploitation manager should be appointed that is close to the relevant markets and able to provide a strong direction for the consortium, and SMEs should invest time in extensive patent searches to be certain of the novelty of what is being developed. In fact, it was felt that SMEs that had previous experience of successful patenting were much more likely to be successful participants within projects.

The role of the SME is clearly an important one, and it was felt by many that SMEs needed to be the key drivers within projects, because it was very easy to allow either larger enterprises or the research providers to 'take over' a project, and for the SME to then become an observer with little influence or input. SMEs don't necessarily have to coordinate projects, but they should be fully involved both at the project initiation stage and during the implementation. This is obviously easier for SMEs that are experienced in collaborative research, and have strong project management, capability with a track record in technology development and working transnationally.

The early development of the exploitation plan was a clear recommendation, so that project partners could identify their own roles within the plan, and also to ensure that any potential conflicts or problems were identified at an early stage. Clearly an exploitation plan is not a static tool, and it was felt that the plan should be flexible to accommodate changes arising during the project, and recognising that each partner might have different drivers. However, it was agreed that at a fixed point during the project a final version of the plan should be concluded to provide focus during the last six months or so.

It was difficult for stakeholders to specifically identify what constituted success from the projects that they had been involved with. For some it was the networks and supply chains that had been developed, which opened up new opportunities. For others it was more closely related to the new products that were in development as a result of the project, and the fact that revenues had increased as a result of their projects. Everyone agreed, however, that additional support for SME 'post project' would be very much welcomed. Such support would not necessarily be financial (although the pilot demonstration project proposed within the next FP7 SME call was welcomed), but could be more in the form of 'enablers' (e.g. external support for commercialisation/ dissemination) to enhance the chances of successful exploitation, given the huge investments already made by both the EC and the SMEs involved.

At this point, the discussion was drawn to a close despite the interest and enthusiasm of the participants to continue. The audience was thanked, but especially the best Practice speakers were applauded for their valuable contribution to the workshop.