

Antti Peltomäki

Deputy Director-General

European Commission

Information Society and Media Directorate-General

Closing Speech

Living Labs Information Event

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon. I hope you have had a most productive and inspiring event today, to prepare for concrete, valuable and successful next steps for the Living Labs and user-driven open innovation related areas which are foreseen for 2009, both in the CIP Programme and in the FP7 ICT priority.

Innovation is a high-cost process. Compared to every success, there are said to be 3 000 ICT product ideas which do not turn out to be winners. Even successful products are not always user friendly. Surveys show that 75% of all users find their ICT tools more stressful than relaxing.

In such a context, user-centric ideation and validation can play an important role in effectively speeding-up high-quality innovation processes by addressing the users' actual needs.

Living Labs are user-driven open innovation ecosystems in real-life settings. Innovation is fully integrated within the co-creation process of new services, products and societal infrastructures. In recent years, Living Labs have become a powerful instrument for effectively involving the user at all stages of the research, development and innovation process, thereby strongly contributing to European competitiveness and growth.

By placing the user at the centre of the innovation lifecycle, the Living Labs concept is tightly linked to the second pillar "Strengthening innovation and investment in ICT research" of i2010, the EU policy framework for the information society and media.

The promotion and support of user-driven open innovation methodologies is a horizontal activity, cutting across several areas.

Firstly, Living Labs activities touch different domains in the Policy Support Programme of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (CIP), thereby boosting innovation for the benefit of competitiveness.

Secondly, it also cuts across different Challenges and Objectives under the ICT priority of the Co-operation Programme of the EU Seventh Framework Programme, where the Living Labs bring users effectively into research and development.

Finally, you should also note the potential of Living Labs in the different applications research domains, which prepare for the successful take-up of research and development results.

This cross-cutting nature is also reflected in the involvement of colleagues from numerous units within my Directorate General Information Society and Media.

Several integrated projects from the Sixth Framework Programme are developing and demonstrating interoperable collaboration

environments supporting the user-driven open innovation process. This is the result of a long standing list of milestones.

Starting from Coordination and Support Actions under this Programme, the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL) was launched in Helsinki at the end of 2006, under the Finnish Presidency of the European Union.

After the establishment of these foundations, enthusiasm and motivation among the stakeholders has been growing. With the continued support of the successive European Presidencies, the network has recently surpassed the mark of more than 100 Living Labs. The last significant step in expanding the ENoLL took place in the context of the ICT2008 in Lyon.

The growing political interest on Living Labs demonstrates the strategic importance of the concept as a powerful mechanism to strengthen European "innovativeness", within a global reach.

Finally, let me share with you some ideas from a new book which I read over the holidays. This book by Canadian Don Tapscott is called: "Grown Up Digital – How the Net Generation is Changing Your World". I was thinking of Living Labs when I read Tapscott saying: "The old industrial approaches to product definition and product marketing are obsolete. ... **Net Geners** [in the Net Generation] ... love to innovate and want to customize everything. They want to collaborate and be engaged. All of this suggests that products must now be mass customized, service intensive, and

infused with the knowledge and the individual tastes of customers. What's more, Net Geners ... want to be involved in co-innovating products, and if you let them you'll actually be setting the stage for rich, enduring experiences to occur. This requires rethinking everything in the customer experience value chain."

Whatever the physical ages of Living Lab participants, I hope that you will find this power of diversity, engagement and co-innovation fully reflected in your Living Labs.

Don Tapscott continues: "Every company needs to find ways to become tied into this explosion of peer production. The economy and the ways firms orchestrate capability to innovate and create goods and services is changing ... innovation is being democratized."

Is your Living Labs engagement making the most of this change?

Before concluding my speech, I would like to bring you two more messages.

Firstly, Living Labs actions in the CIP ICT Policy Support Programme should now clearly demonstrate what is the European dimension in this movement and how should it be further supported.

Lastly, Living Labs should also in the next wave of ICT projects prove their value in the technology adoption cycle, bridging between research and take-up.

Thank you for your attention.