

The Business Innovation Observatory trend report: Smart factories, clean tech and customer experience; how to scale-up the success of learning with users?

The three emerging trends of 'Smart factories', 'Clean technologies' and 'Customer experience' are investigated in the third batch of 12 case studies published by the Business Innovation Observatory. These new trends involve the use of: new manufacturing processes in Smart Factories, new environmental technologies and circular models (clean tech), and new marketing practices in the case of Customer Experience.

The third trend report identifies some key issues among the trends in order to better understand these new innovation practices and how policy can support the scaling up of the successes of learning with users. The report also includes recommendations resulting from the third Business Innovation Observatory workshop held in Naples on 1 October 2014.

Main messages from the trend report

The case studies show that visions of a future with more jobs, less waste and more satisfied customers can become concrete. Many successful solutions already exist today, but the trends should be scaled up in order to increase their full economic and societal impact. Economic impacts include amongst others: productivity gains, market growth, sector growth, and increased revenues. Meanwhile, societal impacts discussed concern for instance: more jobs, material and energy savings, and increased customer satisfaction.

A commonality in the three trends is that they represent a more sustainable and systemic view with circular feedback loops compared to the traditional, linear, short term view on 'passive' market-transactions. The three trends are not just about passive selling (exchanging and extracting value), but also about the co-creation of value.

Both the business models of many companies which drive the three trends and the good policy practices identified are based on 'learning by using' and 'learning by interacting'. Yet, a common policy challenge involves the question of the promotion of education: how can public intervention promote interactive learning between those who offer solutions and those who need and apply these solutions.

There is a perceived view that existing EU policies concerning education and training are not adapted to the challenges and the speed of innovation. Policy makers can make a difference by adjusting education and skills to scale up the innovation trends.

The trends call for a more active and strategic participation of policy makers in supporting and scaling-up these high growth potential trends as without Smart Factories, Europe will continue to lose more jobs, without Cleantech we will continue to produce more waste, and without Customer Experience we will lose clients.



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