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Samantha Michaux, Tabea Link (Lead authors)

10 Tools to Enable the Innovation Potential of High-Tech Photonics SMEs

A guide for cluster managers and business developers to support technological innovation

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Steinbeis-Edition

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Imprint

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10 Tools to Enable the Innovation Potential of High-Tech Photonics SMEs. A guide for cluster managers and business developers to support technological innovation

1st edition, 2018 | Steinbeis-Edition, Stuttgart
ISBN 978-3-95663-168-9

Layout: Steinbeis-Edition
Cover picture: alexis84/iStock/Thinkstock,
bearbeitet von GOETZINGER + KOMPLIZEN Werbeagentur GmbH
This book is also available as printed version. ISBN 978-3-95663-160-3

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200290-2018-02 | www.steinbeis-edition.de

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Paving the way to excellence – Innovation capacity building for photonics SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the engine of the European economy. In Europe, 23 million SMEs provide around 75 million jobs and represent 99 % of all enterprises. Addressing gaps in terms of access to skills or expertise, resources, infrastructure or technology nevertheless remains a necessity in order to sustain the ongoing positive development. It is therefore important to ensure that conditions and support tools are in place that allow SMEs across the EU to exploit their innovation potential to the fullest.

This is where cluster and network initiatives can come in to play an active role in connecting and bringing together the right stakeholders and in reducing the barriers for collaborative innovations. This not only applies to stakeholders from different industries but also to stakeholders from within the value chain (for example, end-users and developers, or science and industry).

Besides providing an ideal environment for SMEs to best innovate and grow, clusters and networks managers should support the ***Innovation Management*** of SMEs which is of paramount importance for reducing the time from idea creation to putting a product on the market and successfully turning innovative ideas into profitable ventures.

Due to its nature as a Key Enabling Technology (KET), Photonics is one of the most prominent drivers for the modernisation of Europe's industry, strengthening its competitiveness, creating new jobs and supporting growth for SMEs. Within this framework, the project **RespiceSME** was launched to **strengthen the role of clusters and networks** as facilitators by **reinforcing the innovation capacity and stimulating targeted collaborations of European Photonics SMEs in and beyond photonics.**

With its unique 3-dimensional approach, RespiceSME focused on *evaluating and stimulating the innovation potential* of high-tech photonics SMEs *(Dimension 1)*; enhancing the *global technological exploitation* of photonics innovations by *analys-*