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**“What do we know about entering innovation networks by SMEs? “**

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**Abstract:**

The importance of networking as a way to enhance innovation has been pointed out in many scientific papers, in particular for SMEs. However it appears that many SMEs (in Italy at least) actually are not embedded in any particular network. Consequently the process to be undertaken in order to successfully engage in a network represent a key topic which need to be explored as a precondition for studying learning in networks. In many cases this process involves also the influence of policies, often playing an important role in providing incentives to networking.

This paper proposes, through a critical scientific literature review, to investigate on processes and challenges involved in the engagement of SMEs in existing networks, with particular attention to the influence of institutional policies and to the role of networks that are not specifically aimed at innovation purposes (e.g. commercialization networks).

Findings shows that literature provides a wide range of studies that investigate on the establishment, evolution, maintenance, constrains and benefits of network, but there is general lack of knowledge on the matter of how individual SMEs enter a network. Networking is globally object of the attention of many scholars. However this process, in particular because of the influence of institutional policies involved, can be different depending on countries. Consequently, not only the importance of prompting research studies on this area needs to be outlined but also a specific country contribution.

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