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D8.7 Evaluation of work carried out with recommendation in relation to DIHs for stakeholders

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1 Introduction

The aim of this task is to evaluate the sustainability of the TRINITY operations and the usefulness of the DIHs network. This evaluation is based on multiple questionnaires, interviews, and workshops which were executed throughout the project in order to capture the needs and expectations of all those stakeholders that benefited from the different services offered (open calls, training, etc) and to the DIHs part of the network.

The aspects that were evaluated, both quantitatively as well as qualitatively include the utilization rate of services (what is used, what is not used), missing needs for new non-offered services, funding resources, needs and model, usefulness and added-value provided by the network.

With this report, we aim at providing recommendation in relation to DIHs for stakeholders.

This document is built as follows. In the first chapter we briefly introduce Trinity and highlight the actions which have been taken throughout the project to safeguard sustainability and usefulness. The next chapter addresses tools and systems which have been developed, as there are the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), the Digital Access Point (DAP), an overview of business models and the Catalogue of services. Chapter 4 and 5 discuss the qualitative and quantitative questionnaires and measurements. Chapter 6 summarizes key recommendations.

2 Sustainability as a concept from start to end

2.1 Trinity: a sustainable network

TRINITY has created a network of multidisciplinary and synergistic local digital innovation hubs (DIHs) which consist out of research centres, companies, and university groups. These entities cover a wide range of topics that can contribute to 1) agile production with advanced robotics as the driving force and 2) digital tools, data privacy and cyber security technologies which support the introduction of advanced robotics in manufacturing processes.

The result is a one-stop shop for methods and tools to achieve highly intelligent, agile, and flexible production. The network has supported development of demonstrators in the areas of robotics which were identified as the most promising to advance agile production. These include for instance effective user interfaces based on augmented reality and speech, collaborative robotics using sensory systems to ensure safety, reconfigurable robot work cells and peripheral equipment (fixtures, jigs, grippers, ...), programming through gestures, Internet-of-Things, secure wireless local networks, etc.

These demonstrators have served as a reference implementation for two rounds of open calls for application experiments, where companies with agile production needs and sound business plans were supported by TRINITY DIHs to promote their manufacturing processes. Next to technology-centred services, (mainly labs with advanced robot technologies and know-how to develop innovative application experiments), TRINITY's network of DIHS also offered training and consulting services, including support for business planning and access to financing. Services of participating DIHs and dissemination of information to wider public are now through a digital access point (DAP). Another important activity of the project was the preparation of a business plan and Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to sustain the network after the end of the project funding. Both the DAP and the MoU will be discussed later in more depth.

Throughout the development of the project, sustainability has been a key topic along the way. From the start, Trinity has applied a practical approach to sustainability, as well from the project perspective as from a collaboration perspective beyond the project, always keeping the pulse of the surroundings of the project. This has proved very useful with the introduction of EDIHs, DTAs. From early on, a bottom-up approach was followed, considering inputs and feedback from stakeholders.

2.2 Early gathering of insight

Early-on during the project, SMEs and DIHs were queried regarding their needs and expectations with the objective to embed this into the sustainability of the network. These needs summarized below were considered bottom-up while developing the project.

- SME insight
  - Access to market opportunities
  - Access to network comprising of new contacts around Europe which will include end-users, integrators and technology providers
  - Access to relevant technology
  - New clients and potential first clients
  - Business partners and investors

- o Relevant industry-specific events
  - o Access to experts and mentorship – experts behind the technologies
  - o Specific technology/vendor/product training broker between SME and technology provider
  - o Relevant and specific technical support

- DIH insights
  - o Provide SME centric portfolio of services and needs
  - o Enable efficient lead generation, networking and matchmaking between different SME, organizations and stakeholders
  - o Provide information of relevant (already existing) technologies, services, available infrastructure, programs and funding opportunities
  - o Enable collaboration of different partners and support different project tasks
  - o Is a link between SME's and DIH's providing knowledge on, and training of technologies.
  - o Be a neutral body that act as a connection point between stakeholders
  - o The interaction should be possible through multiple channels including DAP that provides sufficient information and is usable.

- RODIN-CSA insight (early on in the project)
  - o DIHs are the main customer/user of the network services
  - o Many are looking at marketplaces – though they are primarily brokerage platforms
  - o Business models focus primarily on network services and memberships, not on the granular level of point sales, neither towards individual SME's or DIH's
  - o Still limited collaboration on synergies between projects. Each project still looks at own models
  - o Other EU projects are investigating similar deployment mechanisms

2.3   Prioritization and development of key services and assets

Among the project partners a core group was established to collect feedback and insights from other partners and broader network on identification of needs of services and assets, through a series of workshops the Trinity partners agreed upon key assets and services listed below that will foster a sustainable future for the network.

Table 1 Service priorization

Service	Description	Type	Life-time of service	Customer
#1	Pool of expertise and competence descriptions per participating organization – network of experts	Presentation, section in DAP	3-5 years	Universities, RTOs, DHIs, Industry in general
#2	Technical modules and use case demonstrations -Catalogue and repository	Digital Access Point	3-5 years	Industry, DIHs, SMEs and start-ups
#3	Education and learning content related to these technologies – integrated with digital access point	TRINITY learning platform	3-5 years	Academia, SMEs, start-ups
#4	Service catalogue per DIH partner, and these include different smaller service categories such as networking, brokerage and matchmaking, research services, educational services, services related to individual infrastructures	De-centralized, presentation	5-10 years	Other DIHs, EDIHs

2.4 Market analysis and collaboration avenues identification

The Trinity partners recognized early on that the sustainability would largely depend on the external factors, and the fast evolving landscape of the robotics community around Europe. Hence a comprehensive analysis of the market landscape was performed to identify relevant European IA projects, and existing platforms and networks. Through this analysis, it different collaboration avenues were investigated for future collaborations, network growth and deployment mechanisms. Under this activity Trinity initiated dialogues with other European IAs and existing networks to explore potential collaborations and leverage existing synergies.

The Trinity project acknowledged that SMEs and DIHs have at their disposal a vast amount of networks, assets, portals and catalogues, and they struggle to keep up with ever increasing and shifting landscape on this matter. Hence, collaboration and joint efforts should be a natural part of any project aiming for long term sustainability, and flexibility in business and governance model is also necessary to enable collaboration with relevant stakeholders.

2.5 Business model development

Trinity project utilized Business Model Canvas to explore the different options for selection of a business model for post-project sustainability. Over several workshops a core team of partners from Trinity gathered inputs from various stakeholders to align on key decisions and elaboration of a realistic operation and revenue model. Based on this exercise, the consortium made the decision that Trinity's post-project business model will be based on in-kind contributions and resources from the network alliance partners, and potential contribution from future projects utilizing the DAP to maintain and modify the assets.

TRINITY follows a two track approach, where the TRINITY Network (Alliance) is a formed. Trinity will not operate on the basis of a membership fee, but intends to attract academic, RTOs and companies based on the domain specific content, interest to form new research project, affect to the standardization, facilitate networking and match-making approach in general. The sale of services is supported by the alliance and facilitated through the TRINITY Digital Access Point. The second approach to ensure the flow of income is the connection to the EDIHs. A large number of TRINITY partners are directly involved to national EDIHs and are offering the services developed in TRINITY to the EDIH networks, and through them, to large number of SMEs. In particular the educational and training material developed in TRINITY could be commercialized by each content owner.

The overall value proposition of the post project network alliance is different for each of its constituting member groups. EDIHs/DIHs/SMEs are free to visit the Digital Access point, with catalogues of experts and reusable robotics demonstrators and use-cases. DIHs/RTOs have access to a voluntary and free-of-charge alliance network, with access and user-rights to utilize the Digital Access Point asset for future projects or publication of results and demonstrators. Finally, the EU robotics community gains access to an network of experts ready to collaborate on new projects, and ready to contribute to consolidation of networks, assets and brands that will make it easier for SMEs to explore and deploy robotics technologies

3 Sustainability : tools and solutions

3.1 Digital Access Point

The assets (Digital Access Point), the catalogue of demonstrators and use-cases can be utilized by new members and future projects to document and disseminate new results and use-cases. It is a portal with user-friendly repository- and catalogue functionality.

The core version of the launched website includes: representation of TRINITY (the project itself, and in a wider network of other IAs), share the project related news, incl. news on calls, hosts information on open calls with links to application submission and registration for the applicants, and provide links to social media profiles and contact information.

Based on this core website, additional features on calls, general information, catalogue of technical modules and use cases, events and news sections, SME demonstrator pages, success stories and login area of the network collaboration space have been added. The website could be browsed by visiting https://trinityrobotics.eu/.

The overall architecture of the website covers a set of models and templates, a database management system with the relevant information about the exploitable results, services provided by the members, links to tutorials and training materials, and user interfaces for managing these features according to the project objectives. Services offered by the partners in TRINITY network are also listed in DAP.

3.2 Training platform

The Trinity Training platform gathers the educational and training material developed in the course of Trinity for interested first time users, SMEs, RTOs and other stakeholders. The platform is based on Moodle and hosts the technical (reusable) modules, internal and external use-case demonstrators, and webinars regarding the services provided by Trinity partners. The website could be browsed by visiting https://trinity-trainingplatform.eu/

The training materials are developed mainly to support SMEs in their demonstrations by providing audio/visual guides, programming support, and integration support. In order to achieve this, different level of details are provided, creating 3 versions for each module, namely, integrator, production manager, and developer versions. Training Platform has been linked with the Trinity DAP to make the Trinity training material easily accessible to any interested party directly from the main gateway of the Trinity project with the outside world which is the DAP.

3.3 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

A group of Trinity partners will form a network alliance. This network alliance will enter into a MoU - a voluntary and non-binding agreement to seek future collaborations, to jointly manage and maintain the Trinity outcomes and assets, and give partners opportunity to utilize the assets in future projects and collaborations. The network will be open for new members – at no initial charge.

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4 Sustainability : Qualitative Questionnaires

4.1 Approach and measurement

Throughout the Trinity project, multiple questionnaires have been issued, in order to gather valuable feedback from SME's, DIH's and other stakeholders. Also the topic of "sustainability" has been covered, addressing needs of SME's and DIH's after expiry of the projects (including, but not limited to missing needs, new or missing services, usefulness and added-value). This with the objective of taking pro-active measures throughout the project to anticipate those needs, and make sure they are included and hardwired into the design of the project.

4.2 Qualitative feedback

Feedback of investigated stakeholders points quite unequivocally into the direction of a very strong satisfaction of the tools and services which Trinity provides and will further provide going forward. Here we talk a.o. about the platform for collaboration and information exchange, a platform for partnerships and innovation prospects.

Some testimonials for the TRINITY FSTP participants:

- "TRINITY is the type of effective support as it both results in direct innovation for participating partners but it also manages to leverage group synergies and effectuates long-term valorisation structures." - Laser Cladding Venture (LCV), Belgium
- "..a very good way to start an international research/development collaboration" – Aldakin, Spain
- "Our engagement in Trinity has brought us very valuable partnerships…." - Knowhedge S.r.l., Italy
- "TRINITY really does put SME's interests first." - Additive Automations S.L., UK
- "…opportunity to collaborate with our partner in the project"-Spin Robotics, Denmark
- "…opportunity to disseminate our work and increase the visibility of our organization" – CASP S.A., Greece.

Of course there are also some learnings and points of attention:

- "...more active reach out from each consortium partner to each of the SMEs" - MX3D, The Netherlands
- "...organize a dedicated Trinity conference with demonstration projects" – Mentech, The Netherlands
- "Set up match making events with Academia" - Adaptive Robotics, Norway
- "Help to connect with European tech talent across Europe like Zurich, Delft and all the other top robotics universities in Europe. Provide access to follow on funding, not just public but also private investors via 'pitch day'" - Additive Automations S.L., UK
- "Connection between large company with SME could be interesting" – Pickit 3D, Belgium
- "It would be interesting to promote the service through more extensive means of communication. In that sense, one of the problems regarding the knowledge that the SME's have about European funding is the lack of knowledge. It is important to continue to support events that facilitate the sharing of information from word-of-mouth experiences" – Electrontecnica Alavesa S.L., Spain

- "As an improvement I would suggest more marketing/commercialization workshops". - CASP S.A., Greece.
- "Enlarging the TRINITY mentors around Europe. We would appreciate if there were also TRINITY mentors around our region for easyness in face to face meetings and support with local fundings." – 10Lines, Estonia
- "One of the biggest challenges is how a fast moving agile SME works with a university in terms of project management." - Additive Automations S.L., UK

Participants reported a strong motivation to become more agile in their production. They are working towards increasing internal efficiency and reduction of costs. Current obstacles which are perceived are the high investment costs, e.g. for introducing robots or implementing cyber security solutions across the whole architecture, lack of competences amongst the employees, and a lack of existing technical solutions. All of the aforementioned requests have been satisfied by TRINITY (for instance through Trinity's building blocks of *Networking*, *Training & Education* and *Demonstrators*).

Participants were also queried regarding TRINITY's Digital Access Point (DAP) and Education & Training platform and were found to be satisfied with them. DAP is the key instrument in ensuring sustainability of the network of DIHs in the field of agile robotics. The website has developed a two-way channel for both the network to inform the prospective partners about the opportunities and services within the top European experts, and the prospective partners to establish connections with the network and addressing their needs in robotics and business enhancement.

5 Usefulness and impact assessment

5.1 Usefulness

The main achievements of the Trinity are the development of the Trinity community and the network of the robotics DIHs in the field of manufacturing. Besides technology-centric services, Trinity's network of DIHs developed the offerings in training (adult learning) and consulting services (technology, tools, standards and research collaboration), including support for business planning and access to financing. Services of participating DIHs and dissemination of information to the wider public were provided through a digital access point (DAP) that was developed in the project. Another important activity of the project was the preparation of a business plan to sustain the network after the end of the project funding.

All Trinity catalogue modules and use cases have been documented and complemented with instructions, training and other related educational material. Suitable delivery methods has been selected for different material targeted to various different user levels. All training and educational material has been collected to Trinity training platform. For larger reach and visibility all video training material is uploaded on YouTube is linked at Trinity Training Platform.

Throughout the project, Trinity has had a profound impact on for instance the Ecosystem and Network, on educational material for SME's, or on the transition from lab to shopfloor. Whereas before Trinity, there were several Associations such as euRobotics, Sprint robotics etc., Trinity aims at offering a specialized network focused on robotics for agile manufacturing. Regarding educational material, pre-Trinity, it were the universities which offered lectures and courses for various topics. Trinity has developed specific educational material related to the use cases and the technical modules. Whereas before Trinity, large research projects developed complex systems alone, or with few, usually large, enterprises, Trinity was able to speed-up the technology uptake by SME's (from research to commercialization) via FSTP funding. The TRINITY project offered emerging technology modules, which came with the description of used technologies, interfaces, standards and educational material. The modularisation of the technology was a key for the success.

As already mentioned, TRINITY also developed the Digital Access Point for showcasing the results from the internal and 3rd party demonstrations. The DAP includes the description of the use case demonstration, the used technology modules, media and link to educational material, and organisation information. Such repositories dedicated for the robotic solutions did not exist before.

5.2 Impact assessment

5.2.1 Approach and measurement

Next to a continuous investigation on sustainability, also the usefulness and impact of the network has been monitored on a constant basis. As mentioned before, this allowed a permanent evaluation, allow for corrective actions and a bottom-up convergence towards the goals of the project.

5.2.2 Quantitative feedback

One of the enquiries which was executed, covered expectations of users towards the Trinity website. This was done in order to offer on the DAP-site as much as possible relevant information according the needs and requirements of the users.

Figure 1 Expectations for TRINITY digital access point

The investigation provided inputs for prioritisation of development of functions towards DAP. Regarding usability of the TRINITY network, the audience expressed demand for direct and technical-need-based-submission reaching out to DIHs options. Last but not least, the audience suggested the dissemination of TRINITY success stories through the DAP. In a separate questionnaire, the audience was asked for an assessment of the importance of Trinity's Added-Value services, and challenges to access EC public funding, as to tune the project to come forward to those needs. The graph below shows the importance the audience attributes to Equity-free funding. But also one-on-one mentorship and the know-how of Trinity were considered extremely beneficial.
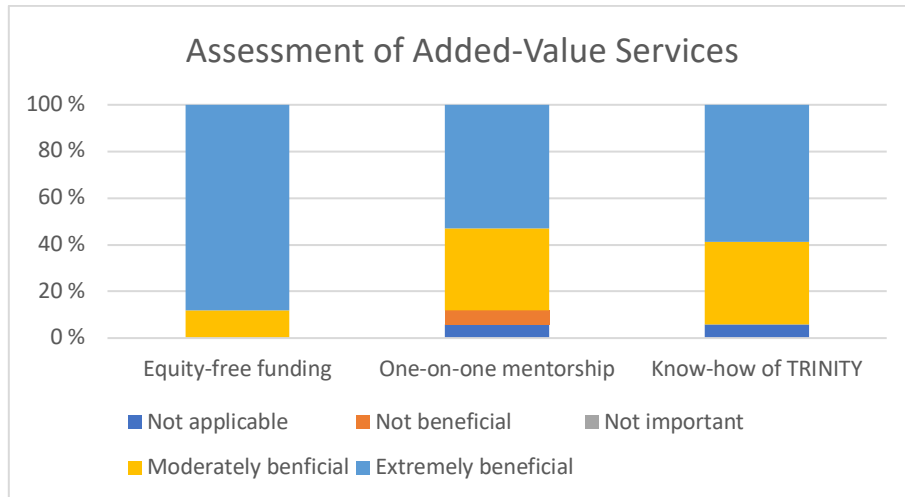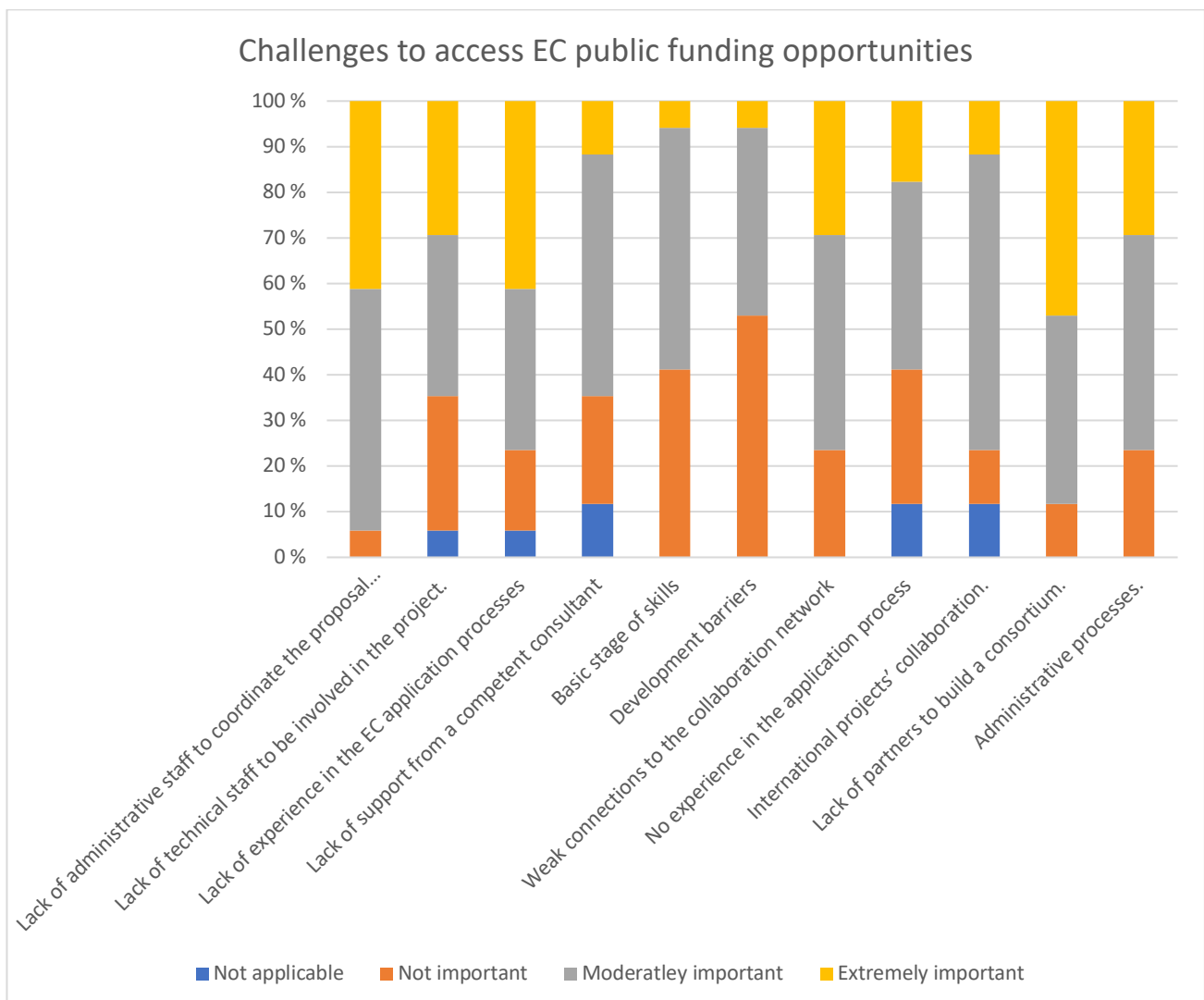
Figure 2 Assessment of value

From the figure below we can understand that the lack of experience in the EC application process, and the difficulty in finding the right partners to build a consortium are considered major challenges.

TRINITY organised 18 internal demonstrations and 37 external demonstrations. In questionnaires, following the open calls, FSTP participant companies reported success in team, market and revenue growth (see in figure below), which shows that the return of investment (ROI) progress for TRINITY FSTP is very good. Besides, other projects and organisations that were not associated with TRINITY have also started to sign-up to the Digital Access Point and started to publish their own results.

The success of the Open Calls in the TRINITY showcased the interest to collaborate under the FSTP funding scheme. The participant companies had gained more revenues, new projects/orders, new investments more than the contribution of EC funding within the runtime of their demonstrator program.

Individual mentoring system for each 3rd party demonstrator was found very effective from both DIH perspective and the SME perspective. Mentoring also made the reporting and evaluation process smoother and more effective as the progress and reporting could be monitored constantly through the demonstrations.

TRINITY addressed the supply chains via Open Calls, and supported this with two platforms (Digital Access Point and Training platform) and technical robotics related modules. In regard the supply chain perspective the approach was to support formulation of concrete supply chains formed to win the Open Calls in TRINITY. To facilitate the formulation of the supply chains TRINITY organised several match-making events.

Trinity introduced cross-industry-based standards for modules and systems. These standards can be viewed as a set of guidelines, criteria, and practices that have been developed to ensure interoperability and compatibility between various industries. They are essential in promoting communication and cooperation between different sectors, allowing for more efficient and effective processes. By establishing common ground and shared practices, cross-industry-based standards help to drive innovation and streamline operations across diverse industries, as the adoption of cross-industry-based standards can have far-reaching impacts, not only within individual industries, but across entire supply chains and ecosystems.

The Trinity project has been a success in generating new businesses based on platform supply. The project has helped to create new business opportunities for companies in a number of ways, including:

- **Open call funding:** The project has provided funding for companies to develop and test new platform-based products and services.
- **Expert mentoring:** The project has provided companies with access to expert mentors who can help them to develop their business plans and strategies.
- **Use-case demonstrators and modules:** The project has provided companies with access to use-case demonstrators and modules that they can use to test their technologies and develop their products and market offerings.

Developing the services to TRL 6 and 7 have helped generate new business opportunities for the parties. Direct commercial revenue generation from the prototypes, as new services, products or acquisition candidates will however take longer time to materialise. As a result of these initiatives, companies involved in the Trinity project have been able to achieve a number of successes, including:

- **Attracting new customers:** Companies have been able to attract new customers by using the platform-based products and services that they have developed with the support of the Trinity project.

- **Recruiting new talent:** Companies have been able to recruit new talent by showcasing their platform-based products and services to potential employees.
- **Generating new leads and business contacts:** Companies have been able to generate new leads and business contacts by participating in events and conferences organized by the Trinity project.
- **Collaborating with other companies:** Companies have been able to collaborate with other companies by participating in joint projects and initiatives organized by the Trinity project.
- **Accessing new funding opportunities:** Companies have been able to access new funding opportunities by participating in calls for proposals organized by the Trinity project.

Trinity has also had a leveraging effect on other sources of funding for its research partners, especially on regional and national funding. Some examples of the EU funded projects include the ReconCycle project, the euROBIN project, the EARASHI, the RECIRCULATE, the CONVERGING, the SMARTHANDLE, the MASTER and the IMOCO4.E projects.

6   Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the aforementioned discussions, interviews, workshops and surveys with stakeholders over the course of the project, the following conclusions and recommendations can be formulated.

6.1   Key sustainability recommendations and actions

6.1.1 Governance and business model

- A group of Trinity partners form a TRINITY (post-project) Network Alliance.
- The new Trinity network establishes a MoU - a voluntary and non-binding agreement to seek future collaborations, to jointly manage and maintain the TRINITY outcomes and assets and give partners opportunity to utilize the assets in future projects and collaborations.
- The Trinity Network Alliance will be open for new members – at no initial charge
- The assets (Digital Access Point), the catalogue of demonstrators and use-cases can be utilized by new members and future projects to document and disseminate new results and use-cases
- The business model will be based on in-kind contributions and resources from the network alliance partners, and potential contribution from future projects utilizing the DAP to maintain and modify the assets.
- Tampere University will take ownership of the DAP asset and take responsibility for post-project operations for a period of 2 years.

6.1.2 Post-project value propositions, assets, and offerings

- The overall value proposition of the post-project network alliance is:
    o For EDIHs/DIHs/SMEs: A free to visit Digital Access point, with catalogues of experts and reusable robotics modules, and demonstrators
    o For DIHs/RTOs: A voluntary and free-of-charge alliance network, with access and user-rights to utilize the Digital Access Point asset for future projects or publication of results and demonstrators.
    o For EU robotics community: An alliance network of experts ready to collaborate on new projects, and ready to contribute to consolidation of networks, assets and brands that will make it easier for SMEs to explore and deploy robotics technologies
- The main assets and offerings of the network alliance are the:
    o A populated catalogue and knowledge repository of reusable robotics demonstrators and use-cases by TRINITY partners and 3rd party SMEs, available from a portal/webpage (the previous DAP)
    o Access to corresponding training materials.
    o A network of experts – catalogue of organizations and expertise

6.1.3 Flexibility to pursue various collaboration scenarios – final project phase and post-project

A key element of the sustainability recommendation is to ensure the project and the post-project network alliance have the necessary flexibility with its assets, business- and governance model to pursue collaboration dialogues and join relevant or required consolidations efforts. This flexibility will be

especially valuable entering the last phase of the IA projects, as new requirements and new EU mechanisms are formed with EDIHs, DTAs, centralized AI platforms, new work programs. Alignment of DIH service catalogue structures, new centralized user-portals, modified sustainability requirements on new IAs in the coming programs are examples of this. Key activities to ensure necessary flexibility to pursue collaboration and meet changing requests from existing networks, the commission, etc.…:

- Structuring the descriptions of the post-project offerings in a way that can be integrated with other centralized catalogue and portal structures:
    - Competences and expertise per organisation
    - Demonstrations done by Trinity and 3rd parties (use case- level)
    - Services relating to technology Deep Dives (visits), matchmaking, innovation scouting, R&D services and educational services (e.g., link to our training platform)
- Prepare and support Trinity coalition partners and post-project network alliance to register their organisation and expertise on the centralised AI and robotics platforms/portals

6.2   Feedback via RODIN-CSA

A sustainable pan-European network should:

- Provide SME centric portfolio of services and needs.
- Enable efficient lead generation, networking and matchmaking between different SMEs, organisations and stakeholders.
- Provide information of relevant (already existing) technologies, services, available infrastructure, programs and funding opportunities.
- Enable collaboration of different partners and supports different project tasks.
- Is a link between SMEs and DIHs providing knowledge on and training of technologies.
- Provide direct funding or helps in applying one.
- Be a neutral body that act as a connection point between stakeholders.

The interaction should be possible through multiple channels including DAP that provides sufficient information and is usable. Different events and meetings are important, and would provide a "real" contact with people. This can be supported by direct discussions.

Good onboarding needs:

- Access to network comprising of new contacts around Europe, which will include end-users, integrators and technology providers
- Access to relevant technology & Funding opportunities
- Enable SMEs to get services from relevant service providers across all Europe

The network of experts allows knowledge transfer of relevant technologies that should meet the requirements of different industries. The contacts (network) and knowledge are identified as most important key selling points. Many partners would be willing to pay some proportion of the project budget if the project funding was obtained through the network. In addition, other not easily quantified resources such as time and effort are offered.