



# **BUTTERFLIES**

## **Project** Bio-Polymers & Additive Manufacturing

### **Newsletter II**

**Building impact together: exploitation planning in the BUTTERFLIES project**

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# Building impact together: exploitation planning in BUTTERFLIES

EU-funded innovation projects are, by design, ambitious. They bring together diverse partners, tackle complex challenges, and aim to produce tools and technologies that change how people work. But there is a question that sits underneath all that activity, which doesn't always get the attention it deserves until quite late on: what happens after the project ends?

This is the sphere of exploitation planning. The work of ensuring that the output of a project doesn't quietly gather dust once it finishes, but instead finds its way into the hands of people who need it. For BUTTERFLIES, these ultimately could be people with medical needs, so there is real pressure to get it right.

The platform structure of a project like BUTTERFLIES, where multiple partners work together in a pre-built value chain, brings both a strategic advantage in terms of that value chain, but also a particular kind of complexity to exploitation planning. On the surface there is a clear pathway: partners collaborate, case studies are produced, and these are tested with their intended users. But as soon as you zoom in, a more intricate picture emerges. Each partner along the project value chain is developing knowledge, methods, materials and equipment that can spin out in different directions, some of which are quite different to the main project goal. So at a top level, what looks like a single innovation route can, in practice, quickly become a web with threads reaching across to different sectors, different value chains and different future applications. One of our challenges is to stay focused on our end goal, but not to lose sight of these additional opportunities.

Getting a consortium to think clearly about this is also harder than it first appears. Our partners come from very different professional contexts, with different ideas about what constitutes value for them, and different strategic priorities competing for their attention. This is the reality of multipartner projects. There are no fundamentally competing interests here – everyone wants the project to succeed – but “success” means different things depending on your viewpoint. Bringing those viewpoints into alignment takes time, and the day-to-day demands of technology delivery within the project don't always make it easy.

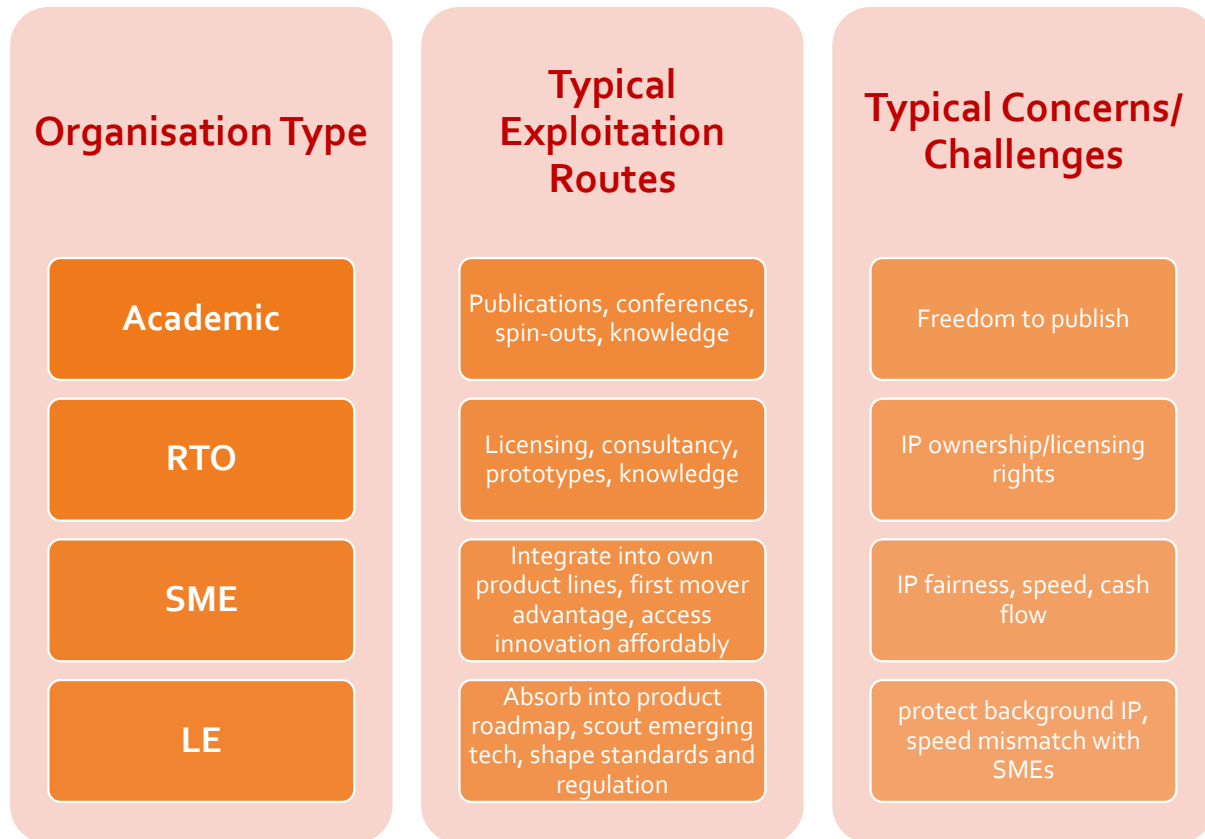
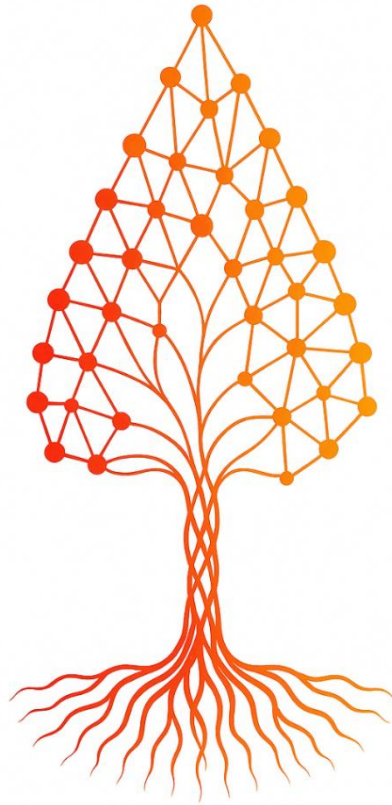


Figure 1. Typical exploitation objectives and concerns of different organisation types found in Horizon Europe projects.

At this early stage of the BUTTERFLIES project, much of our exploitation work involves building the foundations that our ultimate exploitation strategy will require. That means mapping the internal and external environments of the project – understanding what each partner brings, where the pressure points are, and what the landscape looks like beyond the consortium. It means actively looking for the network connections that don't yet exist – the relationships, routes to market and policy levers that might matter later in the project. And it means capturing all this in a way that keeps the eventual target market firmly in view so as not to dilute our commitment there. The risk in this kind of wide-angle analysis is losing the thread back to the end user, who will one day pick up one of our products to fulfil their need. Keeping that person at the centre of the picture, even while the map grows more complex around them, is perhaps the most important discipline of all.



*Figure 2. The BUTTERFLIES exploitation strategy will grow organically from our consortium partners (our roots) coming together to develop technologies and products that might find divergent applications in a variety of different value chains, but ultimately converge at the point of our target case studies.*

We don't yet have all the answers, but it matters to our stakeholders to know that we understand this kind of planning needs to be given the care and attention it deserves. The impact of BUTTERFLIES will not emerge automatically from its outputs. It will be built deliberately by a team that is learning about each other and starting to think about the future together.

We look forward to sharing more as that picture develops.