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Models for Successfully Applying Space Technology Beyond Its Original Intent (2)

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PUBLIC – PRIVATE INITIATIVES TO FOSTER TECHNOLOGY TRANSFERS, THE “KETLAB”  
CASE STUDY IN ITALY

**Abstract**

This paper describes the initiative of KETLAB (Key Enabling Technologies Laboratory), a structure established on October 2015 as the result of the agreement between the Italian Space Agency (ASI) and Hypatia, a consortium of research bodies, universities and companies. KETLAB, whose location is in Rome at ASI premises, is a technological complex infrastructure with a focus on multi-disciplinary activities and technology transfer (intended both as spin-off and spin-in). The analysis will be focused on four relevant aspects of this initiative.

The first aspect is of technological/scientific nature, and regards methodologies to optimize and foster processes of technology transfer, knowledge sharing and technology commercialization. In this framework Key Enabling Technologies (KETs) represent the most promising ones because of the high knowledge intensity, rapid innovation cycles and highly skilled human resources involved. KETLAB will adopt an “Open Innovation” approach, meaning that it will offer the results of the applied research, public and private, rather than producing its own research activities.

From the organizational perspective KETLAB intends to experiment innovative patterns, based on the involvement of several subjects (institutions, research centers, SMEs) of different nature (public and private) in order to share the resources and adopt a more cost-effective approach. In the case of KETLAB and the specific local context where is located, the initiative will also take advantage of the last years of collaboration of ASI with ESA and Lazio Region to promote start-up initiatives. KETLAB will then become the hub of a national network of subjects of different regions sharing the same methodology of technology transfer in other territories.

The last two aspects are of socio-economic and financial nature. KETLAB is located in the area of Tor Vergata in Rome, where there is the highest concentration in Italy of Universities and Research Centers, and one of the highest in Europe. The creation of a common ground of work and discussion could inspire innovation processes and create a leverage effect in terms of economic development and job creation. Finally a financial aspect will be investigated. As in Italy venture capital is not yet mature and aware of the potentialities of the Space sector, a specific effort of the KETLAB will be to engage and attract the interest of investors and private capitals to sustain newly created products and/or ventures.