Foreword

It is widely recognized that small and medium enterprises (SMEs) play an important role in any country's economy. They are important contributors to the national GDP and also relevant creators of jobs. Innovative entrepreneurship is often presented as the main strength of SMEs, which compensates for a lack of resources and of advanced managerial skills. Although innovation might be present at the moment of creation of a SME, its sustained competitiveness demands for continuous pursuit of new products, services, or processes. However, due to their nature, SMEs have difficulties on establishing R&D units to address those innovation issues.

Open innovation is an alternative to organizational innovation approaches based on internal resources and efforts only. It is being widely accepted by large corporations, in many sectors of the economy, which recognize the benefits of opening their innovation processes and initiatives to the participation of external talent or to profit from ideas that have been excluded from internal utilization.

Many accounts on the use of open innovation can nowadays be found in the literature, either academic or commercial. However, such accounts seldom address SMEs. Although they might be viewed as natural candidates to the adoption of open innovation, SMEs seem to be absent from the exploitation of these novel and promising approaches to enterprise competitiveness.

The editors of this book created an opportunity for publication of reports of open innovation use in SMEs. At the same time the book addresses other important aspects related to SMEs and open innovation. One of such aspects is how to enable SMEs to use open innovation or how to access open innovation services. Another aspect is concerned with laying the basis for a research program on the subject.

The good response the call for the book had from researchers and open innovation practitioners from all over the world is a sign that open innovation in SMEs is currently an important topic that is worth fostering and investigation.

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