DisAI.eu

D3.3
Training report on innovation, technology transfer and networking

Project Title	Improving scientific excellence and creativity in combating disinformation with artificial intelligence and language technologies
Contract Nº.	101079164
Type of Action	HORIZON-CSA
Topic	Disinformation Combating
Project start date	1st Dec 2022
Duration	36 months

Funded by
the European Union

Deliverable title	Training report on innovation, technology transfer and networking
Deliverable number	D3.3
Deliverable version	1.0
Contractual date of delivery	30 November 2025
Actual date of delivery	28 November 2025
Nature of deliverable	Report
Dissemination level	Public
Work Package	WP3
Task(s)	T3.2, T3.4
Partner responsible	DFKI
Author(s)	Simon Ostermann (DFKI)

Abstract	The report includes the description and results of the physical workshop on the topic of innovation, technology transfer, and networking, which includes the overall description of the topic, the organizational matters, participants list, outcomes, and lessons learned.
Keywords	AI, NLP, Research Management

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

This deliverable, **D3.3 Training report on innovation, technology transfer and networking**, documents the organization, content, and outcomes of a two-day training workshop hosted by **DFKI** in Saarbrücken as part of **Work Package 3 (WP3)** of the **DisAI** project. The workshop was designed to strengthen the consortium's capacity in innovation management, technology transfer, and collaborative networking.

Within the framework of **DisAI (Improving scientific excellence and creativity in combating disinformation with artificial intelligence and language technologies)**, WP3 focuses on fostering sustainable institutional development through training, mentoring, and best practice exchange. This specific activity (in Task 3.2) aimed to equip researchers and project managers with practical knowledge and tools to enhance the exploitation potential of research results, promote cross-sector collaboration, and improve overall readiness for innovation.

The workshop combined theoretical insights with applied case studies from DFKI's experience in technology transfer, complemented by an exploitation and lead-generation session conducted by **Red Bumerang**. Participants from **DFKI**, **KInIT**, and **CERTH** engaged in interactive discussions and knowledge-sharing activities addressing topics such as research commercialization or collaboration frameworks (e.g., Transfer Labs).

This report provides an overview of the workshop's organization and agenda, summarizes the key sessions and discussions, and highlights the **lessons learned** that will guide future capacity-building and networking actions within the DisAI project and beyond.

2 Transfer and IPR Workshop

2.1 Topic

The two-day workshop, hosted by DFKI, focused on effective strategies and frameworks for the transfer of knowledge and technology from research to industry. The programme opened with an overview of DFKI's catalogue of services and transfer methods, followed by presentations showcasing key approaches such as Transfer Labs, which have proven successful in facilitating joint strategic research, specialized training, and direct industry engagement.

Further sessions examined industry-oriented transfer projects, highlighting both publicly funded initiatives with a strong transfer component and commercially driven collaborations. Speakers shared practical insights and lessons learned from DFKI's extensive experience in these areas.

The second day began with a half-day workshop led by Red Bumerang on lead generation in the communications sector, with a particular emphasis on applications relevant to research institutions and alignment with European initiatives such as the Language Data Space.

The event concluded with a session on the role of generative AI in research and academia, which addressed both opportunities—such as enhanced data analysis, writing support, and idea generation—and challenges, including ethical considerations and bias. The discussion also covered best practices and anticipated developments in the use of AI in scholarly work.

2.2 Organization

The workshop was organized in presence at DFKI Saarbrücken. It took place on April 7th and 8th on a half day each. The schedule is shown below.

April 7th			
Time	**Item**	**Short Abstract**	**Who**
14:30	Registration (15 min) + opening remarks (15 min)		Simon Ostermann (DFKI)
15:00	Transfer at DFKI and our Catalogue of Services	This talk will give an overview of the catalogue of services at DFKI and an overview of transfer methods that are employed.	Verena Zink (DFKI)
15:30			
16:00	coffee break		
16:30	Transferlabs@DFKI: Successful knowledge and technology transfer	This talk gives an overview of one of DFKI's most successful approaches for industrial transfer: The transfer labs. Among several examples we show DFKI's transfer labs as a successful model for	Heiko Maus (DFKI)

17:00	from the research ecosystem	joint strategic research, dedicated training and direct transfer to industry.	
17:30 18:00	Transferring state of the art research into industrial application	This talk will focus on two primary approaches for industry transfer at DFKI in single projects: funded projects with a transfer emphasis and profit-driven collaborations with industry partners. The presentation will analyze the similarities and differences between these approaches and share insights and lessons learned from various successful transfer projects.	Jonas Metzger (DFKI)
19:30	Workshop Dinner	At Restaurant “Zum Stiefel”.	

April 8th			
Time	**Item**	**Short Abstract**	**Who**
8:30 9:00 9:30 10:00 10:30 11:00 11:30 12:00	Red Bumerang: Lead generation in the communications industry for AI	This half-day workshop will focus on lead generation for diverse industries, with a focus on the communication industry. It will put special emphasis on lead generation for research institutes and highlight key connections with related European initiatives such as the Language Data Space.	Igor Panjan (Red Bumerang)

2.3 Summary of the Workshop

Day 1

Opening Remarks & Workshop Framing

The day began with a welcome from Simon Ostermann, who introduced the purpose and structure of the two-day DisAI workshop. Attendees represented project partners from DFKI, KInIT, and CERTH. The workshop was framed as both a deep-dive into technology transfer and commercialization, and a community-building opportunity, especially ahead of the newly launched LorAI project. Ostermann presented DisAI as a Horizon-funded widening project that connects institutions around three research pillars: trustworthy AI, multimodal NLP, and multilingual language technologies. The overarching goals are to strengthen scientific excellence, boost research and administrative management, and increase the visibility and societal impact of AI research. A key emphasis was placed on

collaboration—among researchers, managers, and innovation leads—to foster not just science, but meaningful and transferable results. The flexible agenda was designed to allow space for discussion. Attendees briefly introduced themselves, creating a foundation of mutual understanding. Participants brought diverse experience in natural language processing, explainable AI, digital media, environmental applications, disinformation analysis, and project coordination.

Talk Slot 1: Transfer at DFKI and our Catalogue of Services

Presenter: Verena Zink (DFKI Strategy & Transfer)

Zink introduced DFKI's strategic approach to technology transfer. The presentation opened with a structural explanation of DFKI as a public-private partnership, funded by federal states and major corporate shareholders. This hybrid model allows DFKI to operate across the full innovation pipeline: from basic and applied research to development and transfer.

The core theme was the "Valley of Death"—the high-risk gap between early research and market-ready deployment. Zink explained how DFKI structures its transfer services to help partners cross this gap by combining early alignment, agile project design, and structured funding models. She also introduced the Technology Readiness Levels (TRLs) framework, noting that most transfer projects operate in TRLs 2–6, where proof-of-concept and prototyping are critical.

A structured portfolio of services supports this mission. DFKI offers feasibility studies, concept development, pilot prototyping, expert contributions to research studies, and team development workshops. These services are not theoretical—rather, they emerged from internal analysis of past contracts and successful collaborations across 29 departments.

Talk Slot 2: Transferlabs@DFKI

Presenter: Heiko Maus, DFKI Researcher & Transfer Lead

The second major talk introduced one of DFKI's most powerful formats for applied research: the Transfer Lab. These are long-term collaboration frameworks (typically three years) with partners from industry or the public sector, designed to avoid the friction of short-term contracts and allow deeper innovation work.

Transfer Labs feature a shared vision and evolving roadmap, collaborative teams (often including embedded company staff), and scholarship-supported PhD researchers who explore challenges based on real-world use cases. These Labs allow for flexibility: partners can adjust direction over time without renegotiating contracts, and joint teams build trust and continuity across projects. Several successful labs were shared as examples. Each lab reflected a different model of partnership, with varying degrees of co-location, infrastructure integration, and downstream commercialization.

Talk Slot 3: Transferring state of the art research into industrial application

This talk had to be canceled on very short notice due to sickness of the speaker.

Open Discussion & Participant Reflections

The day featured a wide-ranging discussion among participants, touching on both challenges and lessons learned from research-to-industry transfer. One recurring topic was the overinflated expectations around AI, particularly since the rise of large language models. Teams shared experiences of losing project bids to vendors that promised fast results without the same depth or accountability. In contrast, DFKI emphasizes transparency, phase-based delivery, and scope management.

Participants also discussed the trade-offs involved in applied work. Some researchers find transfer projects motivating—offering tangible impact and exposure to real-world constraints. Others navigate the balance between exploratory research and delivery-oriented collaborations. Multiple teams highlighted that DFKI's hybrid model, combining contract research and academic output, allows staff to engage in both worlds.

The group reflected on how to maintain long-term collaborations. Recommendations included early stakeholder alignment, regular workshops, agile roadmap management, and cultivating internal champions within partner organizations. Personal relationships, trust, and shared language across disciplines were repeatedly emphasized as keys to successful, sustained partnerships.

As Day 1 ended, there was a clear sense that technology transfer is not a one-size-fits-all solution but a layered, evolving process. The DFKI approach—combining long-term institutional tools like Transfer Labs with flexible service offerings—offered participants a grounded, honest, and adaptable model for bridging research and impact.

Day 2

Overview

The second day of the DisAI Workshop centered on equipping participants with practical strategies for selling AI-related services, particularly in early-stage markets. Led by an experienced B2B sales and lead generation expert from Red Bumerang, the session offered a comprehensive walkthrough of how to successfully position, promote, and sell technical services through a structured and repeatable sales process.

Exploitation Workshop

Participants were guided through a structured, four-step approach to sales: understanding client needs, preparing target lists, initiating outreach via LinkedIn and email, and maintaining consistent activity to build real-time market intelligence. A central message of the session was that successful sales come from listening, not pitching. Understanding the specific problems and language of the target audience is critical. The discussion highlighted that many clients still associate AI only with tools like ChatGPT and have little understanding of broader applications. As a result, consulting remains the most

viable market entry point. The participants from KInIT, working in natural language processing, user data, energy, and ethical AI, shared their experiences, noting that client engagements often begin vaguely and require education before progressing to concrete deliverables.

The workshop emphasized the importance of targeting small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) over large corporations in the early stages. SMEs typically have fewer decision-makers and shorter sales cycles, making them more responsive to AI consulting offers. Larger companies may offer bigger budgets but involve longer timelines and complex internal hierarchies.

To support outreach, the presenter demonstrated a complete toolchain: databases to identify companies, a proprietary scraper to assess AI readiness via company websites, and the LinkedIn Sales Navigator to pinpoint decision-makers. Automated tools were also presented, enabling personalized and multi-step outreach across email and LinkedIn. Additional techniques included email validation and domain warming to ensure deliverability.

The day concluded with a live walkthrough of the outreach process, showing how to go from raw data to a fully automated campaign. Participants were encouraged to define their core offerings, identify promising sectors, and begin testing their approach using the tools and frameworks provided.

2.4 Participants

The full list of participants is provided in Appendix A.

3 Lessons Learned

3.1 Organizational and Logistical Lessons

- **In-Person attendance is beneficial.** The in-person format at DFKI provided an important platform for trust-building and peer exchange, which are difficult to replicate in virtual settings. Participants emphasized the value of informal interactions—especially during breaks and the social dinner—for developing future cooperation opportunities.
- **Flexibility in scheduling supports deeper dialogue.** Allowing open discussion time and adaptive structuring enabled participants to exchange practical experiences beyond formal presentations. This flexibility proved essential in aligning diverse institutional perspectives on technology transfer.
- **Advance communication improves participant preparedness.** Providing a clear thematic framing before the event helped participants better connect their institutional experiences to the workshop content. However, future sessions could further benefit from short pre-event surveys and sharing of material to better align expectations and identify specific challenges or case studies of interest.

3.2 Lessons on Innovation and Technology Transfer

- **Transfer is not a one-size-fits-all process.** Experiences shared by DFKI demonstrated that successful technology transfer depends heavily on context—sector, maturity of the technology, and partner type. Models such as **Transfer Labs** work well for long-term industrial collaboration but may not suit smaller or short-term initiatives. Especially the model of the transfer labs will be further explored in lorAI, a new Teaming project where KInIT, CERTH, and DFKI will continue to collaborate.
- **Bridging the "Valley of Death" requires structural support.** Institutional mechanisms, like DFKI's catalogue of services, help bridge the gap between research and market deployment. Participants recognized that sustained funding, early partner involvement, and iterative prototyping are essential to mitigate this risk stage.
- **Trust and transparency underpin all transfer success.** Several partners highlighted that effective transfer outcomes rely less on technical excellence alone and more on relational factors, such as mutual understanding, continuity of contact, and transparent communication about limitations and expectations.
- **Industry expectations around AI are often misaligned.** Discussions revealed that many potential industrial clients overestimate the immediate capabilities of AI, particularly following the public attention on large language models. This underlines the need for clearer communication and expectation management by research institutions.

3.3 Lessons on Networking and Exploitation

- **Networking is an ongoing process, not an event.** The workshop underscored that effective networking extends beyond single meetings. Follow-up mechanisms—such as shared communication channels or periodic check-ins—are necessary to maintain momentum and translate discussions into collaboration.
- **SMEs offer promising entry points for applied AI engagement.** Insights from the exploitation workshop suggested that small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) represent agile and receptive partners for AI-driven solutions. Their shorter decision cycles and openness to experimentation make them valuable initial collaborators in technology transfer.
- **Sales literacy strengthens research impact.** The Red Bumerang session demonstrated that basic competence in lead generation, client engagement, and value proposition framing is increasingly essential for researchers involved in transfer activities. Integrating these skills into research management training could substantially improve commercialization readiness.

4 Conclusions

The DisAI workshop on innovation, technology transfer, and networking successfully achieved its objectives of strengthening collaboration among project partners, sharing practical expertise on technology transfer models, and enhancing understanding of how research outputs can generate tangible impact in society and industry.

Across the two days, participants gained both strategic insights and operational tools. The sessions on DFKI's transfer structures and the Transfer Labs model provided concrete examples of how research organizations can effectively bridge the gap between scientific exploration and industrial application. The Red Bumerang exploitation workshop complemented these perspectives by introducing hands-on methods for identifying partners, generating leads, and developing sustainable innovation ecosystems around AI-driven research.

The workshop confirmed that successful technology transfer depends on human and relational factors, such as trust, clear communication, and long-term engagement, additionally to institutional factors. The in-person setting fostered valuable exchanges that deepened mutual understanding between partners and laid the groundwork for continued collaboration, particularly within future initiatives such as the lorAI Teaming project.

In addition, the event demonstrated the growing importance of combining technical excellence with entrepreneurial and communicative skills. As AI technologies continue to evolve rapidly, research institutions must increasingly act as mediators between scientific progress and real-world application. Building capacity in areas such as client engagement, expectation management, and ethical AI use will be crucial to ensuring responsible and effective transfer of knowledge and innovation.

Overall, the workshop strengthened the DisAI consortium's collective competence in innovation management and exploitation, contributing directly to the project's wider goal of enhancing excellence, creativity, and impact in the European research landscape.

Appendix A: Participant list

Name	Affiliation
Adrian Gavornik	KInIT
George Karantaidis	CERTH
Jan Drab	KInIT
Jana Bieliková	KInIT
Lucia Kotulakova	KInIT
Marian Simko	KInIT
Martin Tamajka	KInIT
Martin Vyboh	KInIT
Michal Kompan	KInIT
Michal Sandanus	KInIT
Miroslav Blstak	KInIT
Nikos Sarris	CERTH
Simon Ostermann	DFKI
Verena Zink	DFKI
Igor Panjan	Red Bumerang