



Capacity Building Workshop

FROM DEMONSTRATION TO IMPACT: HOW CAN TEST BEFORE INVEST AND DEMO DAYS SERVICES DRIVE SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION?

OCTOBER 21, 2025

SHIFT-HUB Capacity Building Workshop: From Demonstration to Impact: How Can Test Before Invest and Demo Days Services drive sustainable Innovation?

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The [SHIFT-HUB](#) project, funded by the European Commission, co-organised an engaging online Capacity Building Workshop in collaboration with the [smartHEALTH European Digital Innovation Hub](#) titled *"From Demonstration to Impact: How Can Test Before Invest and Demo Days Services drive sustainable Innovation?"* on October 21, 2025. The event aimed to strengthen participants' knowledge and capacity by exploring how Test before Invest and Demo Days methodologies can be leveraged to foster sustainability and generate meaningful impact. Additionally, the workshop provided a platform to explore key challenges and opportunities within the existing service landscape across the European innovation ecosystem.

The workshop consisted of two sessions, a keynote lecture session and an interactive workgroup session. The keynote session brought together distinguished representatives from innovation ecosystems who shared their experiences, expertise and approaches in implementing Test before Invest and Demo Days services. The event concluded with a collaborative session that encouraged participants to exchange insights and jointly map the key values of these services and methodologies within the European innovation landscape.

1 Key Highlights

Speakers and Presentations:

The workshop was moderated by [Alena Bubeck](#), coordinator of the [SHIFT HUB](#) project and project manager at [Steinbeis Europa Zentrum](#). She introduced SHIFT-HUB, the project's objectives and services, before welcoming the following distinguished speakers:

- **Adamantios Koumpis**, Teaching and Research Officer at the Institute for Biomedical Informatics at the [University Hospital of Cologne](#). He brings extensive experience in AI integration for healthcare, bridging academic research with industry expertise from his work at different institutions including University Passau, and ALTEC Software, as well as the Digital Enterprise Research Institute in Ireland. He has a strong track record in research strategy, fundraising, and fostering collaborations with European industry, making him uniquely positioned to connect methodological insights with practical applications.
- **Odysseas Spyrgioulou**, International Consultant for Innovation, Technology and R&D at [Booster Labs](#). Odysseas is a Senior Consultant and Researcher with over 25 years of experience in research and innovation, foresight, project management, and AI governance. He supports startups and innovation ecosystems through mentoring, training, and programme design, and has worked extensively in both public and private sectors. Over his career, he has contributed to numerous national and international projects, designed training programmes on innovation, IPR, and entrepreneurship, and supported organisations in building effective innovation strategies.

- **Costas Karamanis**, holds a degree in Production & Management Engineering and currently working for the [Center for eHealth Applications and Services](#) for Digital Health Transformation, in the context of the [smartHEALTH European Digital Innovation Hub](#). He has worked in various large EU collaborative networks, such as the Innovation Relay Centres and the [Enterprise Europe Network](#). He had various coordinating positions, as well as providing active support to numerous recipients concerning the promotion of innovation, international collaboration and advanced advisory. He was also the National Contact Point for several thematic areas for the EU Framework Programmes.

2 Interactive Group Sessions

The interactive workshop facilitated discussions, value mapping, and showcasing focusing on the central question:

“How can ‘Test Before Invest’ and ‘Demo Days’ services be strengthened to deliver better outcomes, address key challenges, and ensure sustainable long-term impact?”

Participants explored in small groups the effectiveness of existing Test before Invest and Demo Days approaches, identified inefficiencies, and proposed actionable recommendations to enhance these services and their implementation strategies across Europe (Figure 1).

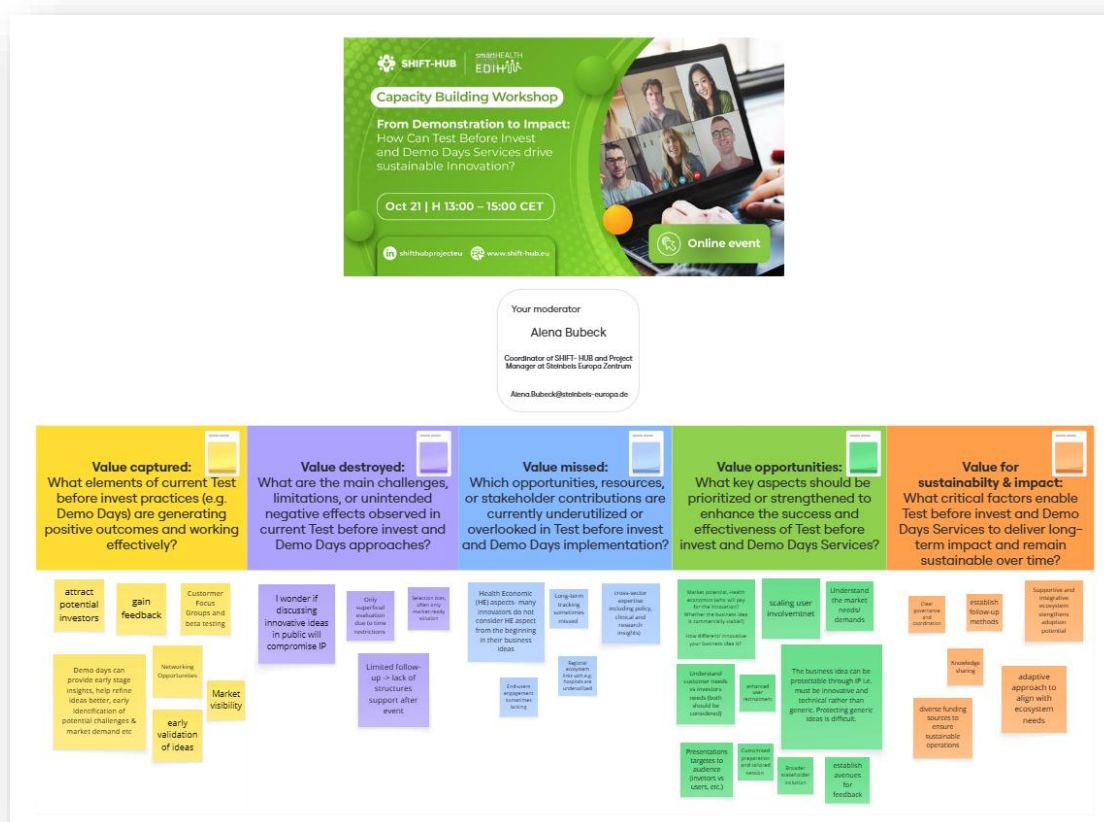


Figure 1: Overview of digital whiteboard frames used during the group working session

Key Insights & Value Mapping

The aim of the value mapping was to identify and analyse the five key values in applying Test before Invest and Demo Days methodologies: values captured, destroyed, missed, opportunities, and value for impact and sustainability. In order to do so, each value was tackled by answering a critical question in smaller working groups. This structured yet open approach encouraged meaningful dialogue, idea generation, and exchange of best practices. The outcome was a consolidated set of insights, recommendations, and service enhancements that can strengthen the Test before Invest landscape. The key findings are summarised in the following.

1. Value Captured: What elements of current Test before invest practices (e.g. Demo Days) are generating positive outcomes and working effectively?

The workshop identified several practices that are currently driving successful outcomes in Test before Invest practices. These approaches bridge the gap between idea developing towards market access by fostering early-stage innovation and market validation for start-ups and solution developers in the health and life science ecosystem. The following factors were highlighted as central to this success:

- a. **Early Validation of Ideas:** Enables start-ups & solution developers to test solutions with real users prior to full investment, reducing financial & operational risk.
- b. **Structured Feedback Mechanisms:** Provides targeted input from investors, mentors, industry experts, and end-users, contributing to product and business model refinement.
- c. **Networking Opportunities:** Facilitates connections with investors, potential customers, pilot sites, and healthcare providers.
- d. **Market Visibility and Credibility:** Demonstrations increase exposure, enhance reputation, and strengthen adoption potential through direct end-user engagement.
- e. **Rapid Iteration and Refinement:** Continuous feedback helps start-ups and solution developers align their offerings with actual market and user needs.
- f. **Investor Attraction:** Demonstrations serve as platforms to capture investor interest.
- g. **Customer Focus Groups and Beta Testing:** Enable deeper user engagement and practical validation of usability.
- h. **Early Insights for Strategic Development:** Demo Days help identify potential challenges, refine ideas, and assess market demand.

2. Value Destroyed: What are the main challenges, limitations, or unintended negative effects observed in current Test before invest and Demo Days approaches?

The workshop gathered insights from participants' experience and expertise to identify inefficiencies, obstacles, and negative impacts of existing approaches that hinder Test before Invest and Demo Days services success. While effective in some respects, existing Test before Invest and Demo Days formats present several challenges that limit their long-term impact and inclusivity. The following issues were identified as particularly critical to address:

- a. **Limited Follow-up Support:** Feedback from events often lacks structured post-event implementation or mentoring.
- b. **High Time and Resource Demand:** Preparation for dual audiences (investors and users) can be overly demanding for small teams.

- c. **Selection Bias:** Tends to favour investment-ready start-ups, overlooking earlier-stage innovators.
- d. **Superficial Evaluation:** Short sessions prevent deep technical, clinical, or usability assessments.
- e. **Overemphasis on Pitching:** Focus on presentation skills can overshadow technical robustness or user-centric design.
- f. **Intellectual Property (IP) Concerns:** Open discussions of innovative ideas in public forums may risk IP exposure.
- g. **Incomplete End-user Involvement:** Limited representation from healthcare professionals and patients can lead to skewed insights.

3. Value Missed: Which opportunities, resources, or stakeholder contributions are currently underutilized or overlooked in Test before invest and Demo Days implementation?

The workshop also examined which opportunities, resources, or stakeholder contributions are currently underutilized or overlooked in the implementation of Test before Invest services. Addressing these missed opportunities is essential to unlock the full potential of Test before Invest and Demo Days services and strengthen their systemic impact. The following gaps were identified:

- a. **Underutilized Data-driven Insights:** Analytics generated during events are rarely used for strategic decision-making.
- b. **Insufficient Long-term Tracking:** Lack of systematic monitoring of start-up progress post-event hinders knowledge transfer.
- c. **Fragmented Ecosystem Integration:** Regional incubators, accelerators, and innovation networks could be better aligned to provide ongoing support.
- d. **Limited End-user Engagement:** Continuous, iterative involvement of users throughout the innovation cycle is limited.
- e. **Lacking integration of User-centred Metrics:** Behavioural and satisfaction data from end-users are not consistently integrated into assessments.
- f. **Missing Cross-sector Collaboration:** Limited participation from policy makers, researchers, and adjacent industries reduces solution robustness.
- g. **Overlooked Health Economic Considerations:** Cost-effectiveness and reimbursement aspects are often neglected early in the business model design.
- h. **Improvable Regional Connectivity:** Partnerships with local hospitals, clinics, and communities are not fully leveraged.

4. Value Opportunities: What key aspects should be prioritized or strengthened to enhance the success and effectiveness of Test before invest and Demo Days services?

To improve the success and long-term effectiveness of Test before Invest and Demo Days services, the workshop participants identified key aspects that should be prioritised or strengthened. To enhance the success and effectiveness of Test before Invest and Demo Days services, future iterations should emphasize structured, inclusive, and data-informed approaches. The following priorities were highlighted:

- a. **Structured Post-event Support:** Establish mentorship, coaching, and follow-up mechanisms to ensure implementation of feedback.
- b. **Broader Stakeholder Inclusion:** Engage experts from research, policy, clinical, and cross-industry sectors.

- c. **Data and Analytics Integration:** Track metrics on engagement, investor interest, and adoption rates to guide improvement.
- d. **Customized and Audience-specific Preparation:** Tailor sessions to meet the differing needs of investors and end-users.
- e. **Enhanced User Recruitment:** Broaden and diversify end-user representation to capture realistic feedback.
- f. **Scalability and Accessibility:** Extend opportunities to early-stage innovators and underrepresented regions.
- g. **Continuous User Co-creation:** Expand beyond single events to sustain engagement and iterative development.
- h. **Business Viability and Health Economics:** Strengthen early evaluation of market potential, payment models, and commercial viability.
- i. **IP Protection and Innovation Integrity:** Support start-ups and solution developers in safeguarding intellectual property while showcasing their solutions.
- j. **Balanced Value Proposition:** Ensure presentations and strategies address both customer, end-users and investor perspectives.

5. Value for Sustainability and Impact: What critical factors enable Test before invest and Demo Days Services to deliver long-term impact and remain sustainable over time?

To ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of Test before Invest and Demo Days initiatives, the workshop participants highlighted several critical enablers. These factors focus on maintaining relevance, securing diverse resources, and fostering continuous improvement through integration of governance, continuous engagement and evaluation. The following aspects were considered essential:

- a. **Clear Governance and Coordination:** Dedicated management structures enables program continuity and accountability.
- b. **Continuous Dual Engagement:** Ongoing collaboration with both investors and end-users ensures sustained relevance and viability.
- c. **Diversified Funding Models:** Combined public, private, and user-driven funding supports financial sustainability.
- d. **Knowledge Sharing and Learning:** Captured and disseminated lessons learnt strengthens ecosystem maturity and agility.
- e. **Ecosystem Integration:** Strong linkages between start-ups, clinical sites, and user communities fosters higher adoption potential.
- f. **Adaptive and Responsive Approach:** Regularly updated methodologies based on evolving technologies, market dynamics, and policy contexts and regulations ensures targeted and efficient support mechanisms.
- g. **Follow-up Mechanisms:** Institutionalised follow-up actions allows to measure impact and reinforce accountability.

3 Outcomes and Takeaways

The Capacity Building Workshop "*From Demonstration to Impact: How Can Test Before Invest and Demo Days Services drive sustainable Innovation?*" successfully brought together key stakeholders from across European innovation ecosystems. Through insightful presentations, interactive discussions, and value-mapping exercises, the workshop highlighted both the opportunities and challenges in implementing Test before Invest and Demo Days approaches, especially in the healthcare sector.

The workshop highlighted the considerable value generated through Test Before Invest and Demo Day activities but also revealed systemic gaps limiting their long-term impact. Strengthening follow-up mechanisms, enhancing ecosystem integration, diversifying stakeholder involvement, and embedding data-driven decision-making will be key to ensuring these services evolve into sustainable, impactful pillars of innovation support.