ABSTRACT
This paper introduces a doctoral research on open innovation solver’s behavior and group factors inducing it. The research is now finishing its first year and exploratory strategies are developed close to open innovation online communities, to prepare a systematic methodological approach.

Research seeks to understand how solver’s patterns of communication and group behavior influence their participation and open innovation community through collaborative IT platforms - and how it weights on their innovation production. A second question is about critical factors that influence solvers’ participation, due to the present global economical crisis. By designing a model of the solver’s group of belonging characteristics and reflecting that on a collaborative platform’s functionalities, the project intends to present some propositions to ease participation in crowdsourcing innovation processes – through an online platform being designed and developed at University of Minho.

Categories and Subject Descriptors

General Terms
Human Factors, open innovation, economics

Keywords
Crowdsourcing innovation, online communities, solvers, crisis.

1. Work in Progress
After a first phase of doctoral classes and the approval of the research theme, work in progress includes nowadays the preparation of a complete literature review to be presented to the University department next April, and preparing the research method that will be based on a case study performed according to principles of qualitative research [21]. With that objective, exploratory research seeks to adapt methodological proposal to the field: it is starting right now.

Literature review on crowdsourcing innovation calls to concepts such as open innovation, seekers and solvers, community (and online community) and also networks [5], and value creation through them [2] – based among other things, on mutual trust [1] and surpassing the limits of the organization [10; 11; 18], and other related concepts, coming both from information systems area and the social sciences.

Open innovation [6; 7; 8] means that knowledge flows in the organization make it possible to stress the inner innovation and to expand through markets in such a way innovation itself can be used on the outside without major copyright payments. This means more specifically that firms should include in their work processes outside-in or inside-out innovation [6; 11]. External knowledge and collaboration across communities [1; 5; 20] are probably in the essence of open innovation, as this means looking for innovation outside of the organization boundaries: the firm becomes a beneficiary or rather the broker of their own investment in intellectual global capital [2; 20]. Open innovation process might mean a reduction of R&D expenses, for example if the organization can profit from outside academic work [3]. Each firm innovative capacity depends on technology strategy, acquisition and exploitation – and the way ideas are dealt with [14].

The main reason to locate research abroad of the enterprise own frame/ impact zone is probably the proximity of interesting markets [17]: R&D developers become more accessible, and the company itself becomes closer to where action is. Suppliers and customers are those from whom collaboration is more relevant to enterprises, not exactly university. Frequently larger enterprises become more innovative than the smaller ones. Though global means larger, the fact is that at the same time geographical proximity has a strong weight on innovation partnerships. Network structure orientation aims to perceive local markets, local knowledge and available new technology to structure an open innovation ecosystem [23]. Some factors influence openness, such as the importance of technology for business, firm strategy, kind of industry related to it; core competencies are well thought off before put to partner development. Short technology lifecycles demand firms to keep up to date, so openness is an easy way of doing it. Some problems come up, nevertheless: intellectual rights can still be an obstacle if speaking about openness and payments on intellectual property, an adequate business model is important for a coherent open strategy.

Bercovitz & Feldman [3] explore partnership with research organizations, either for the exploitation of knowledge (already in use – but eventually used in a new and more interesting way) or, rather, as a way to explore knowledge and place new findings in the market [4]. Either through access to new markets, business alignment [13], expansion of business goals, re-draw of the business model; the partnership must share a common goal profiting from the alignment of firm’s competencies. Involvement of the right users in this particular becomes a market capability [15].

This work focuses on a particular perspective of open innovation, related to capture of knowledge through crowdsourcing [12]. Crowdsourcing innovation thus means that form of openness related to the production of knowledge not strictly by the crowd, but surely facilitated by access of a community or network of solvers. At the same time, the network model [17] means links
between innovation partners and innovators (users) themselves [22].

This research work is centered on the fact that open innovation can only become real if for every seeker of a specific innovation need, some solvers decide to answer and through knowledge creation and sharing participate in this kind of R&D innovation free-market, induced by globalization itself [17]. That usually happens, nowadays, through some sort of collaborative interaction in an IT platform [16]. Why do solvers participate? Why and how do they decide to share their findings, eventually diminishing their profit but surely amplifying their findings impact on a more immediate way? Are there sound group habits that ease this process? Is there some kind of crisis pre-conditions that make this specific sharing easier? All this implies, for sure, science and business politics cannot be just faced as national questions but demand a global perspective.

After literature review, an exploratory phase of the research plan follows. This will include a purposive sampling strategy (to select a set of relevant cases) [24], based on a previous analysis of an open innovation platform and its users. Some of the user’s professional characteristics are publicly displayed, so selection of interesting cases won’t be difficult. This first phase is meant to seek some representativeness [24; 25] and general and specific questions will be presented through online questioning. The researcher will establish contact with solvers present in this well-known open innovation business center, making it possible to develop a case study approach [21] that enables the perception of relational and behavioral characteristics linking solvers to their groups of belonging and can be related to open innovation process specificities and particular economical stimuli.

2. REFERENCES


