

## Speaker and facilitator bios (in order of the programme)

Update 1 DECEMBER 2023



### Inge Van Oost

**European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, D .1 Rural areas and networks**

Inge Van Oost is policy officer at the European Commission, DG AGRI. She has initiated the agricultural European Innovation Partnership (EIP-AGRI), with innovation projects strengthening linkages between research policy and rural development policy. As member of the Taskforce "Research and Innovation" she was instrumental in shaping DG AGRI's research and innovation approach in Horizon 2020 Work Programmes since 2012, and developed the new interactive research project formats "multi-actor approach", "thematic networks" and "advisory networks". Meanwhile, one of her core tasks has become the development and implementation of the policy on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) as part of the CAP 2023-2027, including essential improvements related to the EIP-AGRI. In her former post at the Commission she was policy officer responsible for cross-compliance, the Farm Advisory System and interlinking with the Rural Development policy. Before that, Inge Van Oost was coordinator of the Flemish demonstration projects, drafting rural development measures and designing the farm advisory system. She was evaluator of many agricultural research projects and member of diverse selection committees. She served the Belgian Secretary-General as coordinator of the Horticultural Chain, dealing with chain management, food quality, traceability and safety, sustainability of production methods, linkages with consumers and much more. Before joining the administration, she worked as a farm advisor, and as the coordinator of the advisory team. Based in an applied research institute, the team did not only advise farmers, but also brokered for innovation and implemented multi-actor projects and on-farm demonstrations.



### Pille Koorberg

**Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge (METK)**

Pille Koorberg – she is a Deputy Director (Innovation & Entrepreneurship) of the Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge (METK). METK is a state managed research and development institution operating under the governance



of the Ministry of Regional Affairs and Agriculture. Her main responsibilities include coordination work of networking activities in the field of agriculture and rural life. Among many tasks METK is delegated to act as a „AKIS coordination centre“, since 2007 also as a national support unit of National CAP Network. METK is responsible of coordinating national knowledge transfer actions, national advisory services and innovation support services incl EIP-AGRI.

**Johanna Rohrhofer**  
**Netzwerk Zukunftsraum Land, Austria**



As innovation broker Johanna supports alle EIP-AGRI Operational Groups in Austria. Furthermore she tries to initiate new projects and bring together actors for more sustainable innovations. The Netzwerk Zukunftsraum Land, as the NRN, takes targeted measures to improve AKIS in Austria.

**Tuija Kallio**  
**Finnish Rural Network, Finland**



Tuija Kallio is Network Coordinator on AKIS and innovation at the Rural Network of Finland, providing innovation support services and building linkages for agrifood R&D actors, EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, rural entrepreneurs and developers. She is also involved in the AKIS and smart farming thematic groups run by AgriHubi (Finnish AKIS coordination body) as well as in “Network to innovate” - transnational cooperation between Nordic-Baltic countries on promoting innovation and EIP. She is also one of the representatives of Finland in the Assembly’s permanent Subgroup on Innovation and Knowledge Exchange. She has background in applied R&D in agriculture and health & wellbeing (M.Sc. Biochemistry).

**Maura Farrell**  
**University of Galway, Ireland**



Maura Farrell is a full-time lecturer in the University of Galway, specialising in the areas of agricultural change and rural development. She worked with the Irish National Rural Network for six years.





**Margo Weckx**  
**Flemish Rural Network, Belgium**

Margo Weckx works at the Flemish Rural Network, specifically around the themes of 'knowledge and innovation' and 'sustainable business' within the CAP and she communicates about this through good examples. The Flemish Rural Network organises excursions, study days, writes newsletters,... All this to inform and inspire farmers, researchers, advisors and other stakeholders. Margo also monitors the AKIS component together with two other colleagues from the Managing Authority.



**Frida Sporre**  
**Swedish Board of Agriculture, Sweden**

Frida is working as a team leader at the rural development unit and has been working with knowledge exchange and dissemination of information for some years now. She has had the fortune to work with the development of the knowledge hub for animal production and will continue to do so in regards to for example distribute CAP-funds through open calls and calls for tender.



**Matej Štepec**  
**Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia**

Matej Štepec has been working on the activities of the National Rural Network (National CAP Network), which is based at the Ministry of Agriculture, since 2008. In the 2023-2027 program period, the AKIS area is recognised as one of the major opportunities for the development of agriculture, in which the National CAP Network can play an important role.



**Joži J. Cvelbar**  
**Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Slovenia**

Ms. Joži J. Cvelbar started her career at the Slovenian Agricultural Advisory Service in 1990 as a plant health advisor. From 1994 to 2013, she worked as a Head of the Phytosanitary Inspection Service. From 2013 to 2023, she worked at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food, Directorate for Agriculture, mainly in the field of seeds, plant genetic resources and plant variety protection, as well as in the field of public services in agriculture. She was actively involved in the preparation of the Slovenian CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027



for the cross-cutting objective of modernising the sector by promoting and sharing knowledge, innovation and digitalisation in agriculture and rural areas, as head of the Ministry's internal AKIS working group, which now acts as the AKIS coordinating body.



**Inge De Bo**  
**Ghent University, Belgium**  
**Horizon Europe project 'EU-FarmBook'**

Inge De Bo is a bioscience engineer with a passion for agriculture. She loves to work with several actors in the agrifood and forestry communities, to support them and to learn from their daily needs. Inge worked as a researcher for several years, at Ghent university, about composting of biowaste. Thereafter she was working in the educational field at Ghent university. Since one year, Inge is the scientific coordinator of the EU-FarmBook project. Together with 28 partners in the EU, they are developing the online EU-FarmBook platform, the reference point for practitioners in need of agriculture and forestry knowledge.



**Konstantin Mihhejev**  
**Nordic-Baltic Network to Innovate**

The Rural Network Estonia has been operating for 15 years, and Konstantin Mihhejev joined it exactly 10 years ago as an innovation broker. Among the everyday tasks, normally he is focused on the dissemination of the results of innovative projects or initiatives that could help farmers and advisors solve certain problems or bottlenecks. Also to provide innovation support services, including the creation of some linkages for and with agrifood actors, EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, and innovation clusters at the national and international level. At the same time, he is an EU-FarmBook ambassador, whose main responsibility is to promote digital knowledge repository among Nordic-Baltic potential users. Background in animal sciences and biotechnology. He also worked as a leader-measure specialist in the Ministry of Rural Affairs.

**Natalia Brzezina**  
**European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, F.2 Research and Innovation**

Natalia Brzezina is a research programme officer who contributes to setting up the EU agricultural research and innovation strategy, implemented through two policies, i.e.,







Horizon Europe (Cluster 6) and Common Agricultural Policy, working in synergy under the umbrella of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI). In her role, she focusses on strengthening Agriculture Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) at EU level through Horizon Europe. Before joining the European Commission, she did a PhD at the KU Leuven exploring food systems in the European context within the EU-funded project TRANSMANGO. In addition to her scientific background, she managed a family farm and gathered professional experience in agri-food industry.

### **Elena-Teodora Miron**

#### **Horizon Europe project 'modernAKIS'**



Elena-Teodora Miron coordinates the Horizon Europe project modernAKIS ([www.modernAKIS.eu](http://www.modernAKIS.eu)) and is working also as a service contact point for international projects at the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture in Austria. She is part of the team which works in the AKIS Cooperation Team of the Austrian CAP Network.

### **Anita Beblek**

#### **Horizon Europe project 'ATTRACTISS'**



CEO and co-founder of Agrathaer, ISS in the Federal State of Brandenburg. WP lead (WP 5) of the ATTRACTISS (AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to build a deeper understanding of Innovation Support Services) Horizon Europe projects.

### **Kaie Laaneväli-Vinokurov**

#### **Horizon Europe project 'PREMIERE'**



Growing up in a family of fishermen and farmers, sustainable food production has always stayed close to her heart. Currently, Kaie is a WP lead for the Horizon Europe project PREMIERE, aiming to strengthen the multi-actor approach. She also consults for agri coops as part of METK's innovation team. Her previous experience working at the Ministry of Rural Affairs, advocating for farmers through the Estonian Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce, and initiating cooperatives in Kenya, underpins her current role as an innovation broker, bridging the gap between research and farming to ensure practical innovation aligns with farmers' needs.

### **Francisco Javier Rodríguez Rigueiro**





**Horizon Europe Thematic Network 'AF4EU'**

After studying forestry engineering including degree and MSc, Francisco specialised in soil management, agroforestry and related policies, obtaining a PhD degree in February 2021 from the Univ. of Santiago de Compostela (USC). Presently, he is beneficiary of a grant from the Ministry in Spain, including a postdoctoral research stay at the Agricultural Univ. of Athens (AUA), Greece. His career has been predominantly associated with the EC's innovation actions, such as H2020 and Horizon Europe projects. Francisco has been project manager of the AFINET project and, currently, the AF4EU. In addition, he has collaborated as WP leader team member in several projects, including EUREKA and EURAKNOS, and currently, the Oper8 project.



**Lotta Fabricius Kristiansen**

**Horizon Europe Thematic Network 'B-Thenet'**

Lotta is a research assistant at SLU RådNu, The National Competence Centre for Advisory Services at SLU. Her focus is on knowledge systems, capacity building and sustainable landscapes in relation to beekeepers and beekeeping, pollinators and ecosystem services in particular pollination services. From a holistic perspective, her research focuses on how beekeepers and beekeeping as an activity might contribute to sustainable landscapes for pollinators. The research is carried out in both national and international projects. The projects address the knowledge systems within beekeeping, identifying the knowledge and function gaps, developing supportive structures and acting towards change for more sustainable landscapes for pollinators, and honey bees in particular. Lotta also use citizen science as a method for engagement and knowledge collection. She has been a beekeeper since the end of the '90s and is the author of several beekeeping books. She runs an organic beekeeping business together with her husband.



**Francesca Giannetti**

**Horizon Europe Thematic Network 'FOREST4EU'**

Francesca Giannetti is a researcher at the University of Florence. Over the past few years, she has been involved in the transfer of innovations from research to the forestry sector through a multi-actor approach. Specifically, she has worked in various Operational Groups customising digital platforms for decision support. Currently, Francesca is the Project Manager of the Horizon Europe FOREST4EU project "A European



innovation partnership network promoting Operational Groups dedicated to forestry and agroforestry". The FOREST4EU networking project aims to make the innovations proposed by Operational Groups at national level available at the European level through easily understandable materials and to analyse the barriers to the adoption of these innovations using a multi-actor approach.

**Solaria Anzilotti**

**Horizon Europe Thematic Network 'FOREST4EU'**



Solaria Anzilotti is a forestry research fellow, currently working on the Horizon Project FOREST4EU, which aims to connect forestry and agroforestry partnerships across Europe. She recently graduated in planning and management of agro-territorial, forest and landscape. Her interests space from forestry sustainable management to agroforestry, social agriculture and pollinators. Her goal is to contribute to the improvement of ecosystemic functionality and social welfare through environmental projects from anthropised to rural areas.

**Stefan Gunnarsson**

**Horizon Europe Thematic Network 'BroilerNET'**



Stefan Gunnarsson is a veterinarian and senior lecturer in sustainable animal husbandry. He has experience from coordinating several multidisciplinary research projects within sustainable food production and food ethics, for example the Horizon Europe project BroilerNet ([www.broilernet.eu](http://www.broilernet.eu)). Furthermore, he has been chairing BTSF training courses in poultry welfare organised by the EU Commission, as well as, being chairperson of the ad hoc working group for developing a code for animal welfare in laying hens of the World Organisation of Animal Health (former OIE). More information at <https://www.slu.se/en/ew-cv/stefan-gunnarsson/>

**DG Agriculture and Rural Development**





**Klavdija Ramsak Noemi**  
**Policy officer**

Klavdija Ramsak-Noemi is a Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development, Unit D.1 Rural areas and networks, EU CAP Network / EIP-AGRI team. She joined European Commission, DG AGRI, in 2005. As a programme manager she managed the approval negotiations and implementation of the Rural Development Programme for Slovenia 2007-2013 and contributed to the preparation of the Partnership agreement with Slovenia 2014-2020. At DG AGRI she worked on German Rural Development matters as well as financial management. She has held a socio-economic researcher position in Switzerland. She studied economics in Ljubljana and holds a Master's degree in Human Ecology from Free University of Brussels.

## EU CAP Network Team

### 1. Support Facility 'Innovation & Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI' team



**Aine Mackenwalsh**  
**Main facilitator**

Áine Macken-Walsh uses sociological insights to support participatory co-design of policy and extension interventions. She is a sociologist with a background in the research and application of rights-based approaches to development and the 'multi-actor approach'. She has worked in agriculture and rural development for over 20 years, and has collaborated within 16 EU research and innovation consortia to date. Áine worked in Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on the transposition of EU rural development policies to new socio-cultural contexts during the accession period. Currently, Áine is a sociologist in Teagasc, Ireland, where she has led transdisciplinary processes to address societal challenges relating to human cooperation, gender, animal health, climate change, and the bioeconomy.



**Rasa Pakeltiene**  
**Task manager**

Rasa is Knowledge and Innovation Officer at the EIP-AGRI Support facility. She works as associated professor at the Bioeconomy Development Faculty of Vytautas Magnus University (VMU), and is AKIS activities coordinator at the Business and Social Partnership Center of VMU. Since 2014





she is editor-in-chief of the scientific journal “Management theories and studies for rural business and infrastructure development”. As a researcher, she has published over twenty scientific publications in the field of rural development, innovation assessment methodologies, social partnership, rural social infrastructure, environmental management, etc. With coauthors she has published three research and study books. She is working on national and international research and study projects and is an active member of scientific associations and thematic networks.





**Liisa Kübarsepp**  
**Co-task manager**

Liisa is working in the EU CAP Network since 2022, mainly focusing on the stakeholder's database and website. She previously worked in the EIP-AGRI Service Point from 2017-2021 as facilitator in different events and as task manager for the Focus Groups on soil contamination and plastic use in agriculture, as well as task manager for the workshop on shaping the EU Soil Mission and co-task manager for the seminar on soil health. She has a degree in plant biology from the University of Tartu and is currently pursuing a PhD in agriculture at the Estonian University of Life Sciences. She also works in the Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge (METK) innovation service where her task is to foster innovation in the agricultural sector in Estonia.



**Ina Van Hoyer**  
**Event communication officer**

Ina Van Hoyer is communication manager at the EIP-AGRI Support Facility, coordinating the communication unit. She is responsible for the communication action plan, contributes to all communication tools, including social media and press, and takes up the role of event communication officer. Ina Van Hoyer is a communication expert who has more than 20 years communication experience. From 2013 until 2021 she was the coordinating communication officer at the EIP-AGRI Service Point. She was the communication manager for the SCAR Support Team that organises the SCAR workings groups for the European Commission, DG RTD from 2022 to 2023.

She is founding board member of a cooperative regenerative farm Pomona Puur Natuur and founding board member of the non-profit organisation Pomona vzw to promote regenerative farming and to support farms in setting up cooperative regenerative farms. Previously she was involved in several regional and European projects for the Flemish Government, Waterwegen en Zeekanaal NV to support them in their communication for several Sigma Plan projects.





**Pacôme Elouna Eyenga**  
**Team Leader**

Pacôme Elouna Eyenga is Belgian and was born in Yaoundé, Cameroon. He graduated as agronomist in the field of rural economy and sociology, at Gembloux Agro-Bio Tech / Université de Liège in Belgium. Since July 2021, he is the Team Leader of the Support Facility for 'Innovation & Knowledge Exchange | EIP-AGRI. From 2013 until May 2021, he has been Deputy Team Leader and then Team Leader of the EIP-AGRI Service Point established by the European Commission - DG AGRI.



**Agnes Kivistik**  
**Facilitator**

Agnes has been one of the facilitators at the EIP-AGRI Support Facility since October 2023 and her main tasks are organization and facilitation of EIP-AGRI workshops, seminars and focus groups. Agnes has studied Gene technology (BSc, MSc) at Tallinn University of Technology. Before joining the EIP-AGRI Service Point team and The Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge in 2019, Agnes worked at The Estonian Crop Research Institute as a researcher in Biotechnology department, where her projects were mainly focused on plant breeding with molecular markers and genotyping Estonian potato genebank. She has practical experience in agriculture as her family farm is breeding and producing grape and other perennial plants for sale. Additionally, she is producing local table grapes for Estonians.



**Iiri Raa**  
**Facilitator**

Iiri has experience working with CAP/RDP/agri-environment policy, with a specific focus on evaluation agri-environment and climate related interventions. Iiri is interested in innovations related to agri-environment and networking. Her main duties at EIP-AGRI involve support in organization and facilitation in networking events and developing contents for publication.





**Tiina Köster**  
**Facilitator**

Tiina Koster is specialist in the Centre of Estonian Rural Research and Knowledge (METK). She has a bachelor degree in agronomy and MSc in soil science from Estonian Agricultural University. She has been working as a researcher and lecturer of soil science and environment in Estonian Agricultural University. While working in Agricultural Research Centre (ARC), she covered different topics related to the soil like soil monitoring, lecturing about soils for farmers, investigating the properties of Estonian agricultural soils in agri-environmental program. She has been working also as agronomist in Võru Variety Testing Centre (in ARC) focusing mostly on oilseed rape trials.



**Aleksandra Zlateva**  
**Facilitator**

Aleksandra Zlateva is currently a part of the EIP-AGRI Support Facility team, and with her role as Knowledge and Innovation Officer she contributes to fostering exchanges of knowledge, innovation and good practices between actors in EU agriculture!

## 2. Communications and Events Support



**Sophie Plattard**  
**Travel & logistical support**

Sophie is an experienced event professional with a strong interest in communication and international politics. Based in Brussels, she joined the EU CAP Network – Communication and Logistical Support – in May 2022 as an event organiser. She holds a Master of Arts in Conflict, Security and Development, as well as a Bachelor's degree in German and History.

Curious about meeting new people and culture, Sophie has lived in Austria, England and Germany. In her spare time, she loves swimming and going for walks in the forest.





**Irene Sanchez****Travel & logistical support**

Irene started her journey at Phrenos as an Events Intern in September 2023. She holds a Bachelor's in Protocol, Events organisation and Corporate Communication (Universidad Rey Juan Carlos Madrid). She moved to Belgium for her Erasmus program and decided to stay there to continue her professional career. Before working at Phrenos she worked as an Events Planner at NH Collection Brussels Center. In her spare time she enjoys dancing bachata and salsa, travelling and enjoying the sun in a terrace with friends and family.

