



# EU CAP Network Conference 'EIP-AGRI Operational Groups: Innovation in practice'

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Study on outcomes achieved by  
EIP-AGRI Operational Group projects under the CAP –  
European Evaluation Helpdesk for the CAP

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# Conceptual framework

EIP-AGRI launched in 2012 (DG AGRI COM(2012)79), aiming at a more competitive and sustainable agriculture and forestry sector, applies an overarching '**Open innovation**' concept based on the '**interactive innovation model**' for EIP OGs and H2020 Multi-Actor Projects.

## Main features for EIP OGs:

- **Bringing innovation into the Agri ecosystem**, including improving its connection with research.
- **Pooling expertise** i.e., bringing together AKIS actors (farmers, advisors, researchers, businesses, NGOs, etc.) to incentivise innovation processes and knowledge exchange and **building bridges between research and farming practice**.
- **Bringing a targeted mix of complementary expertise serving the objectives of the OG innovation project and ensuring cross-fertilisation among practice and this other expertise** (practical, scientific, technological, social, organisational) in an **interactive way**.
- **Capturing grassroots ideas and working together on co-creating innovative and practical solutions** for the identified issues, challenges or needs.
- **Creating a solid joint work plan**, including **communication and dissemination actions** using the most appropriate channels to reach the end-user community effectively.
- **Networking: exchange of knowledge and information between OGs; cross-regional connection of OGs to other innovative projects** such as Horizon 2020, thematic and advisory networks, multi-actor projects.

# Objectives and scope of the study

## OBJECTIVES



- 1. To assess outcomes so far achieved by EIP OG projects in the 2014-2022 programming period; to acquire a better understanding of the process of co-creation and spreading of innovative solutions, both within and outside the partnership; to identify possible pathways for further development.**
- 2. To identify the main drivers and barriers in achieving EIP OG project outcomes, and to assess the extent to which communication and dissemination activities have contributed to the achievement of project outcomes.**
- 3. To compare different approaches to EIP calls at Member State/regional level to assess the extent to which the calls have facilitated or, conversely, limited the achievement of outcomes.**

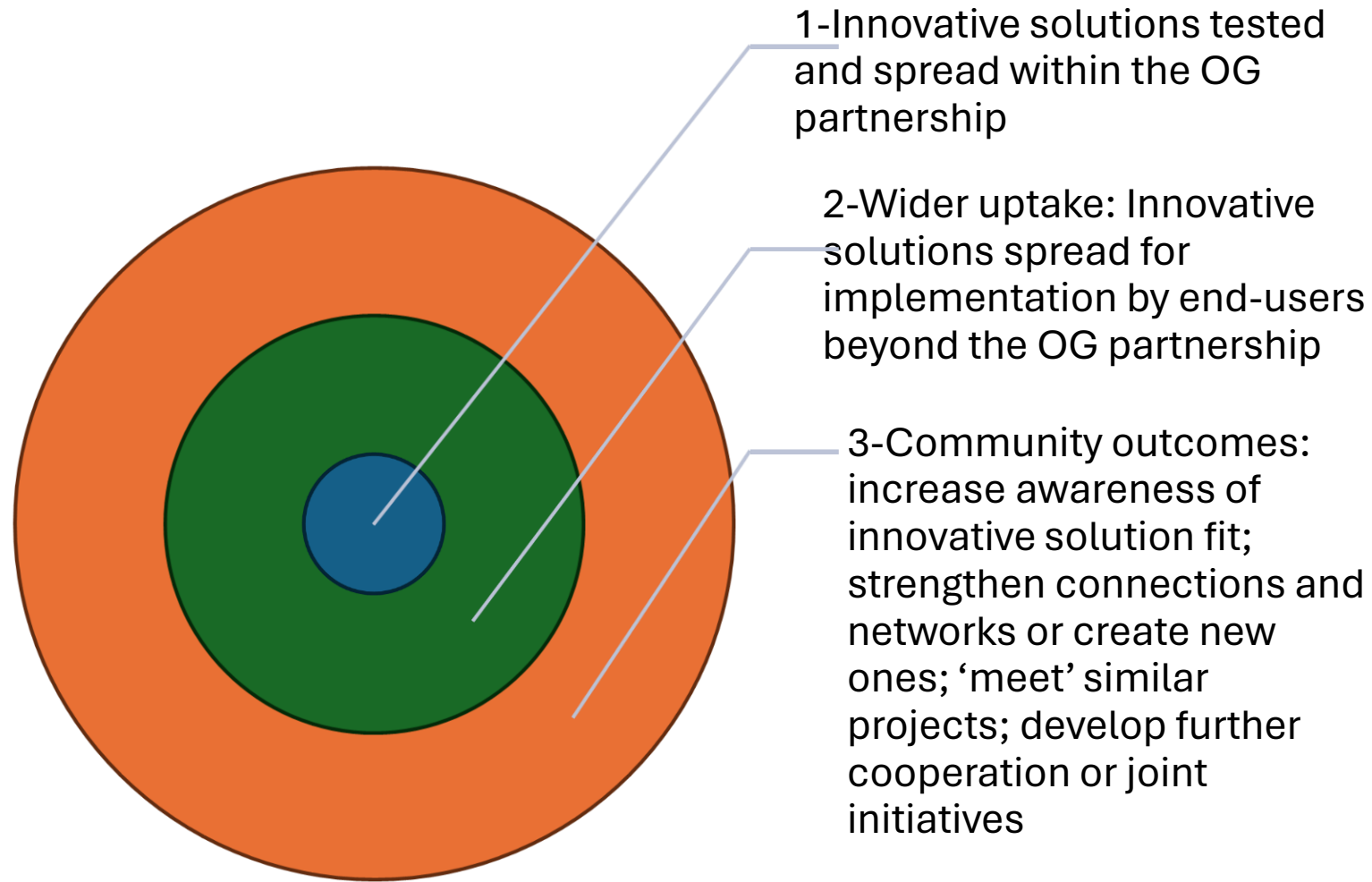
## SCOPE



2014-2022  
RDPs

EU 27 (except  
LU, DK) + UK

## Definition of OG project outcomes





# Methodology

**Three study questions** mirroring the objectives

**Two levels of analysis:** EU27 & case studies

EU-wide **OG survey** and **Innovation Stakeholders survey**

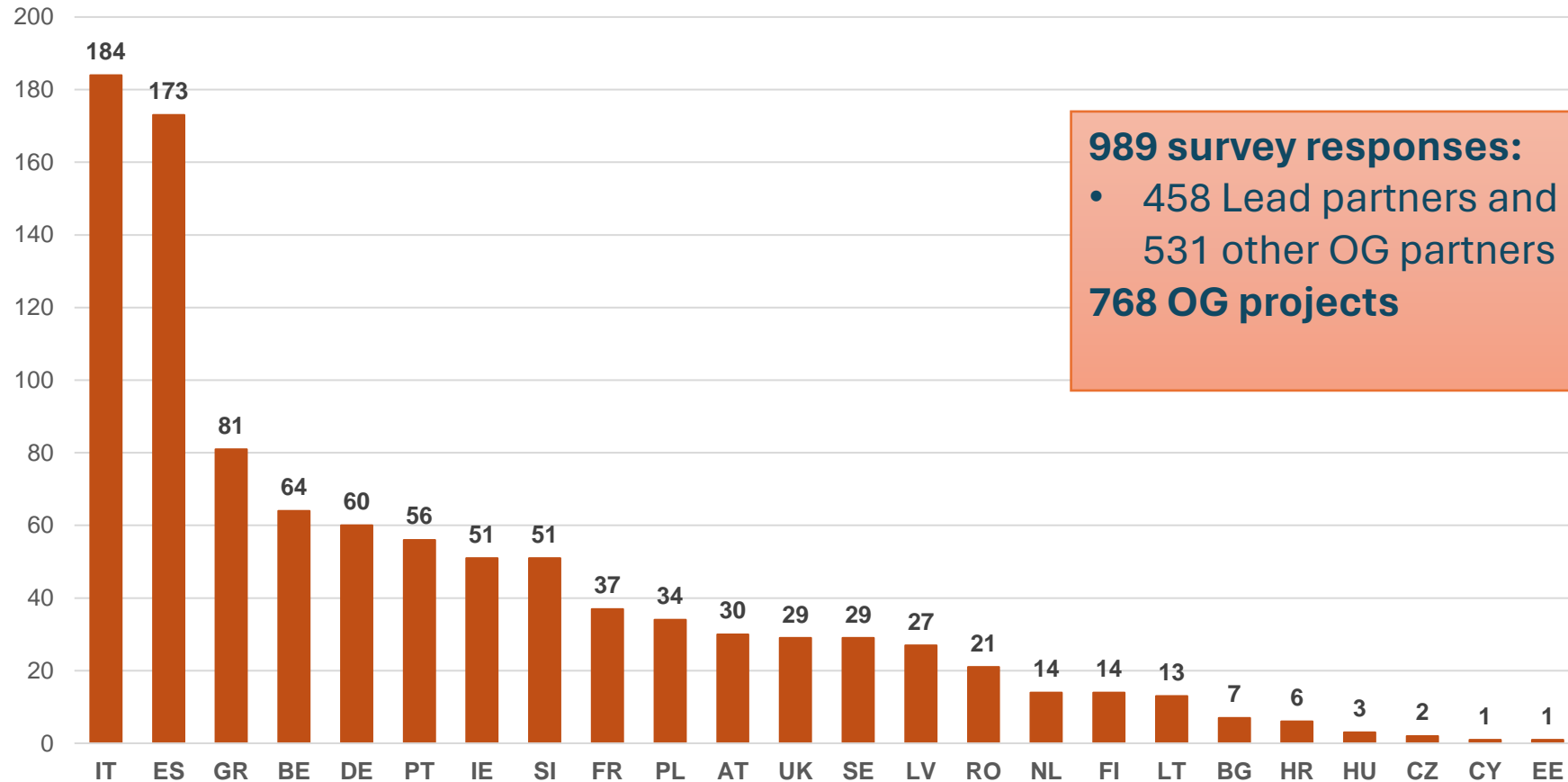
**15 case study OG projects:** AT, BG, DE, ES, FR, IE, IT, LT, NL, PL, PT, SE

**Case studies:** In-depth interviews OG lead partners and focus groups with all OG partners

**Secondary data:** documentary research + EU and national databases

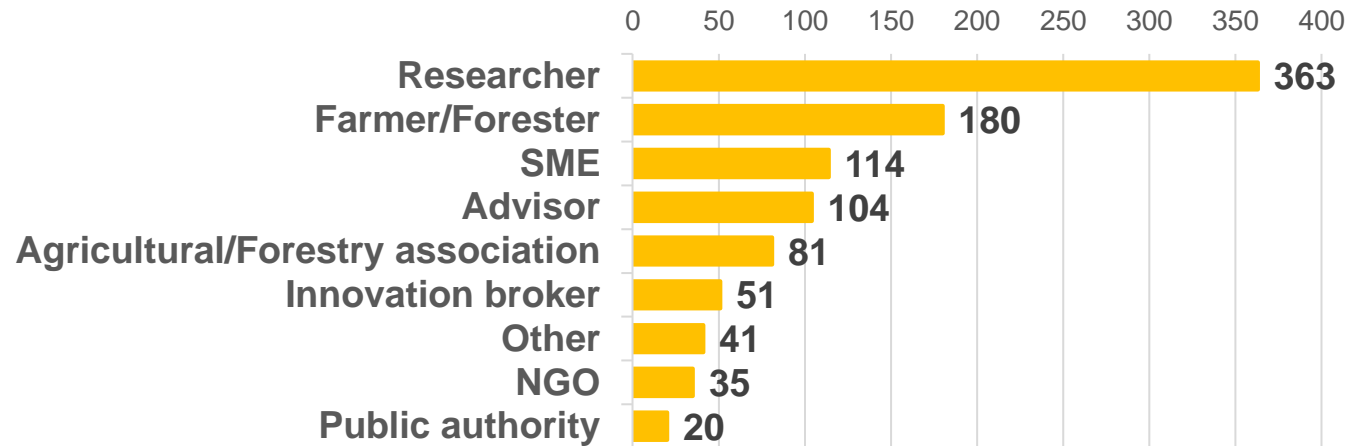


# Overall results of OG survey

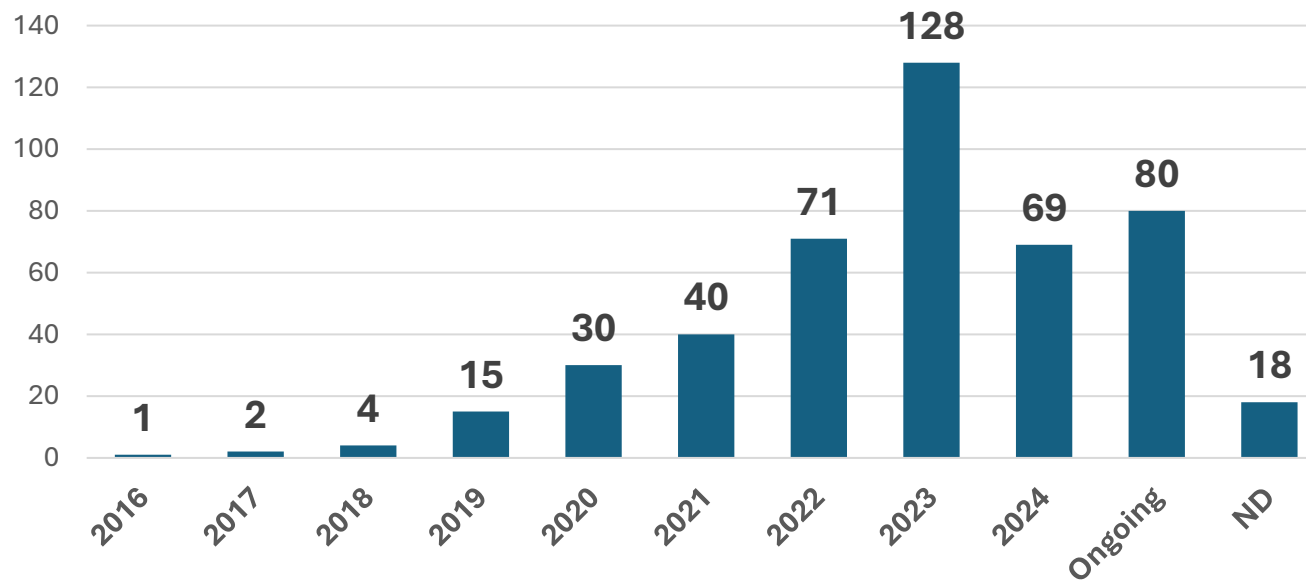


**Distribution of OG survey responses by Member State**

# Overall results of OG survey



**Distribution of OG survey responses by type of OG partner**



**Distribution of OG projects by year of completion**



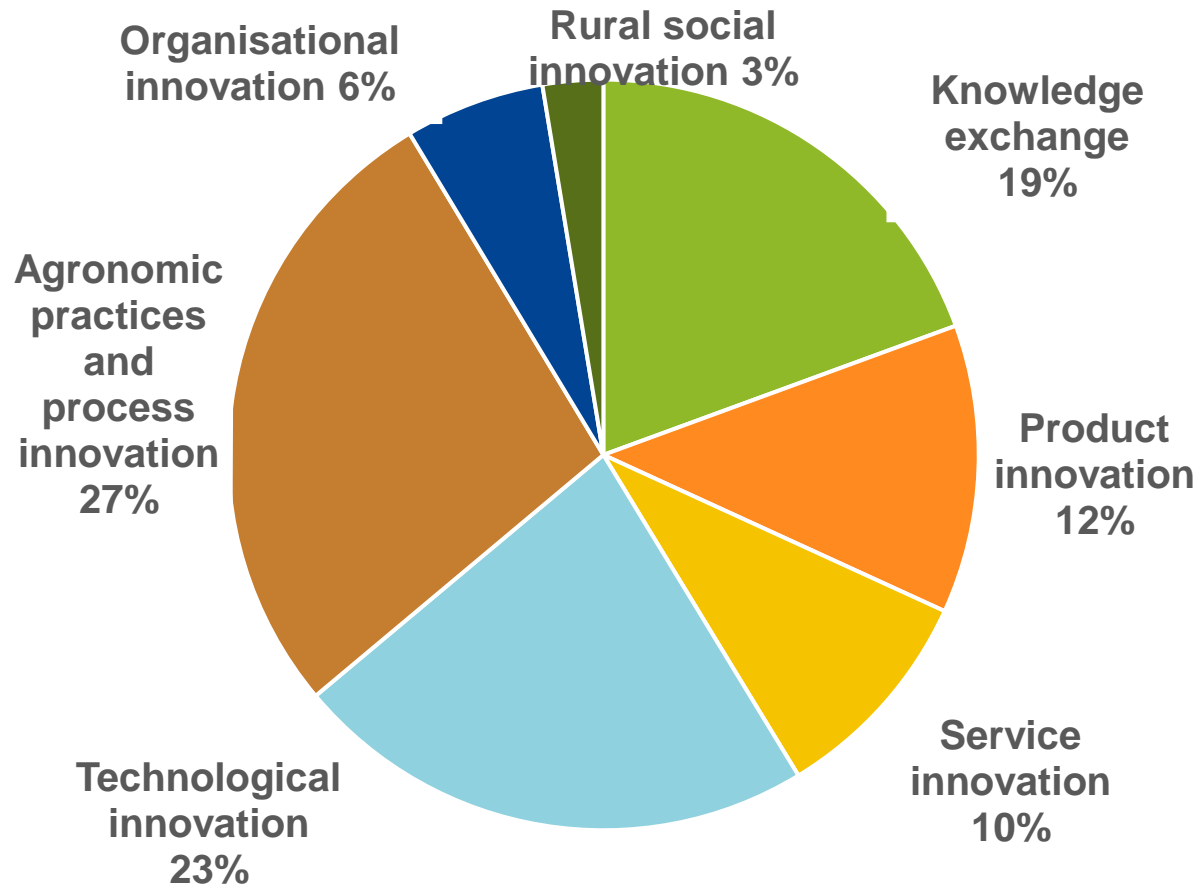
# Overall results of stakeholder survey



**Distribution of Stakeholder survey respondents by category**

Q1 – To what extent have EIP OG projects produced the expected outcomes: project outcomes, wider uptake of innovation, community outcomes?

### A BROAD VARIETY OF TYPES OF OG INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS

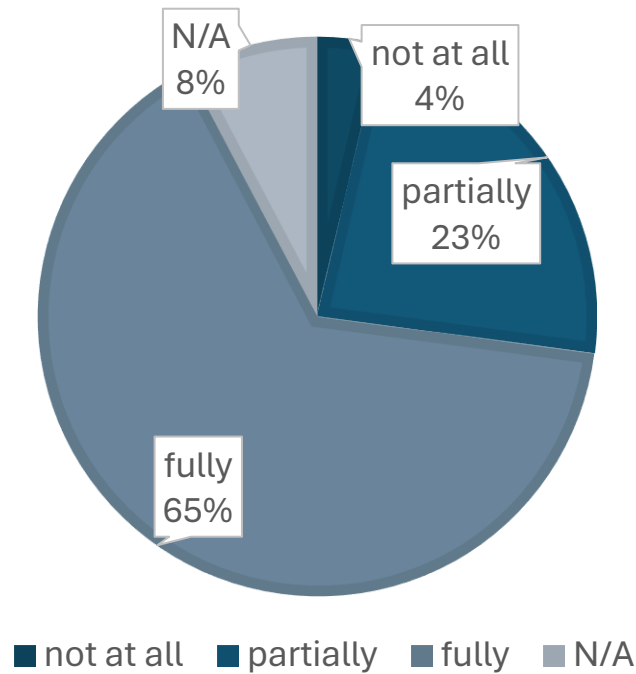


Source: OG survey

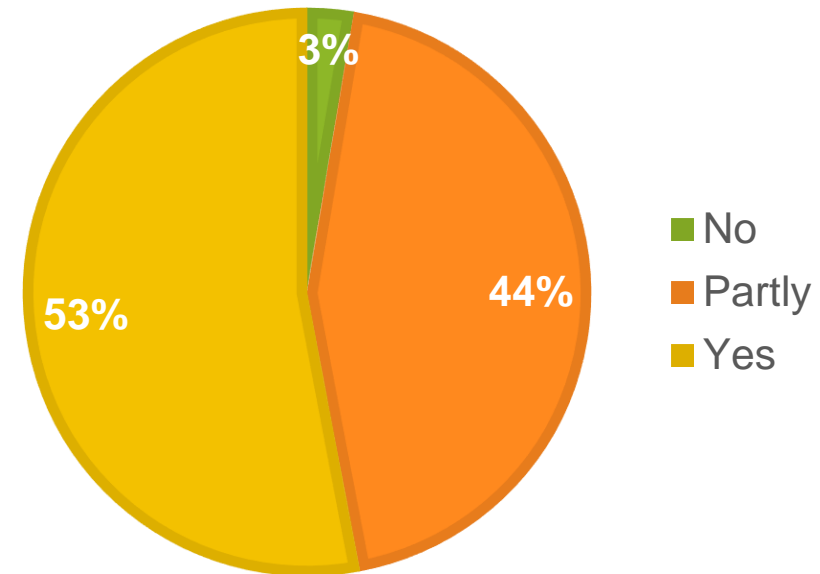
- *Ad hoc* classification adopted for the study
- *Agronomic practices and process innovation*: 47% innovation in crop management
- *Technological innovation*: 53% digital technologies, 43% mechanical technologies
- *Knowledge exchange*: 79% developed new services (training, etc.), 66% tools and materials
- *Organisational innovation*: 67% new forms of collaboration farmers-other stakeholders, 41% value chain innovation

Q1 – To what extent have EIP OG projects produced the expected outcomes: **achievement of project outcomes**, wider uptake of innovation, community outcomes?

**Most projects have developed an innovative solution according to what was planned**  
*(OG survey)*

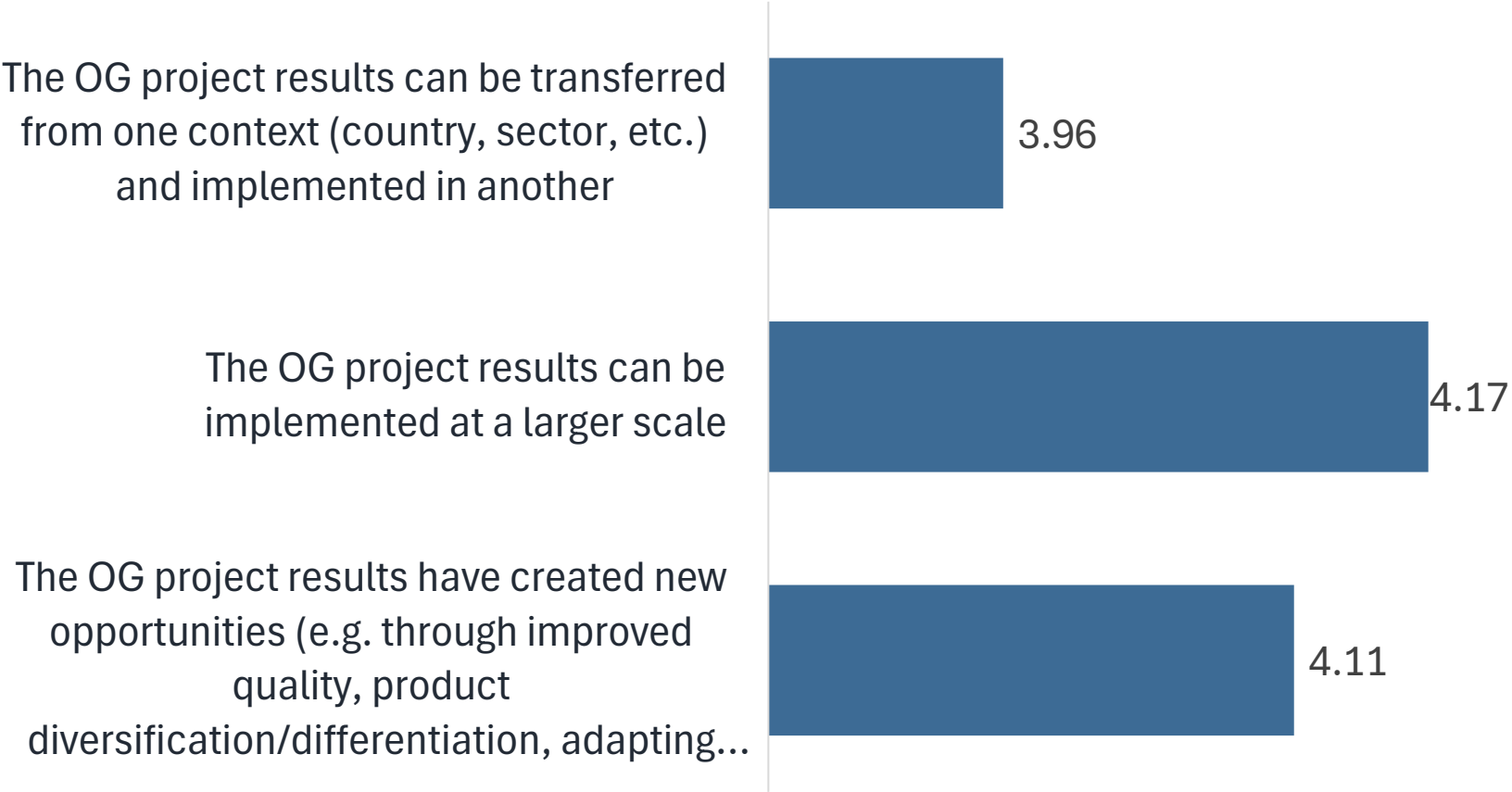


**OG innovation projects deliver successful outcomes and disseminate innovative solutions**  
*(Stakeholder survey)*



Q1 – To what extent have EIP OG projects produced the expected outcomes: achievement of project outcomes, **wider uptake of innovation**, community outcomes?

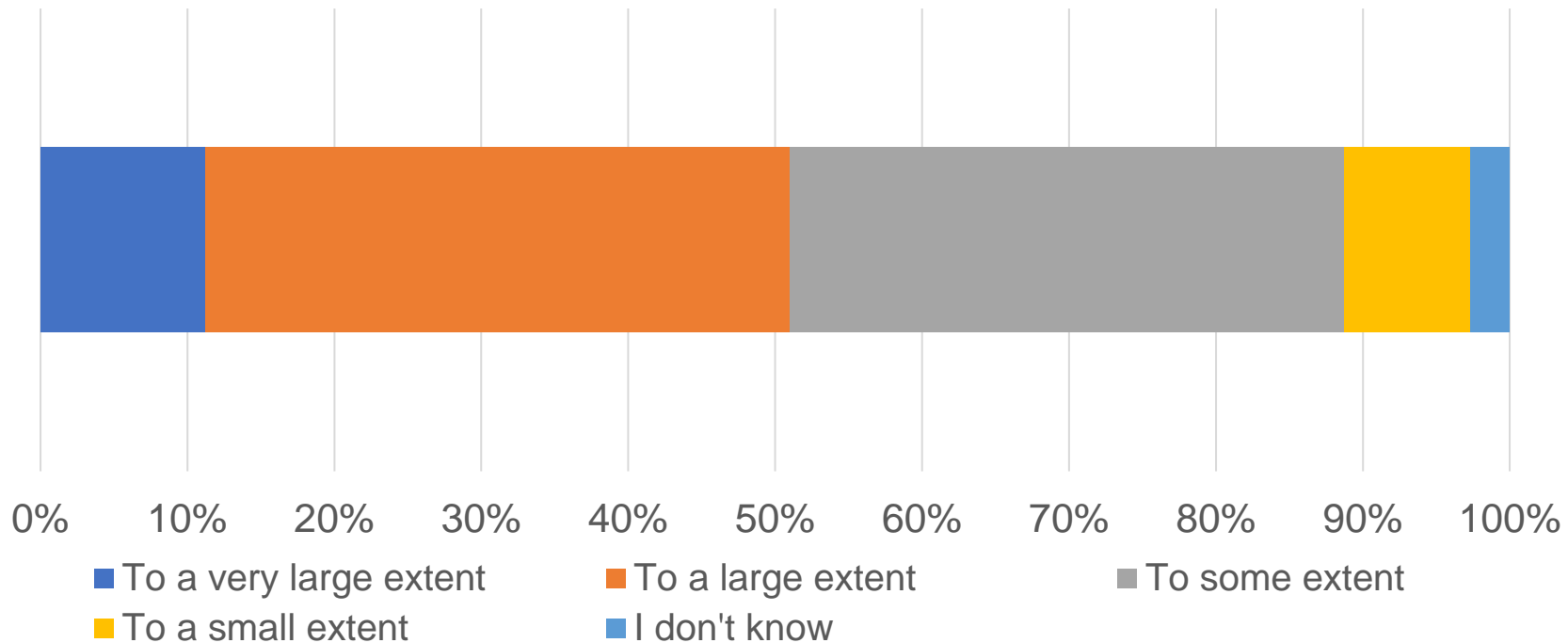
**Transferability and upscaling potential of OG innovative solutions is high**



Scale from 1 (to no extent at all) to 5 (to a very large extent)  
Source: OG survey

Q1 – To what extent have EIP OG projects produced the expected outcomes: project outcomes, wider uptake of innovation, **community outcomes**?

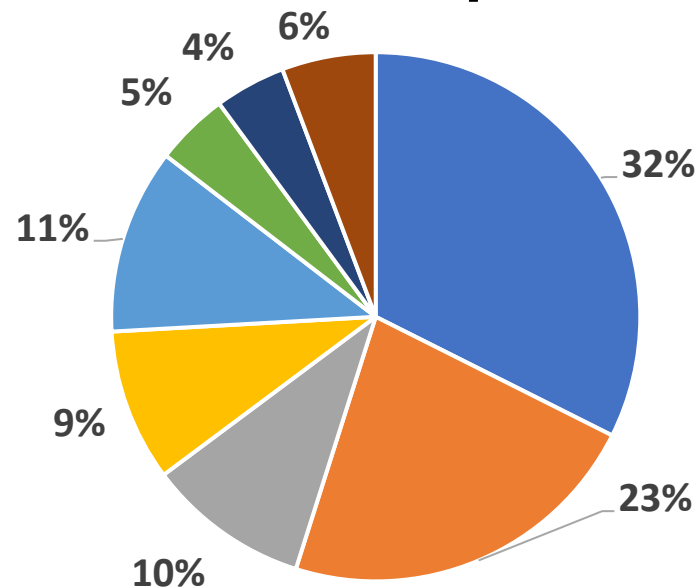
## Most OG projects clearly contribute to strengthening innovation-oriented communities



Source: Stakeholder survey

Q1 – To what extent have EIP OG projects produced the expected outcomes: project outcomes, wider uptake of innovation, **community outcomes**?

## More than half of OGs collaborate with other entities to develop further cooperation



- Agricultural actors/organisations which are not partners in the OG project, in your own country/region
- Research bodies/organisations which are not partners in the OG project, in your own country/region
- OG projects in your region
- Agricultural actors/organisations which are not partners in the OG project, from other countries
- Research bodies/organisations which are not partners in the OG project, from other countries
- Other EU-funded projects
- H2020 multi-actor projects or H2020 Thematic Networks
- OG projects in other countries/regions

About 55% of OGs collaborate or plan to collaborate with other entities: more frequently other agricultural and research organisations within own country/region

Exchange of knowledge/expertise, joint participation in events, informal contact (regular or on-the-spot) are the most frequent types of collaboration

Source: OG survey (answers of Lead partners)

Q2 - What are the **main drivers and barriers** to the achievement of EIP OG outcomes and what lessons can be drawn?

## MAIN DRIVERS AND BARRIERS



OG organisational and social aspects



Communication and dissemination



Support provided to OGs



Exogenous factors



## Q.2.1 - What are the main drivers and barriers to the successful co-creation of innovative solutions and to the possibility of scaling-up of EIP-OG project outcomes?

### Various organisational aspects and types of expertise of OGs facilitate co-creation of innovative solutions



**Judgements on relevance of different types of expertise for the OG project**

Values on a scale 1 not very relevant, 2 relevant, 3 very relevant

Source: OG survey

Stakeholder survey and case studies suggest that composition of OG partnerships to ensure complementary expertise and knowledge and inclusion of farmers/foresters and other end-users are key factors

## Q.2.1 - What are the main drivers and barriers to the successful co-creation of innovative solutions and to the possibility of scaling-up of EIP-OG project outcomes?

### Insights from CASE STUDIES:

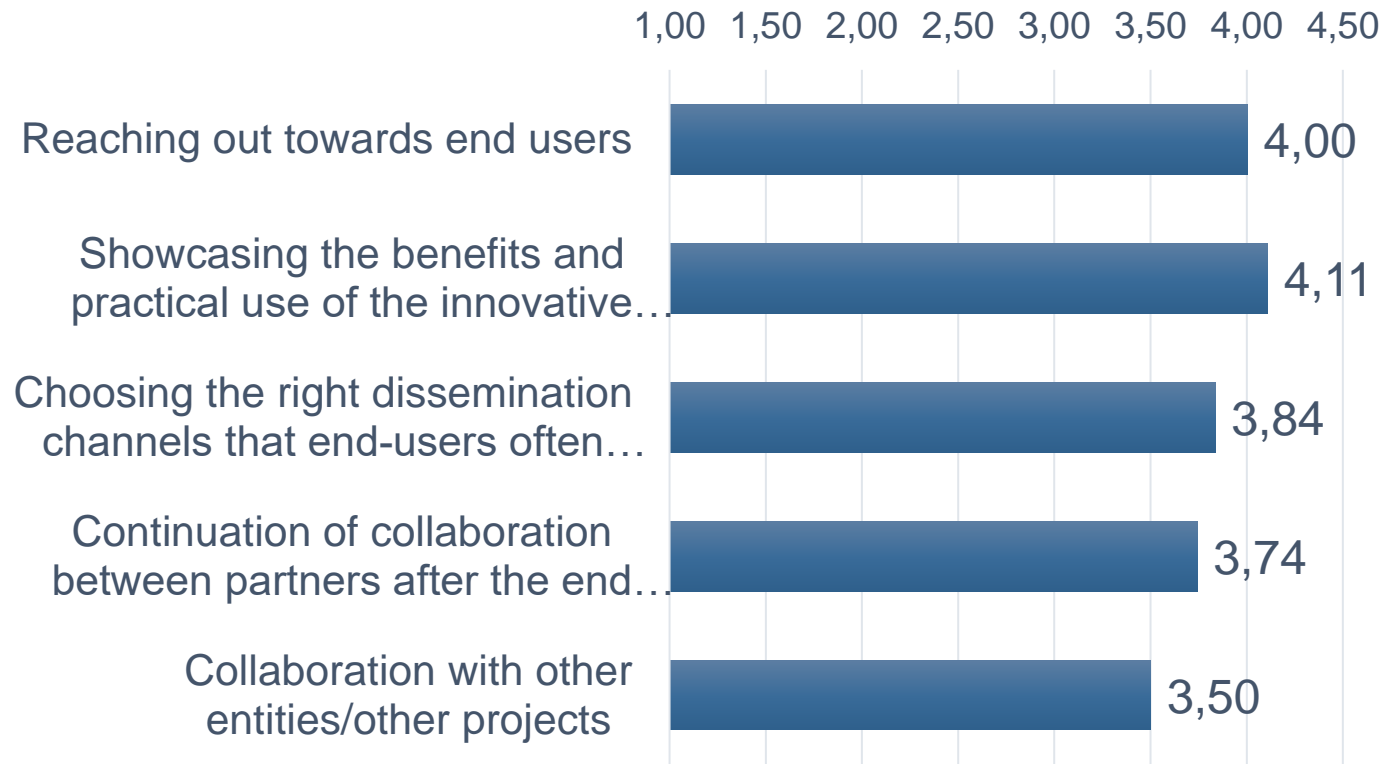
#### The interactive model is a key tool for achieving outcomes.

The most successful projects are:

- Those in which the partners involved are trained in cooperation (*FR-Bourgogne / Franche Comté; IT-Liguria*), whereas often projects focus on the technical aspects to the detriment of collaboration processes
- Those ensuring the involvement of all OG stakeholders in the decision-making and implementation processes, and the cooperation between the stakeholders in the OG working cohesively to achieve the desired outcomes (*Ireland; IT-Liguria, Portugal*), finding a common language and a good internal communication during the project period (*DE-Baden-W.*)
- Cooperation between farmers (practitioners) and R&D partners, facilitated by advisors in form of shortening the innovation transfer path gave tangible benefits (*Poland*).
- Collaboration with the innovation broker is also seen as an element favouring the achievement of results (*ES-Pais Vasco*)

Q.2.1 - What are the **main drivers and barriers to the successful co-creation of innovative solutions** and to the **possibility of scaling-up of EIP-OG project outcomes?**

**Reaching out to end users and showcasing benefits are key factors facilitating successful spreading of innovative solutions**



Stakeholder survey confirms importance of showcasing the benefits: on-farm demonstrations and peer-to-peer events are most effective drivers of successful dissemination of co-created innovative solutions

Values on a scale 1 not at all, 2 to a small extent, 3 to some extent, 4 to a large extent, 5 to a very large extent

Source: OG survey

## Q.2.1 - What are the main **drivers and barriers** to the successful co-creation of innovative solutions and to the **possibility of scaling-up of EIP-OG project outcomes?**

### Insights from **CASE STUDIES**

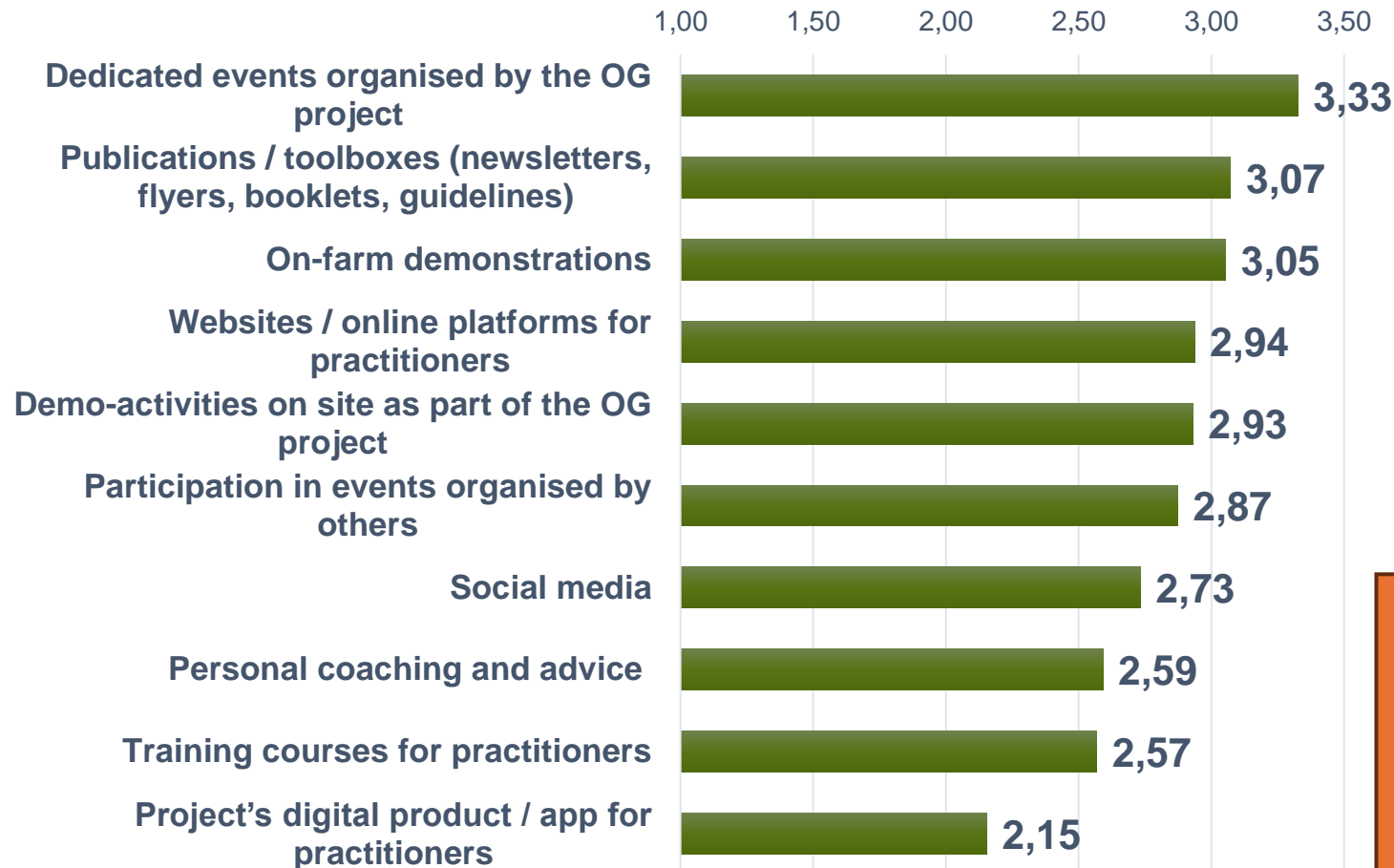
#### Facilitating factors:

- **Choosing the right dissemination channels:** *DE-Baden-W* where the project website is regularly visited providing a unique opportunity to obtain details that are not available elsewhere; *ES-Pais Vasco*, where a **dissemination roadmap** based on the identification of targeted agents and events by each OG partner was important in spreading the project's results.
- **Trust of farmers towards their cooperatives/associations** (*Poland*).
- **Continuation of collaboration between partners:** *IT-Liguria* where the partners are preparing a continuation project with French partners for large-scale application of the tested innovations; *Portugal*, where continued relationship between the partners is expected to result in future projects.

#### Hindering factors:

- **Project objectives not focusing on end-user needs:** in *DE-Hessen* the OG project focused on the university's interest to gain knowledge rather than the needs of farms, has hindered scaling up despite peer-to-peer visits; in *the Netherlands* the created innovative solution was very specific to one type of farm and cannot be replicated on other farms.
- **Inadequacy of the training and advisory system** and the **lack of demonstration farms** where innovation can be applied on a significant scale has severely limited the potential for disseminating the proposed innovations (*IT-Liguria, DE-Baden-W.*)
- **Lack of mechanisms to connect different OGs** (*the Netherlands*)

## Q.2.2 - To what extent have **communication** and **dissemination** activities contributed to achievement of OG project outcomes?



**OG survey responses on the extent to which the communication and dissemination channels contributed to the spreading of the project outcomes**

Values on a scale 1 No contribution, 2 Very little contribution, 3 Some contribution, 4 Very high contribution

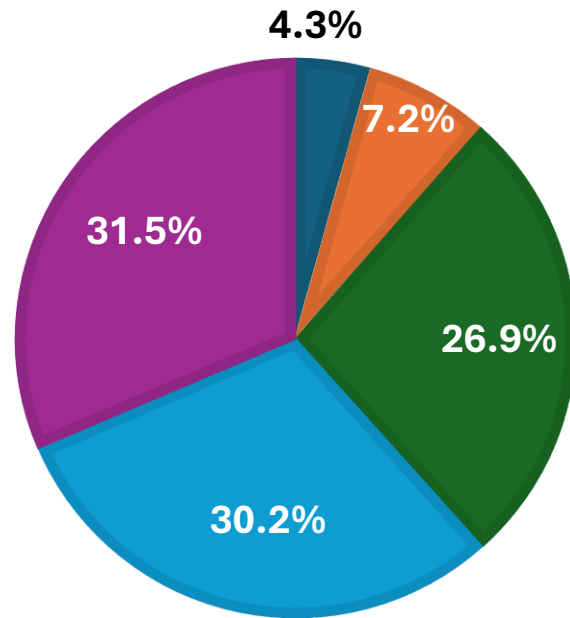
### Case studies:

- **Active communication throughout project life cycle and beyond;**
- **Combination of communication channels** often a winning factor;
- Importance of **personal coaching and advice.**

Spreading of information by MAs and NRN have contributed to the achievement of OG project outcomes: **Websites and events** most frequently mentioned as **key sources of information**

Q3 - To what extent did **Member States/Regions'** **approaches** to EIP OG calls favour/limit the achievement of outcomes?

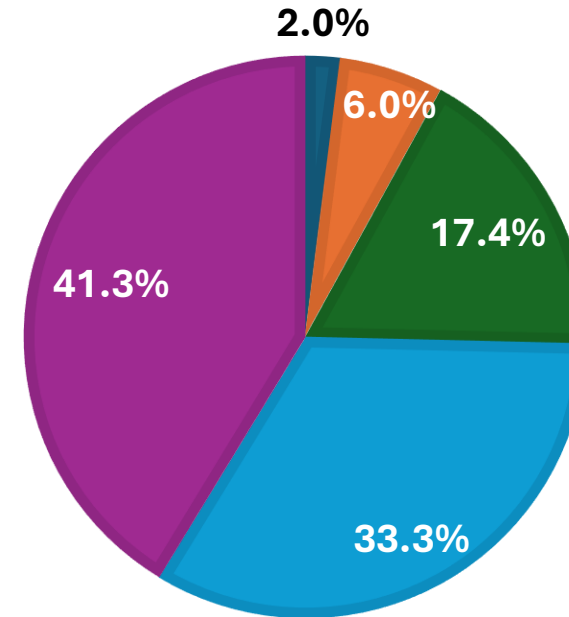
**OG calls have addressed the concrete needs of practitioners**



strongly disagree      disagree  
neither agree nor disagree      agree  
strongly agree

Source: OG survey

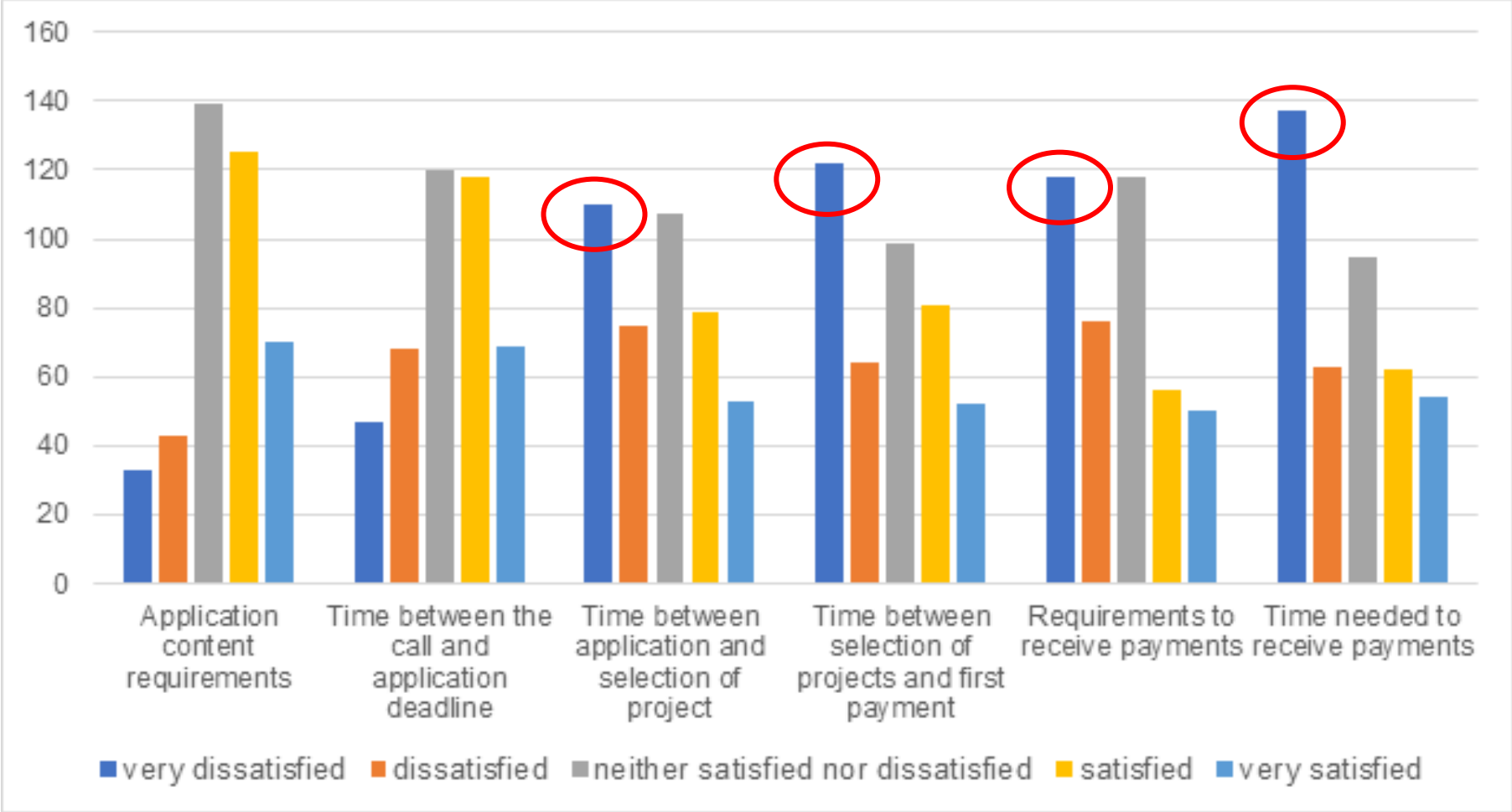
**The drafting of OG calls clearly influences creating OG partnerships with a balanced mix of complementary expertise**



strongly disagree      disagree  
neither agree nor disagree      agree  
strongly agree

Q3 - To what extent did **Member States/Regions'** **approaches** to EIP OG calls favour/limit the achievement of outcomes?

**OG are not very satisfied with certain administrative aspects**

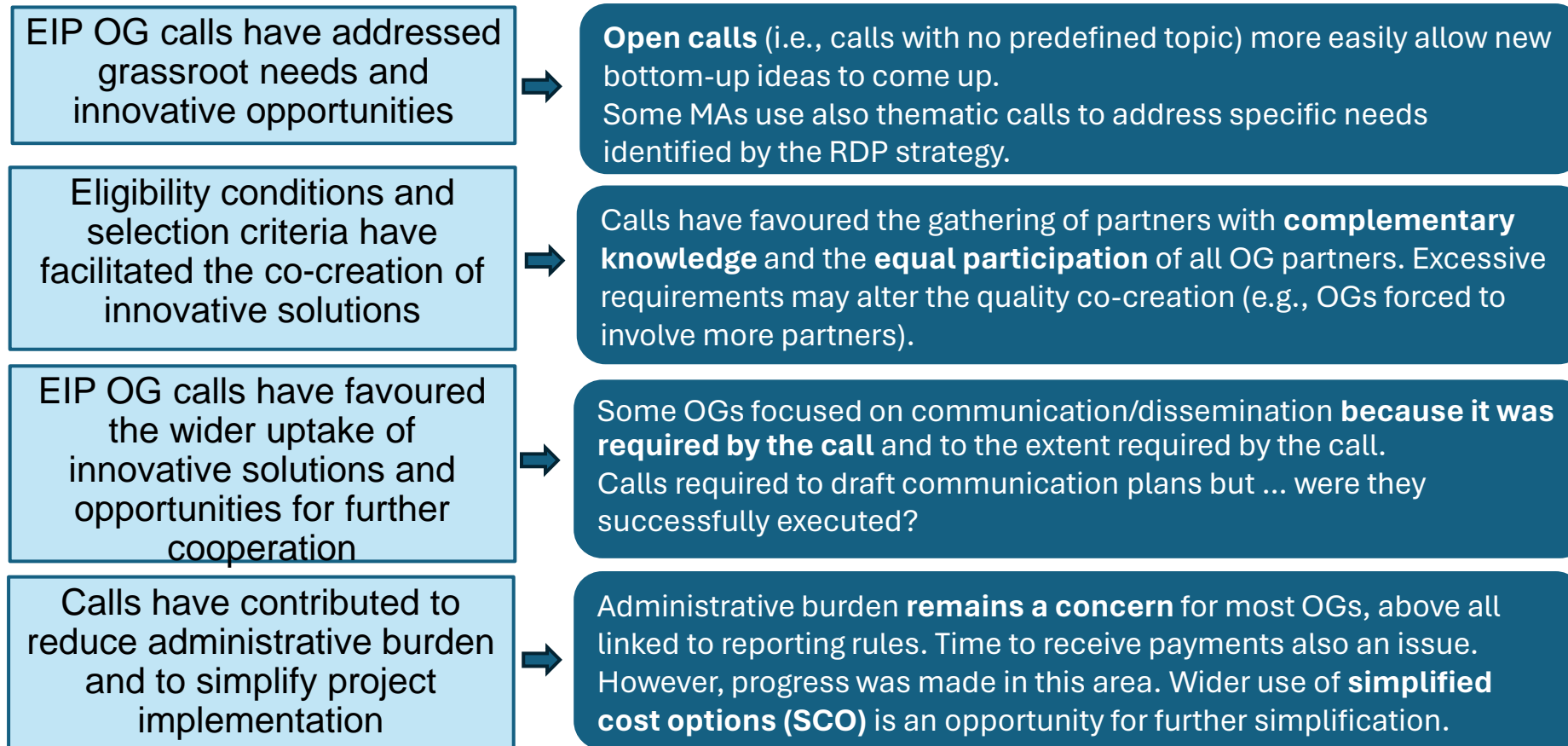


No. responses, Source: OG survey



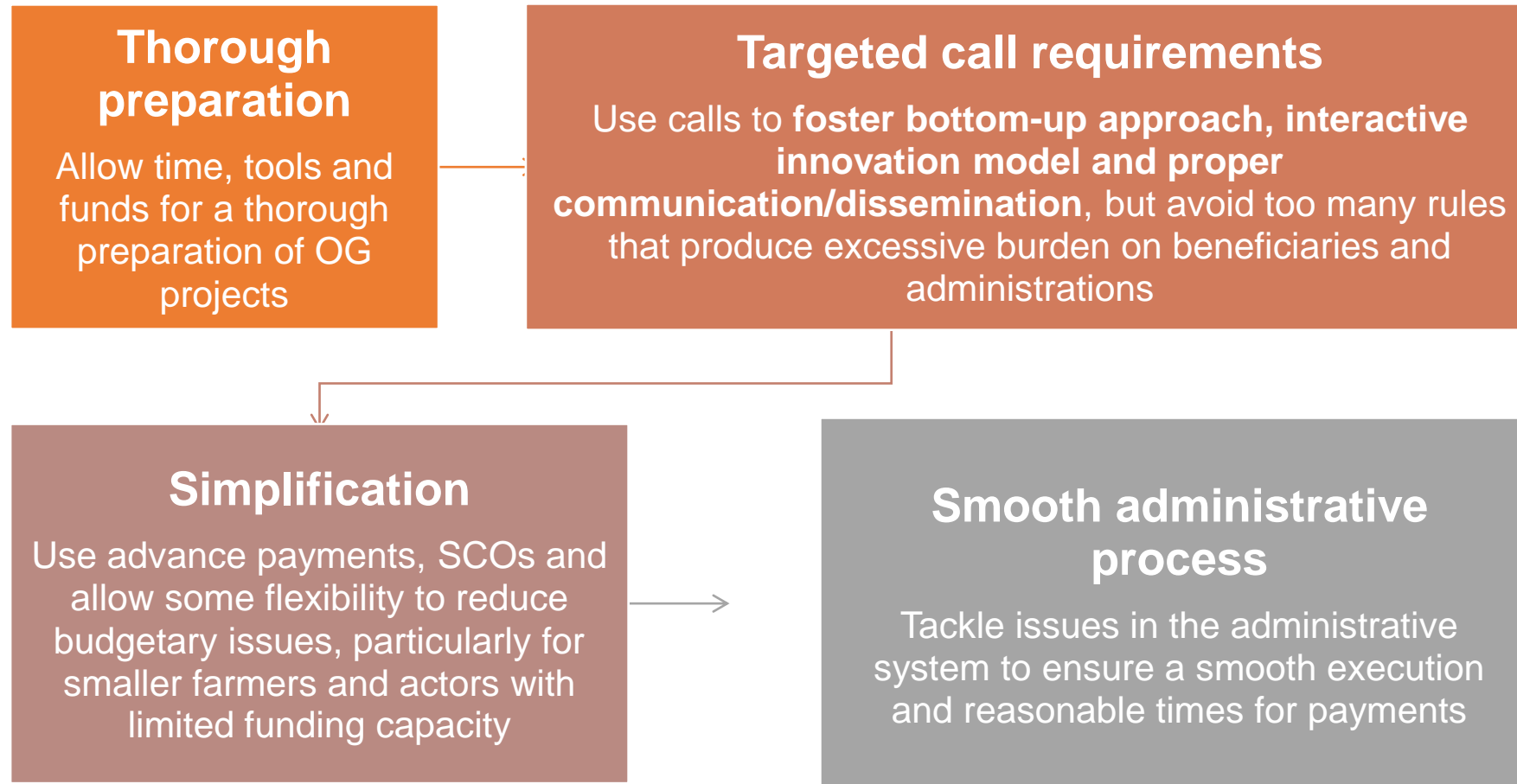
### Q3 - To what extent did Member States/Regions' approaches to EIP OG calls favour/limit the achievement of outcomes?

#### KEY FACTORS AND MAIN FINDINGS



Q3 - To what extent did **Member States/Regions'** **approaches** to EIP OG calls favour/limit the achievement of outcomes?

## Call's drivers for the achievement of OG project outcomes



Source: Own elaboration

# Overall conclusions

## **Achievement of outcomes by OG projects**

- Most Operational Groups have successfully developed, tested and spread innovative solutions consistently with what planned (2/3 of OG survey responses).
- EIP approach has enabled new forms of collaboration between the different actors involved, particularly linking science and agricultural practice.
- Innovative solutions have been spread to broader target groups beyond OG partnerships, at least to some extent, albeit mostly in the immediate proximity of OG partnerships.

## **Drivers and barriers for the successful co-creation of innovative solutions and the possibility of scaling-up of OG project outcomes**

- Right mix of partners ensuring that complementary expertise serves the project objectives is key.
- Role of farmers/foresters and advisors is central to the co-creation of innovative solutions > bottom-up approach enhances success.
- Experience and skills of partners, including thematic knowledge on OG project topics (also experience from previous projects and management / organisational skills) are important drivers.
- Interactive innovation model contributes to high level of interactions among partners and their equal treatment in decision-making. Quality of interactions is enhanced through good collaboration mechanisms and frequent exchanges.
- Various factors contribute to scaling up of innovative solutions, notably, showcasing the benefits and practical use of the innovative solution, continuation of collaboration of partners after the end of the project.
- Support during application, implementation and dissemination of OG projects provided by different AKIS actors is crucial and needs careful attention.
- Partnership size can both facilitate or hinder success.

# Overall conclusions

## **Contribution of communication and dissemination activities to the achievement of outcomes**

- Effective communication and dissemination activities play a significant role in achieving OG project outcomes, and especially in scaling up innovative solutions.
- While traditional channels are commonly used, more effective channels for scaling up innovations are those involving interactions such as peer-to-peer communication, demonstrating project outcomes, also using 'champions' and 'multipliers'.
- Combining different tools and channels is most effective in spreading OG project outcomes.

## **National/regional approaches to OG calls**

- Managing Authorities have overall made genuine efforts to foster the principles of the EIP-AGRI approach.
- Careful preparation of OGs and projects is crucial for successful implementation.
- Support provided by Managing Authorities and other actors is highly valued by OGs.
- OG calls prioritise partnerships with balanced expertise and democratic cooperation.
- OG calls generally require to focus on communication and dissemination but could be more effective in promoting them.
- OGs express concern over administrative burden - options for simplification could be further applied.

# Thoughts for the way forward

- **Importance of OG partnership composition and involvement of all partners at all project stages, in particular at the initial stage when drafting the project proposal:**
  - Ensure a balanced mix of relevant complementary expertise, partners' motivation at all stages and effective coordination mechanisms
  - Ensure farmers place in the partnerships, also to avoid projects being dominated by other partners who may not have the farmers' interest as their priority
- Further strengthen **support to preparation of OGs** and **ensure support is provided by the relevant actors at different stages of OG projects**: MAs, advisors, innovation support services and brokers, CAP networks, etc.
- **Approach to preparation of calls** for selection of OGs and OG projects **seems to be key for successful implementation**:
  - Two-step procedure seems to work better
- **Favour further simplification** and reduction of administrative burden by national and regional rules through e.g., use of SCO; work towards **improving effectiveness of procedures**, in particular those related to payments.

# Thoughts for the way forward

## > Further improve communication and dissemination of OG project outcomes

- > **Most effective dissemination tools are those involving interactions**, including **peer-to-peer communication**, **demonstrating project outcomes**, and also relying on the work of **‘champions’** (people on the ground who set the example for others to follow) and **‘multipliers’** (national CAP networks, advisors, trainers and Ministries/MAs, who can spread the results through their own networks). Therefore, **need to organise supporting AKIS actions** to this effect.
- > **Communication and dissemination are most effective** in spreading OG project outcomes **when different tools and the right channels are combined: dedicated AKIS actions to support sharing OG outcomes.**
- > 57% of OG survey respondents agree that **calls requiring structured planning and carrying out of communication and dissemination activities had positive impact on achieving project outcomes**
  - > Such approach to be further spread / call requirements ensured by MAs
  - > Further improvements could be achieved through **increasing calls’ requirements to use more and more frequently practice-oriented channels**
  - > Assess case by case: in addition to the presence of an advisor, the presence of a communication expert in the OG could be beneficial to increase awareness of the importance of communication. Alternatively, specific AKIS staff in NNs.

# Thank you for your attention!

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All information on the conference is available on the event webpage:

<https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/eu-cap-network-conference-eip-agri-operational-groups-innovation-practice>

