



 **EU CAP Network Workshop**

**Young entrepreneurs – Engines  
of innovation in rural areas**



Funded by  
the European Union



# Table of content

<b>Executive summary</b>	2
<b>Introduction</b>	2
<b>Workshop objectives</b>	3
<b>Methodology of the workshop</b>	3
<u>Approach one: The golden circle model</u>	3
Approach two: ECOSTAR – The Nature Accelerator	4
Critical questions	4
<b>Participants</b>	4
<b>Plenary sessions and field trips</b>	5
Day 1: Setting the scene from European to local rural policy	5
Day 1: Field trips	5
Day 2: Setting the scene: a supporting environment for innovation	5
<b>Interactive sessions</b>	6
Interactive session 1: Challenges and needs of rural entrepreneurship	6
Interactive session 2: Showcasing and learning from inspiring solutions	7
Interactive session 3: Bringing our knowledge and experience to practice	11
Interactive session 4: Promoting and scaling up young rural innovation and entrepreneurship	14
<b>Lessons learnt and key takeaways</b>	14
Interactive session one: Key takeaways on challenges for rural innovation and needs of young entrepreneurs	15
Key challenges in rural innovation	15
Key needs of young entrepreneurs	15
Interactive session two: Key takeaways from solutions in practice on challenges and needs across the six thematic areas	16
Interactive session three: Case clinic insights and looking forward	16
Interactive session four: Scaling and replicating rural innovation	17
<b>Concluding remarks</b>	17
<b>ANNEX 1</b>	18
Responding to critical questions	18

## List of tables

<b>Table 1:</b> Critical questions .....	4
<b>Table 2:</b> Field visit initiatives .....	6
<b>Table 3:</b> Young entrepreneur and rural innovation challenges and needs .....	6
<b>Table 4:</b> Insights from showcasing 'getting to the market' .....	8
<b>Table 5:</b> Insights from the breakout session on rural regeneration .....	10
<b>Table 6:</b> Case clinic results .....	11
<b>Table 7:</b> Conclusions on new innovation success .....	15
<b>Table 8:</b> Key needs of young entrepreneurs .....	15

## List of figures

<b>Figure 1:</b> Simon Sinek's Golden Circle .....	3
<b>Figure 2:</b> Country of origin of participants .....	4
<b>Figure 3:</b> Background of participants .....	4
<b>Figure 4:</b> Funding sources of projects registered to the workshop .....	4

## Executive summary

On 30 November and 1 December 2022, the Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development of the European Commission (DG AGRI) and the Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge exchange including EIP-AGRI held the one-and-a-half-day EU CAP Network workshop 'Young entrepreneurs – Engines of innovation in rural areas'. With a total of 76 registrations, the workshop participants represented 19 different Member States from which they brought their own experience and knowledge on rural innovation and entrepreneurship. The workshop participants came from a wide range of different backgrounds, including young entrepreneurs, farmers, foresters, researchers and students, advisors, civil servants, innovation support agents / innovation brokers, and land owners.

The main aim of the workshop was to support young entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystems and those involved in them in rural areas by showcasing good practices from EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, Horizon projects and projects from other EU-funding programmes, leadership figures from local communities, and other examples of leadership and innovators that have moved into rural communities. The core methodology of the workshop was centred around four interactive participatory sessions that focused on innovations from ideation to scaling and replication.

The interactive sessions aimed at answering four critical questions with regards to young entrepreneurs and rural innovation, summarised as:

- › Who is the entrepreneur and their motive for change?
- › What are the crucial challenges and opportunities facing young innovative entrepreneurs in rural areas?
- › What kind of support do young innovative entrepreneurs need to successfully develop their business ideas?
- › What kind of innovative approaches and good practices exist?



Key takeaways from each of these questions were clustered into a number of topics. These were found to be transversal to each of the interactive sessions, and thus to the different stages of scaling rural innovations and the role that young entrepreneurs have in them. These can be summarised as:

- › Increased training, capacity building, and knowledge on entrepreneurship aspects including: mentality, business planning, finance, marketing, communication and branding;
- › Improved access to networks (also through stakeholder engagement and participation activities), infrastructure (technology, welfare) and strategic partnerships (with public and private sector institutions);
- › Improved access and awareness of information and knowledge sharing from good practices in the EU, national, local (local action and Operational Groups, Horizon and Erasmus+ projects).

## Introduction

Rural shrinkage, due to ageing populations and rural out-migration of young people, is on the rise in the EU. Currently, about 30% of the EU's population lives in rural areas (even less in remote areas) but this share is expected to keep decreasing in coming decades<sup>1</sup>.

Depopulated rural regions often provide lower-income and fewer job opportunities. Furthermore, the out-migration of younger, skilled workers results in ageing populations, which hinders generation renewal and the development of rural entrepreneurship and business opportunity<sup>2</sup>. As highlighted in the European Commission's 'Long-Term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas', the impact of these negative demographic trends can hamper the change towards development, opportunity and a more sustainable future of rural areas.

Even though rural areas provide significant resources and services, both tangible and intangible (such as natural capital, environmental services, quality of life, culture, tradition and know-how) these are often undervalued, poorly understood, and unexplored.







Considering all these factors, this workshop investigated existing experiences, knowledge, instruments, and opportunities within the EU Common Agriculture Policy (CAP) and within Horizon Europe (HE), the EU's key programme for research and innovation, to support and promote young innovators/entrepreneurs and start-ups in rural communities. The event sought to support awareness and knowledge to provide and implement new solutions in rural areas, to share knowledge on existing good practices, and to create new networks and connections that can generate increased interest and employment opportunities and enrich the quality of life in these areas.

## Workshop objectives

With this in mind, the overarching aim of the workshop was to support young entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystems and their actors in rural areas by showcasing good practices from EIP-AGRI Operational Groups, Horizon projects and projects from other EU-funded programmes, leadership figures from local communities, and other examples of leadership and innovators moving into rural communities. To ensure effective knowledge exchange as well as lasting and impactful connections and networking, the workshop defined the following specific objectives:

- Showcase innovative businesses and start-ups led by young entrepreneurs in rural areas;
- Explore opportunities offered under the CAP and HE to support young entrepreneurs and start-ups in rural areas;
- Identify the needs of young entrepreneurs and the barriers they face to develop new businesses in rural areas;
- Promote young entrepreneurship ecosystems within local rural communities;
- Activate networking for innovation among stakeholders and young entrepreneurs in rural areas.

## Methodology of the workshop

The workshop consisted of a combination of plenary presentations, innovative participatory approaches and activities, and field trips illustrating good practices of rural innovation. An overview of the programme is presented below with a brief explanation of the methodology behind each listed intervention.

The programme methodology was chosen considering a combination of two approaches in innovation and business development, outlined below.

### Approach one: The golden circle model

The golden circle model was developed by Simon Sinek, an internationally renowned author and expert on leadership and entrepreneurship. This model encourages entrepreneurs to consider how they innovate by focusing on three concentric circles: firstly, there is the 'why' at the centre, secondly, the 'what', and finally the 'how' in the external circle (Figure 1).

In developing and implementing the workshop programme, the aim was to focus first on 'why' young entrepreneurs do what they do, what drives them, and what are their motivators (interactive session one). These motivators are usually driven by the problems (challenges, barriers and needs) they face in everyday life; Solutions should respond to these problems.

### The Golden Circle

#### What

Every organization on the planet knows what they do. These are products they sell or the services.

#### How

Some organizations know how they do it. These are things that make them special or set them apart from their competition.

#### Why

Very few organizations know why they do what they do. Why is not about making money, that's a result. Why is a purpose, cause or belief. It's the very reason your organization exists.

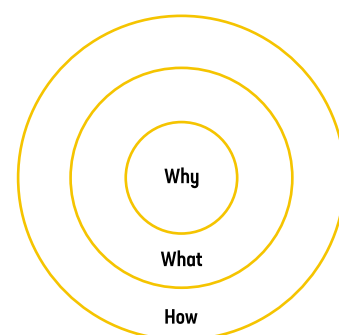


Figure 1: Simon Sinek's Golden Circle

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.espon.eu/sites/default/files/attachments/ESPON%20Policy%20Brief%20on%20Shrinking%20Rural%20Regions.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/society/20210414ST002006/what-solutions-to-population-decline-in-europe-s-regions>



## Approach two: ECOSTAR - The Nature Accelerator

The second approach incorporated activities from a successful accelerator programme from an Erasmus+ Knowledge Alliance project, **ECOSTAR - The Nature Accelerator**. The approach included: i) interactive sessions to identify the challenges and needs for innovations that were proposed by the participating start-ups. A similar approach was applied in interactive session one, ii) a series of technical seminars on specific themes that are key to the innovation processes of the participating start-ups (similar to the workshop's interactive session two), iii) interactive sessions among start-ups that led them to hack and criticise each other's business models (comparable to the workshop's interactive session three), and finally, iv) meetings and interactions with additional innovation support ecosystems through a mentoring programme (comparable to the fishbowl activity in interactive session four).

### Critical questions

Following these two approaches, several critical questions were defined, in order to respond to the workshop objectives. These were embedded across the workshop sessions and activities. The questions are outlined in Table 1. A complete analysis of how each of the interactive sessions responded to the critical questions is provided in ANNEX 1.

**Table 1: Critical questions**

No.	Question
1	Who is the entrepreneur and what is their motive for change?
2	What are the crucial challenges and opportunities facing young innovative entrepreneurs in rural areas?
3	What kind of support do young innovative entrepreneurs need to successfully develop their business ideas?
4	What kind of innovative approaches and good practices exist?

## Participants

Overall, of the 76 registrations to the workshop, participants represented 19 different Member States (Figure 2) from which they brought their own experience and knowledge on rural innovation and entrepreneurship. Participants had a range of different backgrounds (Figure 3) and represented projects or initiatives that are supported by a range of different funding sources (Figure 4).

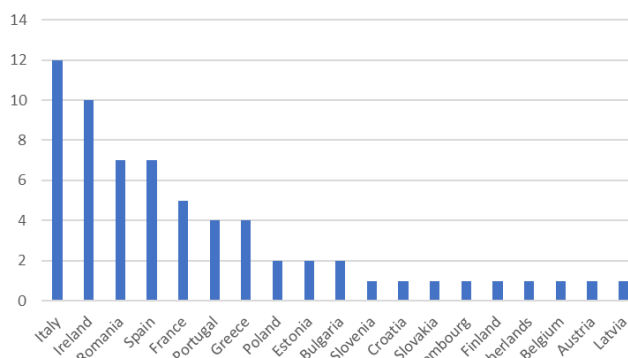


Figure 2: Country of origin of participants

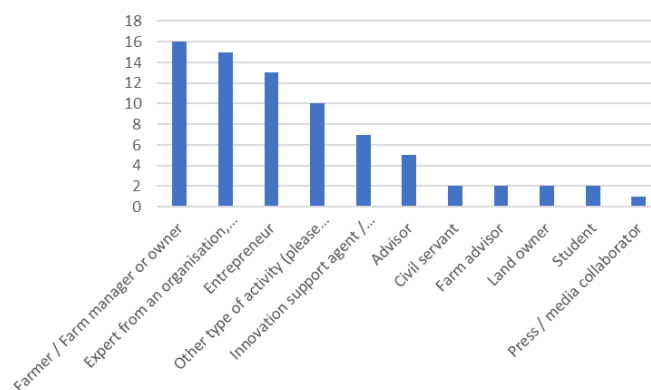


Figure 3: Background of participants

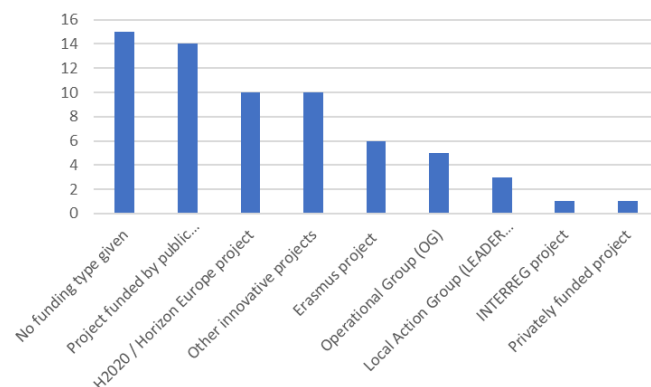


Figure 4: Funding sources of projects registered to the workshop

<sup>3</sup> Full information about the event, including detailed programme, booklet of speakers, videos and presentations can be found on the event webpage





## Plenary sessions and field trips

Both workshop days were opened by two specific sessions, designed to set the scenes for those days. During the afternoon of the first day, three field trips took place (further explained below).

### Day 1: Setting the scene from European to local rural policy

On the first day, the participants were welcomed by Magdalena Mach, Policy Officer at the European Commission, DG Agriculture and Rural Development. She gave a comprehensive overview of the Long-term Vision for the EU's Rural Areas and support policies for young rural entrepreneurship.

The EU policy overview was followed by a presentation from Corina Roe, Head of the Managing Authority for Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan for the period 2023-2027, in the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine on CAP and Rural Entrepreneurship in the Irish Context. Corina presented the upcoming funding opportunities with respect to Ireland's CAP Strategic Plan implementation.



Magdalena Mach, DG AGRI, European Commission

The national policy context was complemented by a third presentation given by Linda McNulty, Head of Operations at the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, focusing on an example of a specific EU programme that supports new entrepreneurs, in this case, the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, a cross-border business exchange programme funded by the EC.

### Day 1: Field trips

Three different field visits were organised in the afternoon of the first day, to engage participants in local entrepreneurial initiatives that respond to the critical questions and that support and promote rural

innovation and entrepreneurship. Initiatives included in each field visit are presented in Table 2 below. More detailed information on the field visits can be found [on the event page](#).



Corina Roe, Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, Government of Ireland

### Day 2: Setting the scene: a supporting environment for innovation

The second day was also opened by Magdalena Mach, who gave an overview of EU funding opportunities under the CAP and Horizon Europe that can support young entrepreneurs and rural innovation. This was followed by a presentation on private funding opportunities by DC Cahalane of Dogpatch Labs in Dublin, a start-up support, development and financing hub. DC gave an overview of the different kinds of private funding opportunities that are available for start-ups, and the different stages in which the start-ups should apply for funding. The final presentation that opened the morning of the second day was given by Barry Caslin, Rural Development Specialist at Teagasc, the state agency that provides research, advisory and training services in agriculture, horticulture, food and rural development in Ireland. Barry gave an overview of the different innovation support ecosystems that exist in an Irish context: agricultural incubators, accelerators, business training programmes and locally applied EU and national funding support programmes for young entrepreneurs and rural innovation.



**Table 2: Field visit initiatives**

Field visit A	<u>Wicklow Wolf Brewery</u>
	<u>Wicklow Way Wines</u>
	<u>County Wicklow Partnership</u>
	<u>Wicklow Naturally</u>
Field visit B	<u>Kilmullen Farm</u>
	<u>K2Alpacas</u>
	<u>County Wicklow Partnership</u>
	<u>Carraig Dúlra</u>
Field visit C	<u>MERITS Innovation Thinkspace</u>



## Interactive sessions

### Interactive session 1: Challenges and needs of rural entrepreneurship

The first interactive session was aimed at determining critical challenges and needs that young entrepreneurs face in rural innovation. The participants were split into 11 groups. Table 3 summarises the results of the votes given by each participant of the 11 group discussions, highlighting the most important challenges and needs.

**Table 3: Young entrepreneur and rural innovation challenges and needs**

Challenges	Votes	Needs	Votes
Improving connections and networks of small rural entrepreneurial activity	20	Availability of capacity, workforce and reliable infrastructure	15
Changing mentality, cultural identity (patrimonial to professional activities)	8	Funding opportunities and finance	13
Access to knowledge and lack of awareness (business opportunities)	7	Real involvement in decision-making processes	12
Support and access to local markets for small-scale initiatives	7	Availability of basic public and professional services (including AKIS)	9
Lack of skills, training and capacity around innovation and entrepreneurship	6	Social innovation (bottom-up and more holistic approaches)	8
Individual behaviour risk, change risk	4	Mentoring with experienced entrepreneurs	7
ICT and its application	3	Greater role of LEADER	6





Different layers and complexity of government	3	Knowledge, training and capacity building (Education for a new mindset “making farming more attractive”)	6
Economic, social and environmental sustainability of business models in the CAP	2	Collaborative networks	5
Youth fixation and regeneration	2	Successful case stories to follow	2
Financial services to farmers	1	Reducing the business risk time (insurance)	2
Fostering LEADER and Local Action Group activities	1	New marketplace for rural farmers	2

## Interactive session 2: Showcasing and learning from inspiring solutions

The second interactive session was organised in six thematic groups, which were based on the motivations for attending the workshop that participants had expressed. Each breakout session covered transversal topics including knowledge transfer and capacity building, funding, networks and policy. The breakout spaces and the key results from these discussions are outlined below.

### 1. Project development

The space on project development showcased what young entrepreneurs in rural areas need above all, in order to develop their projects. This focused on three areas:

- › Coaching for project management;
- › Communicating process and procedures quickly and clearly;
- › Mentoring by other experienced peers.



For this breakout session, the showcasing focused on concrete examples of a supporting infrastructure for project development in Ireland through Teagasc, the national agricultural advisory organisation and the local enterprise offices (LEOs). More specifically, such advisory bodies and network organisations play a role in providing information that is needed for designing, knowledge transfer and capacity building on project development. In contrast, scaling a potential innovation from a project, and access to finance are reliant on more specific capacity-building infrastructure such as business accelerators and incubators. For this, an example of a technology park in Croatia (**Tech Park Croatia**) was presented.



### 2. Getting to the market

This breakout space explored innovation ecosystems, including support infrastructure, training programmes, accelerators and hubs that support solutions in getting to the market. Reference was made to two examples, which are listed below in Table 4 as they were presented during the breakout spaces.



**Table 4: Insights from showcasing 'getting to the market'**

Brief description of the case	'Getting to the market': key focus area takeaways
<p><b>Proud farm incubation (Greece)</b> is an incubation hub with 3 small farms providing 3-year incubation to farm projects. Project link: <a href="https://www.proudfarm.gr/el/#1">https://www.proudfarm.gr/el/#1</a></p>	<p><b>Communication</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Create and build the story around the product/service</li> <li>&gt; Communicate and brand the product and service connected to the story</li> </ul> <p><b>Information and reaching the target groups:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Demand for and access to market statistics and information</li> <li>&gt; Regional data (for example on agricultural products, production costs, etc.)</li> <li>&gt; Knowing where to find open source (farm) data</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Knowing how to look for available start-up funding (e.g.,</li> <li>&gt; EIC Accelerator, Leader and other CAP interventions in each EU Member State, Horizon Europe).</li> <li>&gt; Setting up and scaling solutions emerging from Local Action Groups (knowing how national CAP networks and funding work through forestry and farming CAP advisory and network organisations)</li> </ul> <p><b>Business planning</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; Entrepreneurship assistance and capacity building in accountancy, law and financing (through nationally funded local enterprise offices, innovation and business hubs, incubators and accelerators)</li> <li>&gt; Improving awareness to online tools and available information for Member States (also through e.g., nationally funded local enterprise offices, innovation and business hubs, incubators and accelerators)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Community-supported land purchase (Netherlands):</b> Informal mentorship programme to bridge generational gaps / knowledge gaps / tool gaps. It aims to support young movements in the Netherlands to diversify the landscape with agroforestry elements.</p> <p>Project links: Farm: <a href="http://www.biesterhof.nl">www.biesterhof.nl</a> Land acquisition: <a href="https://landvannons.nl">https://landvannons.nl</a></p>	

### 3. Staying in the market

In this breakout space, the needs and challenges identified in interactive session one were elaborated and discussed. Key focus insights and experiences were showcased by different country participants from the agricultural, forestry and tourism sectors. These are outlined below.

#### Infrastructure, and information and communication technology

- > Enhancing/improving infrastructure and information systems at local and regional levels

#### Communication

- > Focus on the locally relevant added value and story of a product or service to consumers





### Innovation

- > Promote new ideas such as 'rent-a-farmer' where farmers provide field work services to other farmers
- > Encourage contracting primary services such as spraying, transportation and silage, to reduce costs for individual farmers

### Diversification

- > Support awareness of policy and regulation in agriculture and forestry business diversification
- > Build trust and awareness on diversification in family businesses
- > Reduce dependency on single products, promote diversification of income (e.g., with tourism)
- > Improve diversification knowledge, capacity and skills (marketing and processes) of young entrepreneurs in the agricultural and forestry sectors

## 4. Sustainability

This breakout space discussed the importance of sustainability with regards to the needs and challenges that were identified on this topic. Rather than a showcasing, each participant brought their experience on how sustainability is important for them in their business and/or project.

For all participants, sustainability was considered a topic of growing importance that does not just focus on improving land management practices. It also includes a wider community and economy, and the socio-economic benefits that an improved environment can have



in providing valuable ecosystem services. The group agreed that measuring sustainability can often be critical, but difficult. Generic frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can facilitate this for early-stage businesses as they are easy to use and communicative, but they do not always cover all activities.

Then, the group discussed other important tools that can communicate sustainable practices in agriculture, such as Protected Designations of Origin (DOC) and organic certifications for agriculture (which are often country-specific or locally specific),



forest management certification for forestry such as the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and tourism certification for sustainable destinations such as the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC). Finally, the group also agreed that the European Commission should focus more on these aspects, noting that this was also changing in emerging policies and strategies such as the recent EU Forest and Biodiversity Strategies, the Green Deal, the new CAP and more specific regulations that were adopted such as the European Union Deforestation Regulation and the Carbon Farming Initiative, which focus more specifically on sustainability in agriculture and forestry supply chains, and forest and farm management practices.

## 5. Regeneration for rural areas

In this breakout session, the topic of youth fixation and rural regeneration were discussed in light of the most relevant needs identified in interactive session one. They are listed in Table 5 below.



**Table 5: Insights from the breakout session on rural regeneration**

Solution	Insights and key takeaways
Innovation support and corporate involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› High-tech companies and food industries attract young people who stay in the rural area after having started to work there.</li> <li>› Stimulate big companies to open 'hubs' and establish partnerships in rural territories.</li> <li>› There is a need to involve them in organisations that are dealing with agroecology, bioeconomy and forestry where there are emerging needs for professional capacity and knowledge.</li> <li>› Reinforce the connection between food/tech/finance solutions and rural needs and challenges.</li> </ul>
Valorising rural areas to boost partnerships and connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Value the lower living costs in rural areas. People have moved to the rural areas during the pandemic.</li> <li>› Cultural events organised by local associations, with the aim of enhancing the willingness to stay in rural areas. In addition, 'matching opportunities' for those who want to be a farmer and local host families, one example can be seen in Austria: <a href="http://www.perspektive-landwirtschaft.at">www.perspektive-landwirtschaft.at</a>.</li> <li>› Access to basic services and infrastructure should be improved to encourage rural dwellers to stay in rural areas and to attract new inhabitants: schools (e.g. this would appeal to people with children), hospitals, cultural activities.</li> <li>› Promote and share projects and best practices that allow sharing empty and second houses and facilities (so-called free housing) for newcomers/professionals and artists.</li> </ul>
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Educational programmes should valorise agriculture and forestry and aspects relative to starting and maintaining business within these sectors already from the secondary school stage. There needs to be a focus to change and stimulate the mindset to make farming and forestry more attractive. These programmes should also include practical activities and study trips.</li> <li>› Third-level education in agriculture should also focus on agriculture and forestry entrepreneurship education and storytelling.</li> </ul>

## 6. Emerging/new knowledge and trends in innovation for rural areas

In this breakout session, the topic of emerging/new knowledge and trends in innovation for rural areas was discussed in light of the most relevant needs, identified in interactive session one. A list of the key takeaway needs per research/knowledge trend area is shown below.

### Training and capacity building

- › Rather than only focusing on training farmers, information, awareness raising and training should also be focused on consumers; an informed consumer will support sustainable agriculture more.
- › There is a need for training new advisors on sustainability and social innovation applied to local contexts.
- › Communication and storytelling; farmers should learn to promote the food story in their business.

### Innovation

- › The innovation process should include networks of like-minded individuals. Focus more on valorising best practices and results that

have come out of research and innovation projects (Horizon 2020 project **SIMRA**, **ECOSTAR**, the **SMART Villages** project in Italy, etc).

- › A need to simplify administration and adapt it to innovation processes.
- › Promote online sales more.

### Research needs

- › More research on young entrepreneurship is needed, for example, establishing entrepreneurship capacity and training applied to local contexts, including financial management, legal and policy awareness, stakeholder engagement and business development.
- › More research is also needed on bridging urban and rural systems. For example, the sales of farming and forestry products and services also depend on urban and peri-urban areas as markets. However, improved methods of reaching these markets from communication to branding and storytelling of products and services are needed.



## Interactive session 3: Bringing our knowledge and experience to practice

The session was based on a methodology called a 'Case Clinic'. In a case clinic, a 'case giver' presents a specific case, and a group of 3 to 6 peers or team members respond as 'consultants'. The idea behind the method in this context is that it gives access and space to the experience of participants and it helps them respond to a concrete and important leadership or entrepreneurial challenge in a more innovative way. The case givers were mainly young, innovative rural entrepreneurs. The cases were combinations of existing projects, initiatives or simply individual challenges that each case giver had experienced. Table 6 below presents the results of each of the 11 case clinics.



**Table 6: Case clinic results**

Case clinic name and number	Context and presentation of case	Ideas and solutions from consultants to consider	Insights and the way forward
1. Gilbert Ludwig: Finland	The case is about integrating and empowering young people into rural development processes, such as: feeling valued and important; trusted and confident; be involved; staying in the countryside.	Identify and explore urban-rural synergies, let young people be involved. More youth integration and rural identity for young people in schools and universities. Improve and communicate the benefits of living and working in rural areas for young people.	Adding empowering processes to skills and teaching. Building and communicating success stories "making the countryside attractive". Involve pre-university youth.
2. Stavros Papadopoulos: Greece	The case is about understanding if and how female accelerators and entrepreneurship programmes are in other members' countries, and how the mentoring and funding process works.	To bring female entrepreneurs and key stakeholders in the planning process from the beginning. To also bring nascent female entrepreneurs in and ask them their needs. To include men with power to adopt and support these kinds of programmes.	To apply a more structured brainstorming with other men and women in different countries involved in comparable programmes and ask them their views.





Case clinic name and number	Context and presentation of case	Ideas and solutions from consultants to consider	Insights and the way forward
3. Petruta Deac: Romania	The case is about how to create a sustainable source of energy from woodchips and waste material from sawmills. There is a working model and preliminary investment, but they need to complete their investment by extending their product and service range, or diversifying. The case is based on a family business.	To look for a partner – someone who can share both the material needs, and the cost. Cooperation with other public/private partners. Look for investments / crowdfunding. Sell part of the business for shares.	Need to list and seek alternative sources of income. Need to test new ideas on product diversification for pellets.
4. Filip Valentin: Romania	The case is about soil sustainable management. More specifically, organising soil testing free of charge for 40 farmers and they are willing to expand the programme, and create a context where it is normal to share the information. The case is based on a research project.	They need to find ways to improve the motivation. They need a wider campaign showing the benefits of the programme for consumers. They need to focus more on promotion (communication and branding).	To work better on finetuning and presenting the advantages of the programme to farmers. To involve potential clients of the benefits of the programme to give feedback. To connect the programme to other actions within AKINS.
5. Victor Petcu: Romania	The case is about a small farm, identified in Horizon 2020 project <b>RUBIZMO</b> , that has the potential to be transformed, increasing the value of products and services, by improving access to workforce and investments in irrigation and preparing the market for products. The case would like to apply a more community-assisted agriculture to support the product and service delivery.	More inclusive approaches, inviting a wider range of farmers and commercial workers from the county who maybe have additional solutions or lessons to bring. Application of more diversified methods based on suggestions by additional stakeholders (as above). Apply more participatory approaches to engage with the different stakeholders by organising workshops and meetings.	Start by identifying and engaging key stakeholders in meetings to involve them in the development of community-assisted agriculture. Then, learning from the first step, explain to the wider stakeholders and farmers the advantages and differences of community-assisted approaches.
6. Olivia Elsenpeter: The Netherlands	The case is about the collective and biodiverse <b>farm De Biesterhof</b> and how to scale such models, how to explore and invest in a diverse agroforestry system without risk. How to navigate the process of circular value chain creation, and how to get industry partners to share the risk of our agricultural endeavours?	Sharing risk with industry partners. Noble, ecological approach, which is more idea oriented than market oriented. Examine how realistic it is for your team to change the market. Knowing which crops are your focus crops, i.e. strawberries while apples are growing. Explore longer-term rental contracts with landlord. Leverage the existing trust and informally stated intentions and get long-term security on the land. Take the issue of team building seriously; formalise the legal structure of the collective as soon as you are able and figure out what level of investment makes sense for team members.	Benchmarking and learning from best practices. Team up with an Operational Group. A consensus was reached that slow, patient, organic growth was key to a strong start and sustainable business. To get realistic about the existing market and take advantage of streams that are more of a sure bet. To continue to be aspirational about farming systems and influence on the market, but this strategy too should be diversified.



Case clinic name and number	Context and presentation of case	Ideas and solutions from consultants to consider	Insights and the way forward
7. Peadar Casey: Ireland	The case is based on building a sustainable and scalable business model. No specific case reference was given.	Focus on collaboration. Concentrate on being a broker. Engage with industry. Look for and empower committed individuals with complementary skills.	Design a broker model that can be digitalised as a scaling strategy.
8. Nicolas Verdosa: Italy	The case is about how to empower and valorise the critical role of Local Action Groups (LAGs) as vehicles of delivering local strategies, decision making and resource allocation, while not over-centralising them. The case example is based on an innovative startup, <b>Ruralis</b> .	Improve communication among the different LAGs (a network of LAGs).	To continue to organise and attend events such as this workshop organised by the EC.
9. Maria João Horta Parreira: Portugal	The case is about how to interconnect rural and urban youth in participatory actions to explore new and innovative business models in less forward rural areas. It is based on a research project.	To develop an interactive digital map that connects interested rural and urban youth. Education and learning to young children and schools about 'rural identities'. Develop summer camps for children with communities on rural identity through the LEADER approach. Embedding social innovation in local political plans. Creating and sharing tools from local needs and external skills (rural-urban partnerships).	To learn and campaign more the idea of an 'EU vision for rural areas'. Engage more with the local people as actors for solutions, listening and understanding their needs and determining if they can fit with the rural vs urban lifestyles.
10. Daniel Long: Ireland	The case is about how to create collaboration and dialogue among different existing and potential opportunities between agriculture policy and environmental sectors by exploring new information and knowledge-sharing means.	Create a podcast, YouTube channel or radio channels that would solicit debate and knowledge transfer among agriculture and environmental sectors and experts to share solutions. Creation of an experimental cooperative model to take more people outside onto the farm to share experiences.	The podcast has strong potential and could get good support throughout Europe, and farmers get advice. The cooperative model could take in more actors than just farmers.
11. Noemi Salazar Gómez: Spain	The case is an Operational Group ( <b>Horti-Reg</b> ) focusing on regenerative agriculture with very good results. They are a team of expert horticulturists who now want to support five new farmers in starting a new project with their tested method. They need help to design the support plan and create the structure to implement.	Given its novelty, apply a learning-by-doing approach. Promote the success of the method through tailored farm visits and capacity building/education (books, subscriptions, courses). Evaluate well the lands where you want to apply this new method with the entrepreneurs.	The importance of creating a brand. To focus on building socio-economic and ecological resilience with all stakeholders involved. Focus on creating a cooperative to apply the method that includes all stakeholders, including potential consumers to support testing the products and the market.



## Interactive session 4: Promoting and scaling up young rural innovation and entrepreneurship

The final interactive session was delivered to facilitate a discussion around identifying and elaborating key views on challenges to scaling, and promoting the above topic. These key views are summarised below.

### Entrepreneurship insights

- › The link between rural entrepreneurship and rural development as a whole needs to be better understood.
- › Focus needs to be put on producers' entrepreneurial capacity to also become storytellers that can transmit the story of their product, service and way of life.
- › Everybody should be included in decision-making processes, especially in terms of rural development. Both vertical and horizontal collaboration is highly important when talking about scaling.
- › Rural entrepreneurship needs to move from competition over collaboration.
- › Entrepreneurship training and capacity-building programmes need to incorporate the above aspects.

### Rural fixation insights

- › A good welfare is a fundamental factor to improve rural well-being. In many rural areas there is a need to improve infrastructure and access to basic services. This would allow people (including entrepreneurs) to stay in rural areas or it would even attract new dwellers.
- › Farmers need to be included in local life and avoid the situation where they are separated from cultural and societal life.

### Knowledge and information sharing insights

- › Information awareness and dissemination are really important, not only about agriculture but also concerning other sectors such as the bioeconomy and circular economy, biochemistry and technology and how they can support agriculture.
- › Bottom-up approaches and best practices are keys to success. Many solutions can be found in existing best practices and EU-funded projects. These need to be shared and more visibility needs to be given to them for context-specific solutions.
- › Success stories and the rural economy need to be more often communicated to target markets and decision makers via emerging medias such as social media etc.

## Lessons learnt and key takeaways

All participants took part in the four interactive sessions. While the first interactive session grouped participants based on their different backgrounds, countries, interests and motivations, the second interactive session grouped the motivations of the participants with the most prominent needs and challenges in six break-out sessions.

The aim was to explore and exchange the knowledge and experience of participants' responses and solutions to these challenges and needs, within the thematic focus of the breakout sessions. The focus of the third session - the case clinic - was to explore specific and current challenges, presented by individual entrepreneurs in groups, in order to receive useful input and suggestions on potential solutions to those challenges. Finally, the fourth interactive session created a large open space of dialogue and discussion which focused the experience of all participants together. The goal was to inform the young entrepreneurs on where they could find potential knowledge and support in order to scale and grow capacity and knowledge for their solutions. In the following subsections, the results of each of the four interactive sessions from the previous sections have been analysed and clustered as key takeaways and indications.





## Interactive session one: Key takeaways on challenges for rural innovation and needs of young entrepreneurs

As per the first interactive session, the main challenges to rural innovation and needs of young entrepreneurs are listed and described in the following subsections.

### Key challenges in rural innovation

The most prominent challenges related to innovation success were identified and clustered into three main areas outlined below. Key indications from discussions are given on how to overcome them:

**Table 7: Conclusions on new innovation success**

Challenge	Indications for new rural innovation success
Networking, participation and stakeholder engagement. Clearly emerging from participant interaction, young entrepreneurs see the often-diverse social context-specificity of rural areas, where innovations require interaction with many kinds of stakeholders, as a challenge.	Rural innovations need to focus on more socially oriented methods in their application to be successful in the long term, given the frequent lack of supporting infrastructures in these areas (working conditions, education, community development or health). Rural innovation should embed 'social innovation' approaches to be successful and sustainable over the long term
Access to knowledge, upskilling and capacity building related to innovation and entrepreneurship, in rural areas, was considered a key challenge.	There are many successful solutions and approaches still 'locked up' in local-level initiatives (e.g., Local Action Groups and Operational Groups) that can be embedded in training and capacity-building programmes for rural innovation. Technology and further international workshops such as this will be key to raising awareness.
Local traditions and culture related to farming and forestry mentality were considered an important challenge.	Changing mentality is crucial to stemming rural out-migration. The important role of agriculture and forestry in local communities and economies needs to be integrated even at primary and secondary school education.

### Key needs of young entrepreneurs

Three main needs were identified during discussions in interactive session one on identifying needs and challenges. These are listed below, and indications are given on how to overcome them.

**Table 8: Key needs of young entrepreneurs**

Needs	Indications for young entrepreneurs
Financing	Specific spaces for awareness raising and knowledge on options for public-private finance need to be given to young entrepreneurs. This can be in workshops such as this, incubators, accelerators and business development programmes.
Communication and branding, and capacity building and training	Access and awareness on training and capacity building on key business development activities such as marketing, communication and branding need to increase. This can also be through participatory workshops, incubators, accelerators, and business development programmes.



## Interactive session two: Key takeaways from solutions in practice on challenges and needs across the six thematic areas

The key takeaways from showcasing solutions within the six thematic areas are clustered below:

1. The importance of communication of products and services;
2. Increasing and improving awareness and understanding of sustainability in agriculture, forestry and tourism;
3. Networking, connections and strategic partnerships;
4. Education, training and capacity building .

## Interactive session three: Case clinic insights and looking forward

The case clinics were further elaborations of specific challenges to innovation that had been identified by existing entrepreneurs. They had been presented to their groups in order to receive input and suggestions on how to overcome them. The most prominent and recurrent challenges identified from the case clinic givers are clustered into three main areas, outlined below. Key indications from discussions are given on how to overcome them:

**Table 9: Case clinic indications for successful innovation**

Challenges	Indications for existing rural innovation success
1.Environmental sustainability in agriculture	Many solutions already exist in research and practice with regard to environmental sustainability in agriculture (e.g. regenerative agriculture). Knowledge transfer, networking and capacity-building spaces and activities around sharing these solutions and lessons should be scaled and replicated.
2. Identifying, sharing, and connecting with existing solutions	
3. Access to finance and alternative revenue streams	

In addition to the indications presented above, each of the case clinics was asked specific questions on what they would have to do to overcome the problem presented. Suggestions were clustered into steps:

1. Engaging and including stakeholders;
2. Making use of existing technology and methods;
3. Peer-to-peer learning and lessons learnt from good practices;
4. Building entrepreneurship capacity and upskilling.



## Interactive session four: Scaling and replicating rural innovation

To determine how to scale and replicate rural innovations, the main problems associated with inhibitors to rural innovation were discussed in interactive session four. Primarily, these included how to better understand the links between rural innovation and rural development; to understand that rural life is not only about agriculture and an agricultural way of living, it is also about changing the mentality from competition to collaboration, while moving away from traditional approaches to producing and providing services to more diversified products and services that bridge agriculture, forestry and tourism.



This means a shift in focus from market and economic-value driven approaches to more bottom-up and community-led social innovations that focus also on welfare and that encourage multi-stakeholder inclusion. In this way, multiple goals are reached: improved rural welfare state and opportunity, renewed pride and sense of place in rural areas, and more economic, social and environmental sustainability of rural innovations.

### With this in mind, the following considerations emerge:

- › Capitalise on lessons learnt from bottom-up good practices that exist in other EU, national, local and privately led rural innovations, including Local Action Groups and Operational Groups.
- › Strengthen the business development capacity building, training and knowledge roles of existing entrepreneurship platforms for rural areas that exist in network and advisory organisations, incubators, innovation hubs and training programmes.
- › Improve infrastructure and access to it to support rural innovation knowledge exchange, networking and promotional activities through the role of technology.

## Concluding remarks

The challenges that inhibit rural innovation are evidently interlinked and also connected to the many needs of young entrepreneurs facing these challenges.

Young entrepreneurs above all need support, in different forms and at different stages of development, from ideation to replication and scaling. Indeed, this workshop has clearly highlighted a number of transversal areas where support should be focused and that respond to the critical questions presented in ANNEX 1. These can be summarised as:

- › Increased training, capacity building and knowledge on entrepreneurship aspects including: mentality, business planning, finance, marketing, communication and branding;
- › Improved access to networks (also through stakeholder engagement and participation activities), infrastructure (technology, welfare), strategic partnerships (with public and private sector institutions) and enhanced social capital for social innovation
- › Improved access and awareness of information and knowledge sharing from good practices in the EU, national, local (Local Action Groups and Operational Groups, Horizon and Erasmus+ projects).

Moving forward, it will be crucial to ensure that any support systems and strategies for young entrepreneurs incorporate these transversal topics.





# ANNEX 1

## Responding to critical questions

In line with the methodology proposed, each of the interactive sessions was set up to respond to the four different critical questions. The following table gives the analysis of the results from the previous section regarding how the sessions respond to the critical questions.

Critical question	Interactive session 1	Interactive session 2	Interactive session 3	Interactive session 4
Who is the entrepreneur and what is their motive for change?	<p>Key traits and motives that emerged from an assessment of responses to interactive session one include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; risks associated with changing behaviour;</li> <li>&gt; traditional to innovative mentality;</li> <li>&gt; young people tend to drive innovation more;</li> <li>&gt; self-confidence and being hungry for change;</li> <li>&gt; valorising pride in rural identity.</li> </ul>	Not covered by interactive session two.	<p>The case clinic givers were eleven young rural agricultural entrepreneurs who each had the following motivations for change in common:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; a clear and well-defined problem with the status quo in rural society and life;</li> <li>&gt; belief in their solution to fix their problem;</li> <li>&gt; belief that rural areas are better places to live and should be valorised as such;</li> <li>&gt; empowering young people into rural development processes;</li> <li>&gt; seeking to improve rural life and development.</li> </ul>	Not covered by interactive session four.
What are the crucial challenges facing young innovative entrepreneurs in the rural areas?	<p>An assessment across all groups resulted in the identification of the most important recurrent challenges, summarised below.</p> <p><b>Challenges:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; better access to networking opportunities and partners in industry;</li> <li>&gt; moving away from a traditional mentality to one of collaboration and social innovation;</li> <li>&gt; access to market and infrastructure; social, environmental and economic sustainability;</li> </ul>	Not covered by interactive session two.	<p>The crucial challenges identified in each of the case clinics include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; scaling regenerative agriculture;</li> <li>&gt; increasing the value of products and services;</li> <li>&gt; Improving environmentally friendly agriculture;</li> <li>&gt; sharing solutions in knowledge on sustainable soil management;</li> <li>&gt; sourcing additional finance streams</li> <li>&gt; supporting female entrepreneurs in business development;</li> <li>&gt; identifying and promoting good practices from LAGs; connecting rural and urban areas to create synergies and solutions;</li> </ul>	Not covered by interactive session four.



Critical question	Interactive session 1	Interactive session 2	Interactive session 3	Interactive session 4
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› knowledge, capacity, skills and awareness of solutions and how to apply them.</li> </ul> <p><b>Needs:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Financing;</li> <li>› Communication and branding;</li> <li>› Capacity building and training.</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› empowering young people in rural development processes;</li> <li>› building sustainable business models.</li> </ul>	
<p>What kind of support do young innovative entrepreneurs need to successfully develop their business ideas?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› Financing (public, private and insurance);</li> <li>› Collaborative networks;</li> <li>› Knowledge, capacity building and training on rural innovation and entrepreneurship;</li> <li>› Business and innovation mentoring;</li> <li>› Reliable ICT infrastructure;</li> <li>› Involvement in policy decision-making processes</li> </ul>	<p>Across the six breakout spaces, indications for support were broken down as follows:</p> <p><b>Project development and support:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› promoting and valorising solutions across Local Action Groups;</li> <li>› training programmes from network and advisory organisations, innovation hubs and incubators.</li> <li>› Getting to the market:</li> <li>› communication, storytelling and branding support;</li> <li>› access to regional/local data;</li> <li>› accountancy, law and business planning training.</li> </ul>	<p>Each of the case clinic gives reported the following as the kinds of support needed to develop their ideas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› marketing, communication and brand strategy;</li> <li>› stakeholder engagement, participatory and cooperative methodologies and approaches;</li> <li>› awareness and understanding of available finance;</li> <li>› female entrepreneurship business development training;</li> <li>› networking and access to the partners, information and solutions from EU-funded projects and initiatives;</li> <li>› ICT skills and knowledge.</li> </ul>	<p>The following indications and insights were summarised from interactive session four:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› facilitating the flow and co-creation of knowledge and solutions (thematic networks, AKIS);</li> <li>› valorising bottom-up approaches - considering lessons learnt and collaboration among Local Action Groups and Operational Groups;</li> <li>› engagement and participation of all key stakeholders in agriculture and forestry business development.</li> </ul>



Critical question	Interactive session 1	Interactive session 2	Interactive session 3	Interactive session 4
		<p><b>Staying in the market</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; communication support;</li> <li>&gt; improving knowledge and capacity of diversification (marketing and processes);</li> <li>&gt; better understanding of regulation and policy;</li> <li>&gt; encouraging contracting of primary services;</li> <li>&gt; improving access to infrastructure and technology.</li> </ul> <p><b>Sustainability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; improving knowledge and capacity on sustainability certification.</li> </ul> <p><b>Youth fixation and rural regeneration:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; valorising rural-living benefits</li> <li>&gt; promoting public-private supporting partnerships</li> <li>&gt; Improving supporting infrastructure and services</li> <li>&gt; interregional and cross-national collaboration - sharing best practices</li> </ul> <p><b>Emerging/new knowledge and trends in innovation for rural areas:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; young entrepreneur training and capacity needs.</li> </ul>		





Critical question	Interactive session 1	Interactive session 2	Interactive session 3	Interactive session 4
What kinds of innovative approaches and good practices exist?	Not covered by interactive session one	Not covered by interactive session two.	<p>Each of the case clinic givers presented the following innovative approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; regenerative agriculture;</li> <li>&gt; environmental and policy information and knowledge transfer;</li> <li>&gt; sustainable soil management;</li> <li>&gt; wood fuel products; diversification;</li> <li>&gt; female entrepreneurship training;</li> <li>&gt; empowering LAGs as vehicles of delivering local strategies;</li> <li>&gt; circular value chain creation;</li> <li>&gt; rural-urban stakeholder engagement and participatory approaches;</li> <li>&gt; rural empowerment and regeneration;</li> <li>&gt; sustainable and scalable business modelling.</li> </ul>	<p>While no specific approaches were discussed, ideas centered around:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>&gt; bottom-up approaches and promoting, scaling and replicating solutions from Local Action Groups, Operational Groups and community-led initiatives need to be given more visibility;</li> <li>&gt; welfare - integrating and building solutions that solve problems for different actors within rural communities needs to be given more visibility and funding;</li> <li>&gt; communication is key to reaching target audiences, creating rural product and services stories and also receiving critical feedback on success and benefits of these solutions;</li> <li>&gt; social media has a critical role.</li> </ul>



Innovation & Knowledge Exchange | EIP-AGRI  
Koning Albert II-laan 15, 1210,  
Brussel, België  
+32 (0) 2 548 12 87  
[innovation-knowledge@eucapnetwork.eu](mailto:innovation-knowledge@eucapnetwork.eu)

