



EU CAP Network Brokerage event

Accelerating the innovation process through
Horizon Europe multi-actor projects



Table of contents

1. Executive summary	1
2. Introduction	2
3. Participation	2
4. Event	4
5. Main findings of the evaluation poll	9
6. Conclusions	9
7. Annexes	10

1. Executive summary

This report presents the programme and main results of the EU CAP Network Brokerage event entitled 'Accelerating the innovation process through Horizon Europe multi-actor projects', which took place from **19 to 20 October 2023 in Antwerp (Belgium)**.

This stand-alone brokerage event was designed to bring together key players, researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, advisors, practitioners, in particular farmers and foresters, and other stakeholders from the primary sector and related value chains. This event aimed to create a dynamic platform for networking, matchmaking, collaboration, knowledge exchange, supporting sustainable and competitive farming, forestry and rural areas and to improve awareness of the [Horizon Europe Cluster 6 work programme 2024](#), particularly highlighting opportunities for funding available under calls that implement the multi-actor approach. The overarching goal was to assist future applicants in understanding the multi-actor approach, identifying potential partners for consortia and sharing additional information on the calls and their topics. Ultimately, this initiative aimed to elevate the quality of proposals submitted, thereby fostering innovation and advancement in agriculture, forestry and rural development.

Objectives of the event

The EU CAP Network brokerage event provided participants with the opportunity to:

- › **Network** via a dedicated platform for participants to interact, fostering connections and collaboration among individuals from diverse sectors and backgrounds.
- › **Facilitate the exchange of experiences**, best practices and insights on preparing high-quality project proposals with an effective multi-actor approach through presentations and interactive breakout sessions.
- › **Share project ideas** via a forum (where participants shared project ideas and identified potential partners for project consortia applying to Horizon Europe calls for proposals requiring a multi-actor approach).

This event aimed to offer matchmaking and networking opportunities to all relevant practitioners, including research, innovation actors and National Contact Points for Horizon Europe. The goal was to support the preparation of high-quality proposals responding to Horizon Europe calls.



2. Introduction

The EU CAP Network Brokerage event entitled 'Accelerating the innovation process through Horizon Europe multi-actor projects' was specifically designed for matchmaking and networking among a diverse range of participants, including researchers, innovators, entrepreneurs, advisors, practitioners, farmers, foresters, Horizon National Contact Points (NCPs) and other experts from various agricultural sectors. Its primary aim was to support the preparation of high-quality proposals for the upcoming Horizon Europe Cluster 6 Food, Bioeconomy, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Environment 2024 calls, which require a multi-actor approach in the fields of agriculture, forestry and rural areas.

Key objectives of the event:

- **Networking:** Creating a forum for exchange to foster connections and collaboration among participants from diverse sectors and backgrounds.
- **Exchanging experiences:** Exchanging best practices and insights on preparing high-quality project proposals with an effective multi-actor approach through presentations and interactive breakout sessions.
- **Sharing project ideas:** Providing a platform for participants to share project ideas and identify potential partners for project consortia applying to Horizon Europe calls for proposals requiring a multi-actor approach.

The event featured keynote speakers who provided valuable insights into the concepts of the multi-actor approach and its relevance within the context of Horizon Europe calls. Breakout room sessions focused on the specific topics of the calls, offering participants a deeper understanding of the call texts and relevant insights on the requirements to prepare better proposals for this work programme. Practical examples were discussed to illustrate the concepts and matchmaking together with networking activities were integral components of the event.

The event programme ensured a well-balanced representation of different stakeholders, effectively combining the delivery of necessary information (context, procedures, examples) with interactive matchmaking activities aligning with the events brokerage goal.



3. Participation

Event participants were carefully selected through an open call for expressions of interest launched on 25 July 2023 along with direct invitations to the relevant stakeholders. The call closed on 3 September 2023 with a total of 243 successful applications. A selection process conducted by four members of the Support Facility assessed applications based on agreed-upon selection criteria. Applications submitted after the deadline or from non-EU countries were excluded from the assessment. Gender and geographical balance, as well as applicants' interest in the call topics and their professional backgrounds, are taken into consideration during the selection process. Ultimately, 91 participants attended the event. National Contact Points (NCPs) from Belgium, France, Greece, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Turkey were present, providing comprehensive guidance, practical information and assistance related to Horizon Europe.

To facilitate registration and to help coordinate daily meetings, the participants utilised an online app, which was provided by the Communication Support Facility. The app encouraged pre-event interaction through its chat function and allowed participants to arrange 15-minute one-to-one meetings. Due to technical limitations, these meetings were manually assigned to different tables and larger meetings had to be organised by emailing the Communication Support Facility directly.

During the breakout sessions, flipcharts and post-it notes were used to help participants introduce themselves and express their interests. Breakout rooms were equipped to accommodate two remote speakers, who connected during the breakout sessions. A test meeting conducted in the morning ensured smooth proceedings and seamless remote participation.



Table 1. Attendees based on their professional background (some participants belong to different categories):

Professional background	Participants
Advisor	11
Civil servant	7
Farmer	20
Forester	1
Innovation support	4
IT expert	2
Researcher	20
Rural entrepreneur	6
Other type of profession	2

Table 2. The number of attendees per country and background:

Country	Participants
Belgium	9
Bulgaria	1
Croatia	2
Finland	5
France	3
Germany	2
Greece	10
Hungary	2
Ireland	4
Italy	3
Latvia	1
Netherlands	4
Poland	8
Portugal	1
Romania	3
Slovenia	2
Spain	7
Turkey	2



4. Event

The event was structured around one and a half days, with a networking dinner in between. The agenda included an introduction, an informative session, breakouts, a networking dinner and a matchmaking session. All these activities were designed to foster interactions among participants using different methodologies.

4.1 Welcome and introduction to day 1 - Setting the scene

Speaker: Marta Iglesias / DG AGRI, D.1 Rural areas and networks, European Commission

On the first day – 19 October 2023 at 13.00, Marta Iglesias from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Agriculture and Rural Development (DG AGRI), Unit D.1 Rural Areas and Networks, set the scene and officially welcomed participants to the event. Mrs. Iglesias provided an overview of the EU CAP Network, highlighting how it brings together stakeholders from the former European Network for Rural Development (ENRD), including the Evaluation Helpdesk, and the European Innovation Partnerships for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability (EIP-AGRI) Network along with new stakeholders. She emphasised the pivotal role of practitioners (end-users) in research and innovation activities to achieve quicker and more significant impacts in practice, co-creating the results, implementing them in practice and sharing them in peer-to-peer meetings.

Mrs. Iglesias also informed participants about the upcoming multi-actor approach project database, which will soon be available on the EU CAP Network website. Currently, a static database can be found at: [Multi-actor projects: scientists and farmers creating solutions together | EIP-AGRI \(europa.eu\)](https://europa.eu/eip-agri/multi-actor-projects)



4.2 Speed networking

Following the introduction, an engaging speed networking event was held for the 80 registered participants. This session offered attendees a chance to swiftly connect with potential collaborators who shared similar interests and project calls. The main facilitator, Barry Caslin, introduced the session and outlined the process. Each speed networking round lasted two minutes, with a total of approximately 20 rounds. To ensure smooth transitions, four coordinators managed the movement of participants in rows 1 through 8, rotating after every 10 sessions (25 minutes).



4.3 Multi-actor approach explained

4.3.1 Definition and requirements

Speaker: Natalia Brzezina / DG AGRI, F.2. Research and Innovation, European Commission

Mrs. Brzezina delivered an insightful presentation on the interactive innovation model, emphasising the importance of conducting Research and Innovation (R&I) not only for practitioners, but also with practitioners. She provided an in-depth explanation of the multi-actor approach concept, highlighting seven key requirements. This approach underscores the active involvement of practitioners throughout the project's lifecycle, leading to more efficient and effective research processes. By integrating practitioners' knowledge into the research process, innovative solutions can be co-created, ensuring their relevance and effectiveness for the end-users.



4.3.2 Evaluation of the multi-actor approach in Horizon Europe Cluster 6

Speaker: Astrid Guiffart / European Research Executive Agency (REA), European Commission

In her presentation, Mrs. Guiffart discussed the standard evaluation process, which typically occurs within a maximum of five months from the receipt of proposals. This process is outlined in the Horizon Europe expert briefing, which provides general requirements for proposal evaluation.

Tailored criteria for each action type specified in the Work Programme include excellence, impact, quality and efficiency of the project implementation. The evaluation process emphasises several key aspects, such as completeness, readability and the inclusion of an exploitation and dissemination plan for results, unless exempted by specific call conditions. These requirements ensure that proposals are well prepared and provide a clear plan for using and sharing the project's outcomes.

A minimum of three experts is assigned to evaluate each proposal, although there may be more depending on the complexity and scope of the project. These individual experts review the proposals independently and then convene to reach a collective position. They provide comments and scores for each proposal based on their assessment. The Commission Executive Agency compiles the experts' evaluations and provides the final ranking list.

Mrs Guiffart also presented the LIVESEED project, which was launched in 2017 and which brought together 48 organisations across 18 European countries, including plant researchers, crop breeders, seed producers, organic associations and retailers. This collaboration aimed to enhance organic seed availability and quality. The project engaged over 800 organic farmers, expanding the Organic Farm Knowledge Platform with a dedicated section on plant breeding and seed markets. LIVESEED significantly contributed to transparent organic seed markets and provided recommendations for the EU Organic Regulation.



4.3.3 Tips & Tricks - insights from the LIAISON and PREMIERE projects

Speaker: Lisa van Dijk, / University of Applied Research Eberswalde, Germany

Mrs. van Dijk presented 'Tips & Tricks' from the LIAISON and PREMIERE projects, both of which focus on enhancing innovation and collaboration in agriculture, forestry and rural areas. LIAISON developed tools to evaluate co-innovation impact, emphasising journey mapping and impact stories for effective knowledge dissemination. On the other hand, PREMIERE supports coherent and successful multi-actor projects for addressing complex challenges and offers insights for innovative governance in green policy transition. PREMIERE will provide seed funding to operational groups and prepare a handbook of best practices.

For additional information, visit the LIAISON website www.liaison2020.eu and PREMIERE website www.premiere-multiactor.eu



4.3.4 Sharing results through EU-wide knowledge reservoir - EU-FarmBook: Maximising Impact through Knowledge Exchange (2022-2029)

Speaker: Mark Redman / Highclere Consulting, Romania

Mr. Redman presented the EU-FarmBook project, which aims to develop and maintain a digital platform for agriculture and forestry practitioners. The primary objective of the project is to create an easily accessible and user-friendly platform that disseminates practical outcomes from multi-actor projects. It also focuses on expediting the application of these outcomes and embedding them within the knowledge networks of end-users.

One of the key components of the EU-FarmBook project is the integration of artificial intelligence into a chatbot called FarmBuddy. This chatbot will enable natural language-based interactions with users and provide them with basic farm-related information and solutions. The goal is to foster remote engagement in the agriculture environment, allowing practitioners to access relevant information and assistance anytime, anywhere.



The EU-FarmBook platform features are: free maintenance hosting and open access; a dedicated domain; platform funded, endorsed and (eventually) owned by the EC; project visibility and findability; a Contact Centre (for user interaction). The platform also offers a simple upload process for practice-oriented materials and respect for authors' rights via licensing.

For additional information, visit the EU-FarmBook project website www.welcome.eufarmbook.eu.

4.4 Multi-actor approach in Practice

Participants at the brokerage event entitled 'Horizon Europe multi-actor projects' met 4 multi-actor projects in practice.

4.4.1 Agroecology - TRANSECT

Speaker: Walter Rossing / Wageningen University & Research, The Netherlands

Mr. Rossing presented the Agroecology-TRANSECT project, a Horizon Europe funded initiative focusing on agroecological approaches for climate change mitigation, resilient agricultural production and enhanced biodiversity. The project is scheduled to run from September 2022 to August 2026, with €6.4 million of EC funding. Its primary objective is to unlock the potential of agroecology for European agriculture.

To achieve this, the project aims to strengthen the knowledge base for farmers, advisors and decision-makers by providing evidence of the benefits of agroecology on climate change, biodiversity and socio-economic resilience. The Agroecology-TRANSECT project seeks to contribute to a more sustainable and resilient European agriculture system.

Mr. Rossing presented an approach called 'co-innovation dynamics', which focuses on collaboration between researchers and stakeholders from various disciplines. This approach aims to promote agroecological transition through collaboration in 11 multi-actor Innovation hubs. These hubs facilitate the exchange of experiences, identification of enablers and barriers and discovery of optimal practices for agroecology.

For additional information, visit the EU-FarmBook project website: www.agroecology-transect.net.



4.4.2 SHERPA and GRANULAR Leveraging Existing Knowledge and Networks

Speaker: Giulia Martino / Ecorys, Belgium

Mrs. Martino's presentation focused on Accelerating the Innovation Process through a multi-actor approach (MAA) as implemented in SHERPA and GRANULAR Horizon 2020 projects.

This approach accelerates the innovation process by leveraging existing knowledge and networks. By building on past successes and collaborations, the MAA aims to drive innovation more effectively. This method recognises the value of experience and previous achievements in fostering new ideas and developments. Additionally, the MAA encourages the sharing of resources and information among various stakeholders, which can lead to a more efficient and effective innovation process.

The SHERPA project aims to gather knowledge contributing to future policy recommendations for EU rural areas. It creates a science-society-policy interface, serving as a hub for knowledge and policy formulation. On the other hand, the GRANULAR project identifies, develops and provides novel data and reusable tools to understand the characteristics, dynamics and drivers of rural areas. Its objective is to support evidence-based policy-making.

Mrs. Martino's presentation focused on the advantages of MAA in rural policy-making, emphasising the importance of transparency and inclusivity.

For additional information, visit the SHERPA project website: www.rural-interfaces.eu and the GRANULAR website: www.ruralgranular.eu.



4.4.3 MOVING

Speaker: Maria del Mar Delgado-Serrano / University of Cordoba, Spain

Mrs. Delgado-Serrano presented an overview of the MOVING project (MOuntain Valorisation through INterconnectedness and Green growth). The primary objective of this project is to develop capacities and foster collaboration among stakeholders, to support policy design and to build climate resilience in mountain regions across Europe. The project aims to establish value chains that enhance the resilience and sustainability of mountain areas in response to climate change.

By focusing on these key objectives, the MOVING project strives to enhance the sustainability and resilience of mountain value chains in the face of climate change. The multi-actor approach (MAA) in the

MOVING project is understood as collaborative co-creation and sharing of knowledge among diverse actors with complementary expertise.

For additional information, visit the project website:

www.moving-h2020.eu.



4.5 Breakout sessions: Exploring Horizon Europe call opportunities: building consortia for proposal success

This session featured two rounds of topics, with both remote and in-person speakers. Participants gained insights into Horizon Europe calls across various agricultural domains through presentations from experts in the field.

4.5.1 ROUND I.

Introductory Presentations: DG AGRI F.2 Research and Innovation, European Commission.

- > **Biodiversity-rich Farming Systems**

Speaker: Gisela Quaglia

- > **Organic Farming**

Speaker: Susana Gaona-Saez

- > **Forestry**

Speaker: Michael Wolf

- > **Livestock Systems**

Speaker: Valerio Abbadessa

4.5.2 ROUND II.

Introductory Presentations: DG AGRI F.2 Research and Innovation, European Commission.

- > **Plant Health**

Speaker: Gisela Quaglia

- > **Climate Action**

Speaker: Matthias-Leonhard Maier

- > **Rural Communities**

Speaker: Arianna Pasa

- > **Digital & Data Technologies: Robotics & Augmented Reality**

Speaker: Valerio Abbadessa

During both rounds, a table was designated for consultations on 'Bottom-up Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)' facilitated by Natalia Brzezina. These sessions continued exploring

Horizon Europe call opportunities and provided valuable insights into project possibilities within the thematic areas discussed.

Following the project officer's presentations, participants were divided into smaller subgroups based on their interests in specific project calls. Each subgroup consisted of six to eight chairs arranged in a circle, with seating allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to secure a spot for a particular topic. This approach allowed for a more focused and personalised discussion among the participants.

Each subgroup had flipcharts displaying the title of the topic and the expected outcomes. A total of 12 flipcharts were developed to accommodate the participants' interests. Within these smaller subgroups, each participant had the opportunity to write their name, email address, organisation, and express their interest in joining one or more consortium groups.

The purpose of these flipcharts was to facilitate communication and collaboration among participants. They provided a structured platform for groups to present their ideas, experiences, and preferences. This organised approach helped participants understand each other's backgrounds and expertise, enabling the formation of consortium groups based on common interests and goals.





4.6 Matchmaking, consulting and working together

The morning of the second day of the event was dedicated to fostering interaction among participants. It started at 9:00 with an opening session. This session included matchmaking sessions, personal meetings, consultations with National Contact Points (NCPs) and AKIS projects, all coordinated by the main facilitator to ensure timely sessions. One-on-one consultations with NCPs and AKIS were facilitated throughout the morning.

This goal of the brokerage event was to encourage interaction through various activities and environments, promote knowledge sharing and the establishment of collaborations among participants, fostering an environment conducive to building successful partnerships for future projects or initiatives.

Several activities were organised to promote interaction among participants:

1. **Topic-based Clustering:** Participants were grouped into breakout rooms based on their chosen topics during the application process.
2. **App Engagement:** Prior to the event, participants could utilise an app to connect with potential partners. Profiles with photos, CVs and a chat system facilitated interactions.
3. **Scheduled One-on-One Meetings:** Over 120 individual meetings were arranged beforehand.
4. **Plenary Engagement:** Activities like speed networking and breakout sessions encouraged interaction. Speed networking encouraged participants to engage with neighbours and express interests related to calls.
5. **Matchmaking Event:** Pre-arranged meetings and spontaneous meet-ups during the event further promoted interaction.
6. **Designated Rooms for Large Group Discussions:** Specific rooms were designated to accommodate larger group discussions.

7. **Project Ideas and Partner Collaborations:** Participants were encouraged to pitch project ideas or seek potential partners interested in similar project domains.
8. **Speed Networking Activities:** Short, timed sessions where participants interact in a structured format to exchange ideas and explore potential collaborations quickly.
9. **Project Consortium Meetings:** Dedicated sessions where potential consortium members gathered to discuss project frameworks, objectives and potential contributions.
10. **Consultations with National Contact Points (NCPs):** Participants had opportunities to seek advice, guidance and clarification regarding EU funding and Horizon programmes from NCPs.
11. **Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) Consultations:** Dedicated sessions to engage with AKIS representatives to understand local agricultural practices, innovations and potential collaborations.
12. **One-on-One Personal Meetings:** Pre-arranged individual meetings allowing participants to have in-depth discussions, exchange ideas and explore potential collaborations in a private setting.



5. Main findings of the evaluation poll

This evaluation poll conducted at the end of the event, just before the closing remarks by Mrs. Marta Iglesias, revealed several key findings.

Satisfaction with format and organisation: The majority of respondents (94.4%) expressed satisfaction with the format and organisation of the event. This indicates that participants found the event well-structured and effectively managed.

Interest in agenda topics: Overall, participants considered all parts of the agenda to be interesting to very interesting. This suggests that the topics covered during the event were engaging and relevant to the participants' interests and objectives.



The presentations by DG AGRI during breakout sessions and speed networking were highly valued by participants. During the one-to-one meetings, the majority of the participants discovered projects/ideas that they found interesting and potentially relevant to their participation. This suggests that the matchmaking and networking activities were effective in connecting participants with opportunities aligned with their interests. Additionally, participants confirmed that they had ample opportunities to discuss ideas with other participants about future consortia, indicating that the event facilitated meaningful discussions and collaborations among attendees.

Furthermore, the majority of participants expressed their intention to follow up with contacts for future consortia, with an average of five intended contacts per participant. This demonstrates a high level of interest and commitment to pursuing potential collaborations and partnerships identified during the event.

These findings underscore the success of the event in fostering networking, collaboration and the exploration of future project opportunities among participants.

6. Conclusions

The brokerage event served as an effective platform for networking, matchmaking and knowledge exchange among participants from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations. It provided valuable insights into Horizon Europe calls and facilitated discussions on potential project collaborations.

The high level of satisfaction expressed by participants, as indicated by the evaluation poll, underscores the success of the event in meeting their expectations and objectives. The demand for such brokerage events was evident, suggesting the need for continued efforts in organising similar initiatives to support the preparation of high-quality project proposals.

Moving forward, it is essential to build on the momentum generated by this event and continue to facilitate opportunities for collaboration and knowledge sharing within the Horizon Europe framework. By doing so, the EU CAP Network can further contribute to advancing innovation, sustainability and competitiveness in agriculture, forestry and rural areas across Europe.

Considering the feedback received, the event proved very useful for matchmaking. However, for upcoming events, other techniques that seek to facilitate participant interaction could be explored.

The high number of applications proved the need for this kind of activity, thus making this a very desirable tool to support participation in other Horizon Europe calls in the future.

[All presentations and brokerage event results are available on the event page on the EU CAP Network website.](#)



7. Annexes

Annex 1. EIP-AGRI SF and DG AGRI organisational team staff (on-site) comprised:

- › Main facilitator: Barry Caslin
- › Supporting facilitators: Remco Schreuder, Martin Jamrich, Antanas Maziliauskas, Szabolcs Vágó
- › Communication officer: Ina Van Hoya
- › DG AGRI representatives at the event: Marta Iglesias, Aniko Seregely, Natalia Brzezina
- › Task manager: Tajana Radić
- › EIP-AGRI Team leader: Pacôme Elouna Eyenga

Annex 2. National Contact Points (NCPs) present at the event providing guidance, practical information and assistance on all aspects of participation in Horizon Europe:

- › NCP Belgium: Ria De Breucker
- › NCP France: Antoine Kieffer
- › NCP Greece: Evopri-Sofia Dalampira
- › NCP the Netherlands: Suraj Jamge
- › NCP Poland: Bozena Podlaska
- › NCP Portugal: Maria Joao Fernandes
- › NCP Spain: Marta Conde
- › NCP Turkey: Merve Polat



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