



Fostering an effective and integrated AKIS in Member States

EU CAP Network
Seminar



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1. Summary

In June 2023, the EU CAP Network, with the support of the Support Facility on Innovation and Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI, organised a seminar dedicated to fostering an effective and integrated Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) in Member States.



Over the last decade, the importance of agricultural knowledge and innovation exchange has become stronger. The cooperation between researchers, advisors, farmers, and other types of actors, as well as the exchange of agricultural knowledge and the need for innovative solutions, are gaining momentum. Bridging the CAP and Horizon Europe to bring together the knowledge generated within these two policies will need further support and facilitation.

Objectives of the seminar

The overall aim of this seminar was to support MSs in the implementation of their AKIS Strategic Plans, namely by promoting efficient knowledge and innovation flows across the EU. It focused on exchanging experiences and inspiring examples, as well as sharing MSs' plans for organising and supporting effective knowledge creation and exchange between the different AKIS actors. As such, it provided opportunities to share and discuss:

- The various approaches of different AKIS Coordination Bodies to supporting a well-functioning AKIS, and;
- The different roles of advisors, including their role as innovation support providers, and how they can best be integrated into AKIS, learning from existing experience of the implementation of related CAP interventions.



As emphasised in the [EU Communication on the Future of Food and Farming](#), access to reliable, relevant, and new knowledge varies widely across the EU, reducing the overall competitiveness and development potential of the agricultural and forestry sectors and rural areas. Therefore, the exchange of knowledge and focus on innovation is a cross-cutting objective for the new CAP: a well-functioning AKIS will contribute to all the objectives of the CAP, and ensure a strong flow of knowledge among its actors, creating significant added value for the sector.

The new CAP allows Member States (MSs) to provide funding for knowledge exchange and information sharing. MSs are currently starting to implement their CAP Strategic Plans, which entered into force at the beginning of 2023. This includes organising the relevant stakeholders, putting the necessary platforms, tools and instruments in place, and planning concrete activities.

During this seminar, participants were able to learn and exchange experiences on many of these areas, with a focus on:

- The role, function and tools used by AKIS Coordination Bodies, and;
- The new advisory approach including integrating advisors into AKIS.



Participants

The event took place in **Vilnius on 14 and 15 June 2023**. With a total of 120 participants, all EU MSs were represented by AKIS coordination bodies and the various AKIS actors. There was a strong representation from both national and regional Managing Authorities, advisors and advisory networks, National Rural Networks and national CAP Networks, and innovation projects, alongside the European Commission, DG AGRI and the EU CAP Network – Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge exchange | EIP-AGRI staff.



The process

Taking into consideration the early stages of AKIS implementation in MSs, it was important to provide many different inspirational examples to provoke discussion and ignite ideas. Space was also needed for different voices to share their approach, the challenges they faced, and any solutions they had or were developing.

To enable this mix of inspiration and in-depth conversations, day one focused on the exploration of AKIS models in practice, including

how AKIS is being coordinated, the involvement and roles of the various actors, and the strategic interventions being developed. Day two then considered the role of advisors in AKIS, particularly as innovation support providers, and how they were being integrated into AKIS in different MSs.

2. Welcome and setting the scene

Welcome by DG AGRI and introduction to the policy context

Wolfgang Bartscher, Director General of DG AGRI, provided a recorded message to open the session, sharing his aspirations for AKIS and the seminar. He welcomed everyone, emphasising the importance of knowledge and innovation in the future of agriculture and the vitality of rural areas. He highlighted the need to strengthen the connections between all actors in AKIS systems to make the most of the opportunities presented in the CAP Strategic Plans. Common understanding and cooperation between all the Member States was vital to implementing successful AKIS, but he reaffirmed that there was already much experience in innovative and collaborative working to draw upon. He was delighted by the growth in Operational Groups covering all nine CAP objectives, and the work through Horizon bringing actors from different Member States together. He finished by reminding all the participants that the job is only done if research and innovation is in the hands of farmers.



Rimtautas Petraitis, Deputy Director of the Lithuanian Agriculture Advisory Service Centre, provided a local welcome on behalf of the Lithuanian AKIS cluster. He spoke of the main objectives and partners of the Lithuanian AKIS cluster, and gave an overview of the activities of past, current activities and future plans. The Cluster Board, Strategy and Working groups had been established, and were communicating with cluster members and other partners. The cluster had delivered several events as part of this, including fairs, conferences, and knowledge exchange opportunities. It was hoped that the cluster will help AKIS to become more effective, taking a proactive rather than reactive approach. The innovation support system will aid cooperation through the provision of innovation support services, such as an advisor's support centre, a backup

office etc. Although organisations can feel competitive, by working together they create 'cooperative competition', which enables sharing of infrastructure, innovation development and knowledge. As cooperation can happen across the sector, the AKIS cluster was open to everyone with the same goals and values.

Inge Van Oost, Policy officer, DG AGRI, European Commission, explained the purpose and approach to implementing AKIS in CAP strategic plans. She shared what an AKIS is, and how it should create a regional or national innovation ecosystem by enhancing knowledge flows between the AKIS players, as well as strengthening links between research and practice. She talked about the basis of the policy, and what it should be endeavouring to achieve as the connector between all the AKIS stakeholders and influencers - the spider in the middle of the web.



Natalia Brzezina, Research and Innovation Unit of DG AGRI, European Commission, shared the AKIS and Horizon work programmes. She focused on the change from a linear model of innovation to an interactive model, and the developments in the multi-actor approach to innovation and peer-to-peer learning. She shared a range of practical approaches to advancing knowledge reservoirs and networks, and talked about the upcoming funding opportunities through the Horizon programme.



3. Examples of AKIS coordination models in Member States

After spending some time getting to know each other and reflecting on what participants wanted to draw from the seminar, **Elena-Teodora Miron, from the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture**, presented the Horizon Europe project 'modernAKIS'. She talked through a selection of the needs identified by AKIS Coordinating bodies, and shared the different models identified involving Managing Authorities, public advisory bodies, research organisations and the CAP networks. Elena-Teodora then illustrated these models with examples from Bulgaria, Finland, and Austria, before sharing the project's next steps in data collection and facilitation.



Four presenters then shared their inspirational approaches to implementing AKIS:

› **Helena Pärenson, Managing Authority of Estonia:** The AKIS Centre functions at the national level, and focuses on a one-door principle, taking responsibility for coordinating the advisory services, knowledge exchange and innovation support. The knowledge exchange activities have become more diverse, including advisor shadowing, mixed study group trips, and AKIS vouchers, sitting alongside a knowledge reservoir. Coordination of advisory services has also created more diversity in the services offered, increased collaboration and integration between AKIS stakeholders, and training for existing advisors and incentives for new advisors to join.

› **Petra Hanulikova, Managing Authority of Slovak Republic:** The process of establishing AKIS began with a SWOT analysis which ensured the right structure was then developed. Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Institutes were established at national and regional levels as one-stop shops that are responsible for creating links between AKIS actors, organising events and conferences, developing cooperation, and sharing knowledge.



> **Ewa Grodzka, AKIS Coordination Body of Poland:** The AKIS coordinating body is MARD, the Department for Innovation, Digital Affairs and Knowledge Transfer. It supervises the Agricultural Advisory Centre and 16 regional advisory centres, 12 research institutes and 61 agricultural schools. Relevant thematic networks are run by the National Rural Network, and further groups can be added. MARD hosts regular meetings, disseminates information, promotes new advisory approaches and is developing a cooperation platform.



> **Maite Ambrós Mendioroz, Managing Authority of Spain:** The proposed AKIS coordination body will be led by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, together with the Ministry of Science and Innovation, and will also have the private sector at its core. It will focus on engaging providers of advisory services, and will include three working groups - advisory services, R & D, and training. All this is happening at a time when Spain is strengthening the coordination of innovation systems generally, including disbanding bodies that are not working effectively. A digital platform is being developed which will hold relevant information, provide a collaborative networking environment, and deliver specific support services for advisors.



4. AKIS coordination in practice

Interactive session 1: AKIS coordination in Member States

Inge Van Oost framed the session with an overview of the responsibilities of the AKIS coordinating body as the main contact point with the Commission and the coordinating body for the organisation of AKIS, including advice and the advisors who provide it. She explored several practical examples, such as knowledge voucher systems and establishing knowledge reservoirs, and talked of how AKIS can simplify administration for Operational Groups, for instance with the help of innovation support services.

Mark Gibson provided an overview of the contributions made by participants prior to the seminar. Participants then split into eight pre-allocated groups to ensure a good mix of different approaches, and together explored:

1. Who is the official AKIS Coordination Body in your country?
2. Who else is involved?
3. How do they work together?
4. How do they provide input to the Coordinating Body?
5. How are existing structures and networks that already exist integrated into AKIS?

The vast majority of AKIS coordinating bodies are in Managing Authorities, with many still developing their coordination and integration of AKIS implementation. In some MSs coordination is split across different Ministries or regions, and in some cases regions are establishing autonomous AKIS structures under the Ministry's supervision. The coordination of AKIS is also involving the National

Rural Networks, CAP networks, and sometimes even partnerships with universities, research institutes, and the private or civil society sectors. Some countries are exploring the use of digital platforms, annual or bi-annual seminars and regular workshops, thematic activities, and AKIS assemblies. All these facilitate networking and interaction among stakeholders.

Some MSs are developing structures that include AKIS clusters that have a particular focus on a specific theme, such as biodiversity. Many have or are planning on developing digital platforms, however, they recognise that their success relies on farmers and advisors finding the content attractive and using them regularly, possibly with feedback mechanisms. Mobile apps are also being considered as a way of providing farmers and advisors with useful information away from their offices. Regular training for advisors, including on the outcomes of Operational Group projects, was seen as essential to support AKIS implementation. There was also much discussion on starting AKIS interaction by focusing on fewer issues and supporting the sector to build business skills. The full outputs of the interactive session are available in [Annex 1](#).





Interactive session 2: The involvement, roles and interactions of key actors to ensure a well-functioning AKIS

Inge Van Oost framed both this and the following interactive session, providing detailed information on the practical activities of the AKIS Coordinating body and how other actors are involved within this. Individual CAP networks have a role in capturing and disseminating learnings from the Operational Groups and Horizon Europe projects, using this to foster further innovation and to make connections within their own countries and across MSs. Researchers need to be more involved in AKIS, shifting to a greater emphasis on publishing with a focus on practice. This can allow research to achieve a real impact on practice. There will be more and increasingly diverse calls for new Operational Groups, adding to the body of practical knowledge that can be shared. Advisors also have a key role in disseminating this practical knowledge and learning to farmers, therefore the delivery of effective training and support to them is crucial. Inge then shared more tools which enable AKIS Coordination bodies to deliver, including shared back-office functions and co-location of researchers, advisors and knowledge networks.

Mark Gibson provided an overview of the discussion and interactive contributions made by participants prior to the seminar. The breakout spaces then focused on four key actors and how they are integrated into AKIS. Participants moved through the spaces in four rounds, building on other participants' contributions throughout the session:

- > **Advisors:** How are advisors already integrated into structures and knowledge flows of AKIS? How could this be further improved?
- > **CAP Networks:** What is the role of the national CAP Network in supporting AKIS knowledge flows in your country? What could be improved?
- > **Researchers:** How are researchers integrated in AKIS knowledge flows? How can they be integrated more effectively?
- > **Other actors:** Who are other relevant AKIS actors besides the ones included above? How can they be included?

Some Member States have encountered **difficulties when trying to connect farmers, advisory services, researchers and innovation**. Many have developed, or are developing, digital platforms to facilitate these connections, but recognise that, for some farmers, the digital nature of the platform can be an obstacle, and are therefore working with advisors to provide digital training. Researchers often

lead innovative projects, but this can lead to challenges in engaging other actors, and they can lack expertise in delivering the type of events or activities that support the effective dissemination of their work to farmers.

All countries are developing or **building on existing initiatives** that improve collaboration between researchers, advisors, and farmers. Examples include information sharing, networking sessions, and the creation of knowledge reservoirs at national levels. A range of dissemination initiatives such as websites, events, training courses, agricultural magazines, meetings, conferences, field days, webinars, and publications are used to share project results and promote interaction between actors.



There are **fewer examples of structured collaboration between advisors and researchers**, with existing relationships often associated with specific project work, demonstration farms, and training courses. Some countries have introduced measures such as funding programs and innovation platforms to encourage joint work between advisors, researchers, and farmers. Digital platforms and discussion groups are also being established to facilitate knowledge sharing and debate.

So far, there are few specific programs or incentives to support knowledge exchange, but partnerships between knowledge hubs and universities are starting up, helping to facilitate collaboration. Researchers and advisors also collaborate in Operational Groups, meet each other when participating in demonstration events, and contribute as lecturers during training sessions and field days. The outputs of the interactive session are available in [Annex 2](#).





Interactive session 3: The interlinkages between AKIS interventions

Participants then split into eight pre-allocated groups to ensure a good mix of different approaches, and shared the AKIS-related interventions which are planned in their countries. Some Member States shared all their related interventions, other participants only mentioned those that they considered new or different to their traditional approaches.

There are **many existing measures that have proved successful** that are being developed and continued during this period. Many of these are included in most Member States' AKIS interventions. These include:

- Advisory services that are related to EIP Operational Groups provide knowledge needs from farmers which become priority topics for Operational Groups, whilst results from Operational Groups provide additional knowledge to advisors in a continuous knowledge transfer system;
- Vocational training for farmers and discussion groups using modern teaching methods;
- Training for advisors and support for advisory services, and;
- Demonstration farms, field visits and pilot laboratories.

More novel approaches, such as genuine back-offices and innovation support services preparing individual projects, are still underused.

In many cases it was highlighted that there is a lack of communication of Operational Group results to advisors, and an overall under-representation of advisors in these Groups. **Better integration of advisors could also create better interlinkages between different measures, including training and Operational Groups, but also Groups and advisory services.**

There was also a shared understanding of the **need to better follow up on Operational Groups to understand the process** of collaboration as well as the results; this would require going beyond dissemination and assessing the transfer readiness level of the results, thus ensuring they can be usefully implemented by the broader sector community.

Other **improvements suggested by several MSs** included:

- Using farmers as trainers;
- Broadening training opportunities for advisors;
- Having a system for advisors' registration to ensure quality standards which still guarantee inclusivity for all private and public advisors;
- Drawing links between the compulsory training systems for professionals and AKIS activities;
- Using Operational Groups to build a knowledge reservoir or resource for advisors;
- Using Operational Groups to test eco-scheme-related challenges;
- Creating innovative knowledge flows that observe and gather quantitative and qualitative information and disseminate this through agri journalists, and;
- Broadening the scope of advisors' training, for example by including networking activities and brokerage with researchers.

The outputs of the interactive session are available in [Annex 3](#).



Feedback session

The day ended with participants sharing their one key learning in pairs, in fours and then in eights. Several groups then fed back the key learning they had shared with the rest of the group. Participants then enjoyed a guided tour of Vilnius Old Town, followed by a networking dinner at Vilnius Town Hall.



5. Setting the scene for day 2

Inge Van Oost opened the day by sharing information on the new roles of advisors within the AKIS. She started by reasserting the task of the AKIS Coordinating Body to organise both advisors and the advice they are providing. She emphasised that advice should be developed to cover the new forms of expertise required across economic, environmental and social dimensions. She also repeated that, following the new CAP rules, all impartial advisors both private and public can participate, and that these advisors should receive training.



Advisors need to become more competent, and the administrative system that supports them should be simplified. Advisors will also be needed as partners in the increased number of Operational Groups that are planned throughout this period. Support for advisors includes: advisors providing individual, innovation support services;

capturing individual grassroots innovative ideas and refining them; connecting relevant partners with useful expertise for the objective of the project; preparing a project proposal that all actors want to engage with, and drafting a cooperation agreement; and final project proposal. A back-office or specialist hub for advisors will help them to find the necessary information and enable them to spend more time with farmers.

Natalia Brzezina from DG AGRI then shared how advisors could benefit from existing Horizon projects. **i2Connect** is a network project connecting advisors to boost interactive innovation in agriculture and forestry, aiming to fuel advisors' expertise for interactive innovation processes. **ATTRACTISS** (Activate and TRigger ACTors) is working to deepen the function of Innovation Support Services. This project aims to specifically improve Innovation Support Services as a key AKIS intervention, and provide instruments, approaches and tools to do so. **COREnet** and **EU4Advice** are multi-actor projects connecting advisors across all EU Member States in an EU network with a view to sharing and spreading experiences on advising for short food supply chains.



6. The role of advisors as integrated in the AKIS

Four presenters then shared their inspiring examples on the roles and tools they are using to support advisors in their Member States' AKIS:

- › **Jan van Esch, AKIS Coordination Body, the Netherlands.** Jan shared their approach to supporting advisors within a fragmented system. In the Netherlands all advisors are private advisors, and, over the last twenty years, the Ministry has left advisory services to the market. Now they are working to get advisors better connected to the AKIS. The Minister of Agriculture gave a mandate to VAB, an association of advisors, to organise the registration of advisors, highlighting their areas of expertise. This will ensure that advice is independent, and will enable the Ministry to communicate with all those registered. When applying for a voucher for independent advice, the farmer can only choose an advisor from this advisory register. To be registered, advisors have to demonstrate their competencies, and continually develop them by collecting skill points every year by attending training sessions and meetings. The Ministry is now connecting all AKIS actors to ensure effective knowledge flows.



> **Els Lepage, AKIS Coordination Body and Managing Authority, Flanders, Belgium.** Els explained how their knowledge e-wallet voucher system for training and advice works. Farmers can get vouchers through a website, and have a fixed budget they can spend on training and advice. The vouchers are used for purchasing advice or training from registered advisors and trainers. Farmers can choose whatever best supports their needs, and the provider they want to use. There is a selection process for registered advisors, who have to be impartial. This ensures that support is tailored to the farm, and that suppliers are providing the services farmers want.



> **Florian Herzog, Advisory services coordination, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture.** Florian shared the new role of advisors in AKIS, with advisory services positioned as an innovation driver and hub. Knowledge transfer will bridge research and practice through comprehensive advisory services, strong practitioner networks, and communication channels which really reach the end user. It is mandatory for advisors to participate in Operational Group projects. This fosters increased cooperation and networking between researchers and advisors beyond their respective projects. The National CAP network will help integrate advisors by carrying out a capacity needs assessment for advisors; setting up an AKIS Community of Practice (with advisors as key members); national focus groups and idea labs on diverse topics following the multi-actor-approach, which will also include advisors. There will also be an annual training programme developed for advisors, based on actual knowledge needs.



> **Carola Ketelhodt, Innovation Support Service, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany.** The regional Chamber of Agriculture is the project delivery agency for the Innovation Office EIP Agrar SH, and is the most frequent participant in EIP projects. It illustrates the principles of AKIS, and what an innovation support service should look like. Advisors help to find and communicate grassroots innovative ideas, become a partner for project actors, bridge the gap between researchers and practitioners, and develop and moderate Operational Group projects. This Innovation Support Service kicked off in 2013. It has already strengthened relationships across the sector in the region, enabled access to expert knowledge, and encouraged new ideas to emerge.



> **Patrizia Proietti, Horizon Europe project 'ATTRACTISS'.** There is insufficient understanding of what Innovation Support Services are, who is involved and how they link with other actors in the sector. ATTRACTISS is seeking to change that. Innovation support services require bringing new actors in to drive the innovation process. Services needed along the innovation process might require different actors to be involved in different phases. Developing an innovation hub is being explored as one solution, as well as the provision of back-office services. ATTRACTISS will help Innovation Support Services by providing capacity, tools, and practical showcases for organising these services, processes for structuring knowledge exchange, and supporting better uptake of innovative ideas.



Interactive session 4: Sharing approaches and practices, learning from concrete examples

Participants then split into eight pre-allocated groups to ensure a good mix of different approaches, and shared their own concrete examples of integrating advisors into their AKIS. They gave examples that answered these questions:

1. Are there Innovation Support Services in your country? If so, how are they organised?
2. Are there any back offices for advisors in your country? If so, how are they organised?
3. How can farmers, foresters, and other rural actors find AKIS advisors?
4. How do you organise training for advisors?



The conversations highlighted that **Member States have very different understandings of Innovation Support Services, and these do not always conform with the CAP regulation.** In most examples, Innovation support services are not centrally organised. Currently many countries only have an informal service(s) which consists of private providers or institutes who have built good connections with advisors and farmers.

In some countries, there are different web-based databases which may help to find advisors. Participants also discussed what happens when new topics, new innovations, and cross-sector questions surface, as it can then be more difficult to find specific advisors or to verify if they are trustworthy. Here existing advisors can act as brokers to bring in other experts from other fields to give advice on new or specific topics.

In several countries, there is a mix of state-funded and private advisory services available to farmers, with varying levels of contact and accessibility. Public advisory services are often organised within agricultural chambers or other public entities, and are well known by farmers. Some private advisors are hardly known, and work only with their trusted clients. However, these private advisors have a substantial impact on farmers' decisions, as in practice they often serve the bigger farms. Professional associations and organisations currently play a significant role in supporting and coordinating advisory services, and there is a diverse range of consultants and experts involved in providing agricultural advice.

Overall, **the need for developing transparent lists of advisors and trustworthy connections was seen as vital. To cover the full picture of advisory services and provide them with up-to-date knowledge on all sustainability fields, it is important to include both public and private advisors**, who all have substantial impact but often serve different kinds of clients.



Various services and organisations provide educational events for agricultural advisors, which can be checked and approved, and so count **towards the learning credits that advisors in some countries require to remain registered.** In many cases, the Chambers of Agriculture provide training for advisors. There are also many Ministries that organise conferences or events to enable knowledge exchange between actors. Training activities are overseen by relevant authorities, such as the Department of Agriculture, and typically include both general knowledge and specialised skills. The training programs vary in duration, format, and topics covered, and can be provided through national training catalogues, external bodies, public structures, and professional associations. Efforts are being made in some countries to identify and meet the specific training needs of advisors, including in innovation and digitalisation. The results of these interactive sessions are available in [Annex 4](#).

Reporting back from the seminar

Participants came together to share their learning from the seminar. In groups of seven to ten they first shared what had happened during the seminar; the conversation was then extended to explore what was useful or important to them in developing their countries' AKISs, and finally to commit to what they were going to do when they returned to their organisations in response to the seminar. **Hugo Almeida, Deputy Head of unit D1 'Rural Areas and Networks', DG AGRI, European Commission**, then shared his reflections and provided closing remarks for the two days.



Annex 1*:

Interactive session 1 - section 1

Country	Who is the AKIS coordinating body in your country?	Who else is involved?	How do they work together?
Austria	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management		
Bulgaria	Ministry of Agriculture, Rural Development Directorate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Advisory services in all regions > Mobile advisory offices in regions > Agricultural academy with 27 institutes 	
Croatia	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management		
Cyprus	Department of Agriculture		
Czech Republic	Ministry of Agriculture Dept. of Research, Knowledge and Advisory Services		
Denmark	Danish Agricultural Agency		
Estonia	Ministry of Rural Affairs, in a new Dept. of Research and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > The AKIS Centre 	
Finland	AGRIHUBI, working under the Natural Resources Institute of Finland, and supervised by the Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Virtual hub > Universities > Advisors and advisory services > Farmers Union and producer organisations > Education and training providers 	<p>Steering group consisting of Managing Authority (MA), Paying Agency (PA), National Network (NN).</p> <p>Different task forces have been established.</p>
Flanders	Ministry of Agriculture		
Germany	Ministry of Food and Agriculture (and 16 regional structures, one in each Bundesland)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > CAP network > Regional Authorities > More involved with monitoring 	<p>Working groups involving different actors.</p> <p>Meetings with the MA.</p> <p>Exploring different activities and synergies.</p>
Greece	RDP implementing authority within the Managing Authority, part of the Ministry of Agriculture		

* Please be aware that this information is a snapshot of the current situation, may not be fully inclusive, and will evolve over time.



Hungary	The Department of Agricultural Modernisation of the Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › A Community of Practice including young farmers, advisors and researchers › Informal networks through the Chamber of Agriculture › National AKIS committee including the Ministry, farmers associations, cooperatives, Directorate of Research and Innovation within the Ministry, and the national network 	
Ireland	Ministry of Agriculture		
Italy	Ministry of Agriculture and a network of regional coordinators connected to the existing Regional Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Involve all at a regional level to ensure the differences are recognised › Assembly of Regional AKIS Networks › Research centres › Farmer unions › Registered consultants 	<p>The roles of AKIS CB and NN remain undecided so far.</p> <p>The aim is to have different networks working together and greater involvement of farmers.</p> <p>Stakeholder meetings currently focused on funding allocation.</p>
Latvia	Ministry of Agriculture, Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › CAP Network › Advisory Services 	Monitoring Committee.
Lithuania	Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Advisory services › Media › Universities 	Meetings every quarter.
Luxembourg	Ministry of Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Technical coordination and communication from the ministry › 3 advisory bodies involved › 2 Universities 	<p>Workshops on a regular basis.</p> <p>In the future: more people to be involved in existing networks.</p>
Netherlands	Netherlands Knowledge Centre for Agriculture, Nature and Food		
Poland	The department of Innovation, Digitalisation and Knowledge Transfer within the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural development	<p>Will form a steering committee and a Community of Practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> › Advisory services › Innovation brokers › Committee in the NN 	The Ministry is the coordinator and will gather research needs from practice and disseminate innovation through events and study visits. A database of OGs and innovation projects.
Portugal	Probably the Portuguese Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development		



Romania	Ministry of Agriculture		<p>The regional offices of the Managing Authority with existing staff.</p> <p>Designing a digital open platform for AKIS that will include information on EIP OGs.</p> <p>Physical meetings organised through the national CAP network.</p>
Slovakia	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development		
Slovenia	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Well known advisory structures > Farm chambers > Institutes 	Structure in progress, a strategic board and a coordinating body.
Spain	Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food + Ministry of Science and Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Early stage in mapping stakeholders > Ministry is defining their role as CB 	<p>Meeting point for regional AKIS.</p> <p>There are many differences in regions and in the needs of different crop growers.</p>
Sweden	The Ministry of Agriculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Swedish National Board of Agriculture > National Rural Network including an innovation coach and an Innovation Support Group 	AKIS working group.

Interactive session 1* - section 2

How are AKIS actors organised and how will they give input to the AKIS Coordination Body (CB)?

Austria: AKIS rather well functioning, however, there are three large agricultural universities, geared towards excellence and publications rather than practice.

Belgium: Strong AKIS in Flanders and Wallonia, including experimental farms and researchers, for Wallonia in a diffuse network.

Belgium, Flanders: Advisors regularly visit farmers, and connect with research stations and universities.

Bulgaria: The NAAS National Advisory Service (public) has regional offices, but is centrally managed.

Cyprus: Advisors are mainly public and have an annual evaluation, but it needs improvement.

Denmark: Decentralised agricultural advisory services.

Estonia: All AKIS actors are cooperating partners of the AKIS Center which is being developed from two existing organisations (TG+ARC). There is an Advisory Board and a Strategic Plan, plus Annual Work Programmes.

Germany: Various established advisory networks and some well established innovation support services in place, e.g. in Schleswig-Holstein. In addition, there is also an EIP-AGRI working group that meets once per month, under the remit of the National Rural Network.

Greece: The Ministry of Agriculture organises regular meetings, conferences and workshops.

Italy: An officer within the Ministry of Agriculture is linked to Regional AKIS Coordination Bodies, alongside well-established advisory networks, while the CAP Network is also involved at strategic level.

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Netherlands: Demonstration and research farms connected with farmers and advisors.

Portugal: Well-organised farmers' networks.

Slovenia: There are no private advisors, all are public and cooperate very well with the CAP Network. The public advisory service has a back office with specialist advisors (Chamber of Agriculture).

Spain: Farmers get involved via the cooperatives (where these provide advisory services).

Sweden: The CAP Network was involved in the preparation of the CAP Strategic Plan. Private advisors already have strong and well-recognised structures in the country, so it has become difficult to coordinate them.

Other actors mentioned include:

- > agricultural schools' networks,
- > public bodies on agricultural biodiversity,
- > regional services,
- > advisory network,
- > innovation brokers network, and
- > thematic networks at a regional level.

New tools, instruments or structures that have been developed to support AKIS CBs?

Belgium, Flanders: Developing a platform for stronger connections to agricultural researchers, as well as a collaboration platform and OG project database on the national CAP network website.

Estonia: Knowledge transfer, advisory services, Innovation Support Services and rural networks are all being brought together for the first time.

Finland: AgriHubi was established at the beginning of 2021 to strengthen Finnish AKIS. There is also an innovation coach working with Operational Groups. A platform for all rural actors to bring information together is also launching.

Greece: The CAP Network is building a knowledge reservoir that will include the results from Operational Groups and from research. Farmers will be invited to give feedback on the quality of advice they receive.

Italy: Developed a platform on research and innovation, including online training for advisors.

Latvia: There is a Council dedicated to steering AKIS. It started from the need to target Operational Groups dealing with the Green Deal.

Poland: The CAP network is the main tool for the dissemination of information. Planning to cover the costs of advisors for participating in events, and researchers will be paid for presentations and their incurred costs.

Romania: A digital platform, financed under technical assistance, that will be open to the public with a dedicated login section for AKIS members. The login will also be needed for those who apply for calls, and the platform will be used for accredited advisors. There will be personalised calls developed to address the needs expressed by AKIS members.

Slovenia: Intervention for consortia for agricultural knowledge funding for infrastructure and equipment, under specific themes. Topics are decided by the Ministry in dialogue with AKIS stakeholders. There is a knowledge platform in place, like a national 'FarmBook'.

Spain: New thematic networks are being established, connected to the EU network. Under the Resilience Plan, a digital platform is being developed with a knowledge reservoir that includes other functions, like Tinder for advisors and farmers and training for advisors. An innovation coach is available for Operational Groups. CNTA (Centro Nacional de Tecnología y Seguridad Alimentaria) is developing a new technological centre which will focus on the bioeconomy.

Sweden: A digital platform that focuses on animal production. Innovation coaches are also in place.



Annex 2: Results of interactive session 2*

Advisors' breakout rooms

How are advisors already integrated into structures and knowledge flows of AKIS? How could this be further improved?

Austria: Advisors are invited to integrate with the Board of Research. Research needs are identified by advisors.

Belgium: Advisors are mostly connected to research organisations, which facilitates the interaction between advisors and researchers. Could be improved with more interaction between advisors cross-sectoral and also sectoral across borders.

Cyprus: Public advisors sit within the extension service in the Department of Agriculture (AKIS Coordination Body). Private advisors are not well integrated in AKIS, but steps are being taken to improve this situation.

Czech Republic: There are innovation brokers (funded via Technical Assistance) who usually are advisors and are most frequently connected to a research organisation. The list of them is on the Ministry's website. There are also independent innovation brokers that are approved by the Ministry.

Denmark: Advisors are collaborating with researchers on projects. They support the identification of research needs.

Finland: Advisors are partners in Operational Groups, members in AKIS national Thematic Groups, and represented in the Subgroup on Innovation and Knowledge Exchange (SolKE). Advisors and researchers are already collaborating, for instance in joint publications. Could be improved as advisors are fundamentally private. There are no permanent structures in place to feed the 'conversation'.

France: Projects are linking advisors and researchers. Advisors are represented by their federation, institutes, etc. Could be improved, as advisors are not represented under one single federation or organisation. They should be part of the Steering Committee of the AKIS CB.

Germany: Could be improved by involving advisors more. A key challenge is how to motivate them to join Operational Groups, as they need to earn money, so how to make it attractive for them to invest their time.

Greece: Advisory services sit under a public organisation supervised by the Ministry, with a back office.

Ireland: Could be improved if there were advisors focused on Rural Development-related issues.

Italy: Independent advisors are not integrated. There is a registry of advisors. In the Veneto region advisors are integrated in AKIS, e.g. through the Operational Groups. There are also training courses for advisors, at a regional level. This could be improved, as the AKIS Coordinating Body is struggling to involve advisors because different regions have different approaches regarding the organisation of their advisory services. There is also a need for a repository, a knowledge and info system supporting all actors. Work in the Veneto region could be improved with the introduction of a back office to help advisors improve their knowledge, and bring them closer to researchers. There is also a need to create Innovation Support Services, where advisors and researchers work together.

Latvia: Advisors are involved as experts in projects, also in innovation events together with universities and other types of organisations. They are also integrated into Working Groups. Additionally, there is the Latvian Rural Advisory and Training Centre. Because Latvia is a small country, farmers know most researchers and advisors.

Lithuania: There is a pool of independent advisors. It is mandatory that they have training, with the topics based on needs from farmers and research.

Malta: The country is still in the initial stages of integration. There is training offered to farmers by advisory services. Advisors have informal contact with all types of stakeholders. It will improve once the formal AKIS Coordination Body is established, with all actors under one common umbrella, to better implement the AKIS. There are also training needs for advisors.

Netherlands: Advisory organisations are private sector. There are contacts with other AKIS actors, but not in a structural way. There are advisors who are specialists, and others who are generalists. They are certified and obliged to maintain a certain level of qualifications, which implies continuous training and learning. Could be improved if databases were regularly updated and advisors' continuous education and training were improved.

* Please be aware that this information is a snapshot of the current situation, may not be fully inclusive, and will evolve over time.



Slovenia: There are specialist advisors who are in the back office of the Chamber of Agriculture. Needs for specialists are identified according to the knowledge needed.

Spain: Could be improved, as the AKIS Coordinating Body is struggling to involve advisors because different regions have different approaches regarding the organisation of their advisory services.

Sweden: Advisors are already integrated in the AKIS Working Group. Would be improved if there was a continuous dialogue which would help collect feedback from advisors for the AKIS Coordinating Body, and if a platform was created to collect the learning needs for advisors to develop their core competences.

Cap Networks breakout rooms

What is the role of the national CAP Network in supporting AKIS knowledge flows in your country? What could be improved?

Austria: Organising specific AKIS events to strengthen networking among AKIS stakeholders. Setting up and running the community of practice. A network of innovation brokers is being financed under the CAP network.

Belgium, Flanders: Creating further network opportunities through events, both thematic and intervention-based; developing an internet-based collaboration platform; hosting more regular knowledge exchange meetings; and building a project database with contact information. Developing digital tools; for example, one in which the user inputs the farm characteristics and gets a set of opportunities as output, establishing a cooperation platform.

Bulgaria: Providing a platform for communication and presentation of AKIS actors, promoting their work and achievements to share how they can work purposefully together and provide benefit to farmers. Need to improve the approaches to training, educating and informing people.

Croatia: Building membership and bringing all stakeholders together. Need to involve all the right actors; have access to more human resources; be more targeted when disseminating information.

Estonia: A challenge is that both the CAP network and AKIS network have similar tasks and a similar set of tools, so there is a need to find new actors to prevent an AKIS bubble of "usual suspects". Delivering dedicated newsletters, an online platform and capacity-building activities. Supporting messengers of new topics and international cooperation, for example, the network helped the cross-border Operational Group with Finland.

Finland: The CAP network acts as an innovation hub within the AKIS to promote innovation and financing. Each year they organise a 'spring event' during which public bodies, venture capitalists and many other actors join farmers. Would be better if there was less of a gap between the CAP network and farmers, a gap which advisors are often too busy to fill.

France: The CAP network finances studies to gather information on a topic, as well as dissemination activities.

Germany: Helping to start the AKIS process across the Federal States; building an EIP database of project results; hosting thematic workshops that disseminate project results; co-creating and negotiating among different actors. Need to host more thematic events; develop exchanges across federal states; organise an interactive database with ideas, innovations, video information, experts, etc and links to the Farm Book; generate thematic groups on concrete themes, like mini AKISs.

Greece: Encouraging and strengthening cooperation between actors involved in AKIS; facilitating the exchange of knowledge, information, and experiences between them.

Ireland: Develop innovation brokerage (innovation support services are obligatory).

Italy: Organising knowledge exchange meetings for EIP AGRI, LEADER, Operational Groups, and Horizon. Intending to create a culture of AKIS through continuation by involving harder-to-reach actors from the local and European level. There are many knowledgeable farmers that do not speak English: it is important to involve them as well.

Latvia: Organising seminars, conferences, workshops, etc., for all the stakeholders; providing innovation support; publishing and disseminating information on results from Operational Groups.

Lithuania: Training for consultants; building and maintaining an up-to-date contact database which includes farmers, advisors, researchers, and all other AKIS actors. Need to include more partners by demonstrating the real benefits of a well-functioning AKIS.



Netherlands: Connecting the actors. Need to explore and provide more digital tools to reach more people. Like the i-Connect project: provide more capacity building for advisors as the CAP Networks could do this using project results. Focus on policymakers to develop better legislation. Many farmers won't use a digital platform, so work is taking place to try and certify advisors to train the farmers in the use of digital tools.

Poland: The advisory organisation is also the CAP network coordination unit. A network of innovation brokers is being financed under the CAP network.

Portugal: Building and maintaining a database for all the innovation projects. Need more human resources to ensure robust knowledge transfer and advisor training; explore new tools to ensure the most effective delivery.

Slovenia: The network acts as a one-stop shop to collect Operational Groups' ideas. They cooperate with advisory services, and run a CAP knowledge portal containing knowledge relevant for farmers. They also organise meetings and conferences each year for all AKIS actors, with a day dedicated to Operational Groups.

Spain: Capturing and managing information on the Operational Groups and their projects. Need tools that provide ad hoc information and disseminate news and information to the right AKIS actors.

Sweden: Are developing innovation coaching to help AKIS actors to work in an innovative way within and between organisations.

Other needs discussed:

- › Create a database with Operational Groups' results.
- › Build capacity: organise activities to empower AKIS actors; apply the results from good research like 'DemoFarm', learning kits, etc.
- › Have an open mind, take risks and build a culture of continuous improvement.
- › Raise awareness of the organisations involved in AKIS, especially on topics of the CAP SP objectives.
- › Knowledge demonstration with farmers, in farmer and advisor partnerships.
- › EU regional meetings for CAP networks that share similar issues or challenges, for example, small Member States or regionalised countries.
- › The role of advisors is changing. The CAP network could train the advisors in acquiring new skills and competencies.
- › Develop a knowledge reservoir.

Researchers' breakout rooms

How are researchers integrated in AKIS knowledge flows?

How can they be integrated more effectively?

Croatia: Researchers are involved in training activities via the public advisory services, connecting to advisors and farmers.

Cyprus: Operational Group farmers often need an 'innovation broker' to find appropriate scientists.

Czech Republic: Would be better if researchers no longer worked in their own 'bubble' with a focus on large-project funding, and rather focused on farmers' needs, if information brokerage was improved.

Estonia: Operational Groups involve researchers. These function as advisors, and are involved in knowledge exchange activities. Rural EU Network advisory researchers even have a podcast!

Finland: MAA Horizon, researchers' involvement with farmers. 30 years of advisory services has led to a series of published books, developed with researchers. This has become reference material at universities.

Germany: Would be better if EIP-AGRI and Operational Group partners provided a direct and practical link between research and farmers; if some national funds were allocated for research to better include communication and dissemination for all AKIS actors; if Operational Groups helped with collaboration in their final years; if the regional innovation support services acted as information brokers, with well-connected researchers; if the 'credit points' researchers got for scientific work were also given for research with farmers in an interactive way.

Hungary: Would be better if the narrative was changed from excellence to impact.

Italy: The country is strongly regionalised, and regional researchers are well integrated with advisors and farmers, functioning as teachers in training courses. Would be better if there was more active involvement of the regional agencies and the establishment of innovation hubs focused on collaboration between farmers associations, researchers, and advisors.



Latvia: Would be better if researchers were always invited to demonstration sites and interest group meetings; if the opportunities for researchers to be advisors were more strongly promoted and supported; if connecting researchers to farmers daily could be improved and structural links were created for researchers-advisors.

Luxembourg: Formally researchers are integrated as a source of scientific knowledge which is demand-driven and provides applied research. There is direct contact between farmers and researchers, also via Operational Groups. The Ministry of Agriculture requires research projects to include farmers. It would be better if the hierarchy within research institutes allowed for more intense collaboration and understood AKIS, and if nationally-funded Operational Groups and other innovation partnerships could be funded.

Malta: Would be better if there was funding for advisors and research to work hand-in-hand, with an emphasis on communication.

Netherlands: Operational Group Vocational Institute, TOP PPC universities linked with private SMEs and farmers. Would be better if there was a Green Knowledge Register, where knowledge institutes make the transition towards their work being used by advisors and farmers.

Poland: Operational Groups and HORIZON projects have already helped other actors understand the benefits of collaboration. It would be better if national technical assistance funds were available for farm advisors and research, and if lectures and seminars were fine-tuned to needs.

Portugal: Government and Universities must cooperate to validate projects. It would be better if AKIS working groups included universities; if there were more study trips as they help build mutual understanding of the issues and each other; if university hierarchies appreciated and so gave higher priority to research collaboration with 'field' actors.

Romania: Operational Groups' practical research has had a strong impact on mutual understanding between research and practice. Because of the lack of technical advisors, it would be better if there was a designated Operational Group Manager from the Management Authority who worked as a mediator between researchers and farmers.

Slovenia: Would be better if specific public services focused on crop types cooperated effectively within the CAP network; if future consortia led by research partners included advisors and farmers more effectively; and if EIP and Operational Groups really boosted collaboration.

Other actors breakout rooms:

Who are other relevant AKIS actors besides the ones included above?

How can they be included?

- > Feminist rural movement – different events are now organised, prizes are given to highlight their achievements.
- > Breeders.
- > Financial institutions.
- > LAGs.
- > SMEs.
- > Farmers that want to diversify e.g., rural tourism.
- > Public funders.
- > Schools:
 - > Vocational schools – could be used to bring actors together.
 - > Teachers at different school levels – e.g include factsheets for teachers in EUFarmBook, to give them materials to teach.
- > Paying agencies.
- > NGOs, consumer associations.
- > Farmers networks.
- > Media – can help with translating between different stakeholders.
- > Contact point for Horizon.
- > Administrators (for example labels).
- > Control bodies.
- > Chambers of Agriculture.
- > Veterinarians.
- > Restaurants.
- > Marketing specialists.
- > Agritech companies (digital tools, AI).
- > Consumers.
- > OGs.
- > Rural youth, young people.
- > Smart rural areas.
- > Retailers.
- > Industries.

The involvement of groups is different across Member States, with many listed here already involved in some rural networks. Businesses need to be better integrated, but it can be difficult to engage them. Participants identified that the common tools they use to foster better relationships are open days, farm demos and Operational Groups.



Annex 3: Results of interactive session 3*

What are the AKIS-related interventions which are planned in your countries?

Albania: Establishment of Operational Groups and corresponding measures from the national support programme.

Austria: Cooperation; rural innovation; Leader; EIP AGRI; Advisory services; information and knowledge transfer within and outside agriculture and forestry.

There is a recommendation that groups writing a business plan above a certain threshold use an advisor to help with development and writing; advisors can receive funding to write the plan.

Belgium: Study visits for advisors on different topics.

Bulgaria: Advisors are part of innovation support services, they identify ideas for projects and help to build projects around these.

Croatia: Advisory service support; individual advice; support for knowledge flow (training and other education activities for farmers); EIP Operational Groups; short supply chains.

Cyprus: Focus Groups to identify research needs and share knowledge.

Czech Republic: Advisory services (namely individual); EIP Operational Groups; knowledge transfer.

Estonia: Operational Groups and Innovation Clusters involving farmers and researchers working together on a long-term basis; AKIS development and implementation support functions via the AKIS Center including AKIS vouchers, advisory coordination and advisors training; community-based payment scheme trials.

Finland: Funding groups of farmers during their development process, for projects and knowledge exchange; using LEADER via the LAGs to support innovative or pilot projects; vouchers to support the preparation period of Operational Groups, farmers' groups, producer organisations and Smart Village Actions.

France: EIP network of regional offices; training; advisory services; cooperation; Leader. A national platform for research projects related to agriculture; CAP network website.

Germany: advisory services for farmers, knowledge transfer demonstration projects and EIP OGs.

Hungary: Farm demonstration, training for farmers, EIP OGs, support for advisory services.

Italy: Launching a school to train advisors; exchange visits among Operational Groups; farm field visits; developing Communities of Practice in high-tech farming and Centres of Competence; an AKIS back office for advisors. ERDF funds are combined to support digital interventions.

Innovation hubs in Campania provide training and advice for farmers, they are thematic and based on farmers' needs drawing knowledge from Operational Groups results.

Malta: To ensure trainers are well informed. Future support will involve the development of soft skills, understanding how to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice, and exploring ways to find good trainers.

Netherlands: EIP including Operational Groups, field labs (=OGs), generational renewal and pilots; knowledge including vouchers, project group(s), demonstration, training and business plans; producer innovation; LAG network; advisory systems; Eco schemes including small farmers and animal-based schemes; Operation Group project including three-year proposals, using groups to trial eco-schemes; create 'free space' to innovate; include the role of the paying agencies. Creating voucher systems for advisory services focused on innovation and trying new ideas on the farm, as well as for transition for a farm or a group of farmers.

North Macedonia: Reforming of advisory system.

Poland: Knowledge transfer for training farmers in both general and specialist areas; advisory services for both individuals and groups with a yearly plan of cooperation; training of advisors in general and specialist areas, mentoring between experienced and new entrants; demonstration projects on the farm and demonstration farms which build on the existing network of Demo farms; the development of an innovation branch within the CAP network under Technical Assistance. Young farmers must utilise advisory services, and farmers must receive training via the relevant intervention to access investment in environmental activities.

* Please be aware that this information is a snapshot of the current situation, may not be fully inclusive, and will evolve over time.



Portugal: Operational Groups; knowledge interventions; advisory services; young farmers. Operational groups have developed partnerships between different actors. The results are disseminated in different ways, but one of the main channels is the rural network website. This is linked with the advisory services. At the end of the Operational Group the information is used for demonstrations and advisory services, and in some cases provides inputs into policy.

Serbia: Demonstration farm network.

Slovenia: Interlinkages between EIP Operational Groups; Intergenerational Knowledge transfer when young people are in the process of taking over the farm; knowledge transfer such as exchange visits including for advisors; institution to support knowledge transfer on environment, climate and digitalisation, and to set up a cooperative consortium in the long term.

Spain: A new advisory service in the research centre (IMIDRA); innovation workshops and creativity for farmers; innovation cooperation projects via EIP, and vouchers. The knowledge voucher scheme is demand-driven, and the farmer decides which advice and adviser they want. Training for young farmers and advisors includes meeting researchers in the research institute, which enables relationships to be built.

Sweden: Establish knowledge hubs as pilots; an EIP Agriplan.



Annex 4: Results of interactive session 4*

Are there Innovation Support Services in your country? If so, how are they organised?

Austria: The Chamber of Agriculture and Agricultural Innovation Hubs. Innovation brokerage for Operational Groups in the CAP network. Also within advisory chambers, support for setting up Operational Groups and in certain thematic clusters. There is less of an administrative burden for the innovation broker and building trust is important.

Belgium, Flanders: There are private initiatives and different organisations, and an innovation support service within the main farmers' organisation.

Cyprus: An Innovation support centre operates within the NRN, as well as impartial advisors who support innovation via Operational Groups as brokers.

Czech Republic: Innovation Support Services should be provided by the Managing Authority, but there is no special service for this at the moment, although some private innovation brokers are already active.

Denmark: Innovation support is provided by the Advisory Centre and Business Support Facility.

Estonia: ISS are in the early phase of development within the AKIS Center, they are inviting enterprises to tender for innovation support.

Finland: There is an innovation coach in the CAP Network, and universities have their own Innovation Support Services that enable them to provide services to others.

France: In part the services are provided by the CAP network but there are many other organisations providing this type of service, the chambers, the universities, etc.

Germany: There is a dedicated innovation support unit in the Chamber of Agriculture in Schleswig-Holstein, innovation support cross-sector in Lower Saxony, and other examples in some of the twelve regions. The CAP network brings these innovation services together on a regular basis, and also showcases Operational Groups through a website, including providing cross-sector exchanges. The Rhineland-Palatinate region had a call for Innovation Support Services some years ago, which is delivered by the private sector. They are involved in the preparation of proposals for Operational Groups, so mainly brokering. There were two studies to evaluate EIP implementation in the region, and they were involved in identifying good practice for this.

Hungary: There is a small unit of 2-3 people, and work is being carried out with advisors to collect information on who is providing such services or is willing to provide them in the future.

Ireland: There is limited support and it is not well advertised.

Italy: One is being established. There are existing regional agencies, cooperation groups between farmers' associations, researchers and advisors.

Lithuania: The Lithuanian Advisory Service has its own Innovation Support Service as a separate department.

Luxembourg: The Ministry of Agriculture is currently building innovation brokering, and exploring several options, in cooperation with other innovation support facilities within the Ministry of Economy.

Netherlands: There are many services and organisations providing educational events, but not all are specifically dedicated to this. Workshops are being organised to understand the situation better and Smart Agri Hubs are being introduced.

Poland: There is the Innovation Network which sits under the NRN, and innovation brokers in every region coordinated at the central level, for CAP innovation interventions.

Portugal: The National CAP Network coordinates an innovation "working group". They organise meetings and share information. No individual innovation support for projects.

Slovenia: There is a one-stop shop via the Ministry, eight public advisory services and an AKIS Coordinating Body.

Sweden: Innovation support services and the innovation coach for AKIS are based in the NRN, and there are regional hubs for innovation support. It is important to make connections with other successful systems.

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Are there any back offices for advisors in your country? If so, how are they organised?

Austria: The back office is supplied by the Chambers of Agriculture. They provide the registration framework, training, newsletter, brokerage between farmers and advisors for private and public advisors, and provide tools at a federal level which are shared with the states.

Belgium, Flanders: No back offices, but there are applied research farms with specialists that provide information directly to farmers.

Belgium, Wallonia: The back offices are the research centres, as a lot of advisors are also researchers. It is an elaborate system, but not well-structured.

Bulgaria: The NAAS back-office experts work closely with the Agricultural Academy and the Bulgarian Academy of Science; they exchange information about challenges and how to solve them. They involve scientists in demonstrations, virtual visits, thematic webinars, peer-to-peer learning, etc. There is a YouTube channel that is very popular among farmers.

Cyprus: No back offices, but there is a national agricultural institute that provides information and demonstrations, however no official structure.

Czech Republic: The back office service is in transition from the FAS system to AKIS.

Denmark: There is a central back office which serves as a knowledge depository at SEGES and DAAS, which covers all topics and sectors. 30 private advisory services.

Estonia: There have been since 2010, but these will now move to the AKIS Centre from 2024. It provides relevant documentation, maintains the database and website, delivers training and seminars, and manages quality schemes and software tools for some domains.

Finland: There are no back offices for private advisors, but the two largest private advisory organisations offer this for their employees.

France: There are, for example, National Institutes with an 'innovation cell' that cooperate with advisors.

Germany: In some regions, the Chambers of Agriculture have headquarters as back offices, run experimental stations, and are connected with centres of competences, e.g., grassland institute. Other regions have sub-organisations, experimental stations doing applied research and running training centres.

Hungary: The back office is supplied by the Chambers of Agriculture. They provide the registration framework, training, newsletter, and brokerage between farmers and advisors for both private and public advisors.

Ireland: There is no back-office support for private advisors. The private sector has its own offices supporting its associates, and they are normally focused on smaller or part-time farmers. Teagasc, the public advisory service, has back-office support for their advisors and provides them with training.

Latvia: A centralised, public Advisory Service provides back-office support.

Netherlands: There are several back-office providers within the private sector.

Italy: There are differences in regions, some already have back offices, and some will have soon, with support from the CAP.

Poland: The CDR provides thematic meetings and brokerage with researchers for the public advisors and training, documents and tools related to CAP interventions, invitations to dissemination and knowledge exchange events with private advisors.

Portugal: A new platform website was launched in July 2023 with links to all advisors in the network.

Slovakia: The communication and knowledge exchange does not work very well between actors and institutions in the sector. There is a plan to open eight regional offices and begin cooperation creating tighter communications between actors.

Slovenia: A knowledge portal was created as part of the CAP network, and all Operational Groups' outcomes feed into it. The real back office is in the Advisory Service, with dedicated staff and working groups holding regular meetings on innovation support, brokerage, expertise, and advisors.

Spain: There is a back office in the Basque Country: the Agriculture Department of the Region, local agricultural offices, and cooperatives provide this support.

Sweden: The national knowledge hub for animal husbandry is being developed and will act as a pilot for a thematic back office. Three other thematic hubs are being developed as well. Private advisors have their own system.



How can farmers, foresters and other rural actors find AKIS advisors?

Austria: Have a website of the Chamber of Agriculture that includes a search tool by service, not by person, so farmers look for services, not for specific advisors. Once the farmer selects the service they want, they find out which advisor will come and support them. There will also soon be an interactive AKIS map developed by the CAP Network.

Belgium, Flanders: Currently setting up a database of advisors who will be able to use advisory support via knowledge vouchers distributed to farmers.

Bulgaria: The public advisory service has been known for many years, and can easily be found. Private advisory organisations will be included in the AKIS platform.

Croatia: The public advisory service has its own website, where farmers can find advisors.

Czech Republic: There is a register for advisors, brokers, demonstration farms and research consultants.

Denmark: An advisor list is available from advisory centres and DLBR.

Estonia: A public registry of advisors and central e-mail and phone support. They can also be found via events, fairs, or demo-events, through personal recommendations or articles.

Finland: For agriculture there is a digital registry maintained by the Paying Agency. The forestry industry and forester-owned associations have robust channels. For rural actors this is through advisory services, associations, Smart Village thematic coffee breaks, and activities organised by the CAP Network or other projects.

France: Most farmers are used to waiting for advisors to come to their farms.

Germany: Advisors can be found through advisory services' websites, websites of farmers' organisations, through farmers' journals, and at events or field trips. In the Rhineland-Palatinate region, farmers can find advisors through a messenger service, the internet, info-services or personal contacts. There is free advice available for all public advisors, private advice can be funded up to 80%.

Greece: Farmers can find AKIS advisors in the national register of farm advisors.

Hungary: There is an electronic registration list.

Ireland: There is an advisor registration list at the local Advisory Offices for both private and public advisors.

Latvia: Contacts have been developed over many decades.

Lithuania: Has a website listing selected advisors.

Luxembourg: The size of the country means everybody knows everybody, but they can be found through fairs or newspapers.

Netherlands: There is a very diverse advisory landscape, and farmers often use their trusted advisors. There is the VAB website and advisors' list which farmers can search if they need to.

Poland: Via the Innovation Network, with brokers in every region as well as information on a webpage, though public advisory services with offices at a local level and the register of public and private advisors on the CDR webpage, which is also linked to the registration process with info on areas of expertise.

Portugal: Through the National Rural Network, farmers organisations and advisors lists.

Romania: Have a contact details list on their website for those who are interested.

Slovakia: There is a database of certified advisors - currently including 2,150 advisors, that is searchable by name or type of advice. They can also be found on the webpage of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Institute, with regional branches of this Institute being planned.

Slovenia: Farmers can find advisors through the PAAS - Public Agricultural Advisory Service. They are considering building a list of all advisors that will become available on the website.

Spain: By asking Neiker (the main advisory organisation in Basque country) or the provincial Government.



How do you organise training for advisors?

Austria: At a national level there is continuous training for teachers and advisors, and the Chambers of Agriculture provide the quality management objective of 25 hrs per advisor per year. There is a university college for agricultural pedagogy that offers a plan for further training for advisors.

Belgium: There are field visits and study days for advisors on different topics, but no specific training for advisors is organised.

Bulgaria: Training of advisors will be organised through the Coordination Body, and financed through technical assistance. All certified advisors must participate in training once a year for 18 hours.

Croatia: Advisors organise training by themselves, they choose a topic and find a teacher, usually professors or researchers from universities.

Cyprus: Training is through national funding programs organised by the extension services through the Department of Agriculture.

Czech Republic: Accredited advisors must attend training courses until they achieve a certain number of credits to become certified.

Denmark: Advisor training is available at DLBR (performed by DAAS).

Estonia: Training is organised centrally by the AKIS Centre back office. Advisors have to train to become a public advisor, and then there is a mandatory requirement for 25 hours per year of continuous learning. It also supports ad hoc individual training when requested by advisors.

Finland: The Paying Agency offers training related to CAP measures, the CAP Network is providing support training on an ad hoc basis. The big advisory organisation ProAgria has its own training, but advisors' lifelong learning is not supervised by the Paying Agency. There are agricultural science days bringing researchers and other AKIS actors together. Advisors can get training and field days, training on project funding and other types of specific courses.

France: For technical training there are few institutions left because it's very hard to get accreditation. For soft skills there are plenty of training opportunities offered by different institutes and schools.

Germany: There are regional differences, but in the regions with Chambers of Agriculture, these provide training and organise regular meetings to exchange knowledge in different areas.

Greece: Regular training is being organised.

Hungary: Training is mandatory, and there is a 'credit points' system in place.

Ireland: The Department of Agriculture provides half-day training for advisors in the advisory register.

Italy: There are many differences across the regions. In Veneto, courses are funded by the RDP, and there is a requirement for advisors to take a lifelong-learning approach. There is a mix of training courses, workshops, and field visits on-farm. In Campania, there are five partnerships involving universities, training bodies, agricultural schools, agricultural organisations, farmer organisations, rural districts, trainers of advisors, public administrations, and other AKIS actors.

Latvia: In the RDP and CAP Strategic Plan.

Netherlands: VAB provides affiliated training, as does the CAP Network and others. To stay registered advisors, education points are needed every year.

Poland: Regular training is mandatory for the advisors included in the register, and is provided by the CDR. Training is funded under the RDP and CAP strategic plan.

Portugal: Advisors' training is delivered through the national rural networks, farmers' organisations, and training and accreditation providers.

Romania: Training for advisors will be launched in 2024.

Slovakia: Advisors need to undergo training to get certification. There is a system of points awarded for training, and advisors must reach the required number of points per year. There are also training updates on agri-environmental measures in the agro sector, but these are not only for advisors. Special training for advisors needs to be planned further.

Slovenia: It is organised inside public services and with the new intervention. Advisors undertake training as part of their yearly programme at PAAS - Public Agricultural Advisory Service.

Sweden: Resources are available in the Managing Authority, but this is not regularly organised.



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