


5th National Networks' Meeting

The 5th National Networks Meeting of the EU CAP Network, co-hosted by the Greek National Network, focused on knowledge exchange and best practices within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) framework. It featured various presentations and discussions on topics such as good practices, project competitions at national and EU levels, the organisational structures of National Support Units, a matchmaking session for national networks, and updates on various networking activities.

On the second day, participants were split into two groups and visited two different sets of CAP-funded projects in the rural areas of Greece.

Welcome and opening speeches

 **Nikolaos Manetas, Head of the Greek Managing Authority**, opened the meeting and welcomed participants to Greece. In his presentation, he highlighted the importance of EU and National Networks (NNs) in addressing key agricultural challenges, such as ongoing crises, climate change, international competition, and changing consumer demands.

 **Antonia Gámez Moreno**, Head of Unit D1 'Rural areas and Networks' from the European Commission (EC) - DG AGRI, highlighted the recently published [Vision for Agriculture and Food](#) in her welcome speech. She also stressed the need for close engagement with stakeholders and encouraged NNs to promote public consultations and the Citizen Panel on the future Multiannual Financial Framework.



Event Information

Date: 19-20 March 2025

Location: Nafplio, Greece

Organisers: CAP Implementation Contact Point


Participants: 73 individuals from 26 Member States (MS) and the EU, including National Networks (NNs), Managing Authorities (MAs) and the European Commission.

Outcomes: Knowledge-sharing and peer-to-peer learning about the Networks' work related to the identification, collection, analysis and dissemination of good practice projects and the diversity of organisational structures and functioning models of National Networks' Support Units. Following up on the Networking Hackathon and exchanging updates on networking.

Web page: https://eu-cap-network.ec.europa.eu/events/eu-cap-network-event-5th-national-networks-meeting_en

National and EU-level work on good practices

An introductory [presentation](#) was given by **Veronika Korčeková** and **Alexandros Papakonstantinou**, EU CAP Network, which framed the main topic of the session - the work of Networks on good practices (GPs). For the purpose of this meeting, they defined GPs as successful and inspirational CAP-funded projects. The process of the identification, analysis, collection and dissemination of GPs at the EU level was outlined. Challenges linked to GP work at the EU and national level include measuring the impact and replicability of GPs, data availability, and the low levels of interest from GP project beneficiaries in sharing and presenting their project information.

 **Edgars Linde**, from the Latvian NN, brought in GP-work related experiences from the national level. In his presentation, Edgars explained that, in Latvia, the advisory service regional offices, as part of the Latvian NN, are collecting GP projects. In 2024, 140 projects were gathered in total. One of the high-level GP collection activities in Latvia is a 30-year-long competition called 'Sējés' (in English 'sower' - a person who plants seed). Solutions to increase the publicity and promotion of the projects are mainly linked to websites, social media, and publications.



Ulrika Holmgren from the Swedish NN presented how they disseminate GP projects in Sweden. They use different tools such as podcasts, aiming to reach younger audiences, as well as good practice conferences and events, in online and in-person formats. In addition, the Swedish NN ran a campaign in 2023-2024 called '**Good News for Everyone**', which provided visibility to around 90 GPs that are eligible and communicable. The lesson learnt from this process is that it is possible to create communication campaigns with a rather small budget that are highly impactful and reach different audiences.



Group work introduced an interactive board game named the 'Good Practice Odyssey'. The game guided NNs through the process that it takes to identify, collect and disseminate good practice projects. At each stage they had to decide and agree on the most efficient way to proceed, based on their experiences. This facilitated peer-to-peer learning of NNs and helped to explore the process linked to GP work from different national perspectives.



One of the main takeaways from the game is that each NN addresses GPs differently. Their approach varies depending on the NN's structure, available resources, and the stakeholders involved. NNs learnt from one another while sharing new methods to improve their processes.

Another important insight is that collecting GPs is rarely a linear journey; there are often moments when they must revisit earlier stages, or return to the starting point to reassess and refine their approach. The material created for this gamified session is available on the [event page](#), and was made available for NNs to use according to their own needs.

Project competitions and awards at the national and EU level



At the beginning of this session, **Pawel Krzeczunowicz** from the Polish NN outlined the various project competitions organised at the national level in Poland. Pawel pointed out that in 2024, the Polish NN organised 46 GP competitions. He also highlighted key reasons for organising the competitions, which were increased participation, youth engagement, promotion of good agricultural practice, increased demand for information, and rewarding knowledge transfer.



The EU CAP Network shared experiences from organising competitions at the EU level. **Pacôme Elounga Eyenga** from the EU CAP Network presented key lessons from organising the EIP-AGRI Awards. Subsequently, **Eirini Litina and Cristina Rascón** from the EU CAP Network shared key insights from organising **the Agricultural and Rural Inspiration Awards (ARIA)**. They also launched this year's edition of ARIA, which will cover 4 categories: Environmental protection, Smart & competitive agriculture, Socio-economic fabric of rural areas, and a fourth 'flexible' category to be announced soon. A cross-cutting theme on empowering women in rural areas was also announced.





Organisational structures and functioning models of NN Support Units



Next, a presentation was given on the organisational structures and functioning models of National Support Units (NSUs) by **Eirini Litina**, **Cristina Rascon** and **Veronika Korcekova**, EU CAP Network. In early 2025, the EU CAP Network conducted a survey mapping the setup and organisational models of NSUs in the new programming period, and [the results](#) were shared and discussed during this session. Key findings include:

- **Organisational structure of NSUs:** The majority of NSUs (15 out of 28) are based within the Managing Authority (MA), while seven are delegated to a ministerial agency or another institution. In some cases, certain activities are outsourced to external institutions or service providers (as seen in countries like Czechia, Malta, and Bulgaria). A few countries (Austria, Belgium-Wallonia, and Ireland) have fully outsourced their NSUs to external providers, involving multiple organisations.
- **Regional structures:** About half of all NSUs operate only at the national level, and the other half have a regionalised structure of some kind. The survey explains some regional structures of the NSUs and how they are organised.
- **Membership:** The survey provides insights into the membership structure of the NSUs, which is important for understanding the collaborative nature of these units and the diverse stakeholders involved in CAP implementation.



Following the presentation of the survey results, the session featured several insightful presentations about the different approaches to organisation structures in NNs across Europe. In Hungary, they have a completely new innovative organisational structure for the NSU, presented by **Attila Nagy** from the Hungarian NN. In Slovenia, they approach innovation and AKIS in an integrated way, as presented by **Svit Mal** from the Slovenian NN. In Spain, the regional antennas work closely at the local level and undertake evaluation tasks, demonstrating their effective connection with the rural community and their contribution to the assessment processes. The presentations on the Spanish Regional Antennas and the role of the NSU in evaluation tasks were presented by **David Argibay** and **Blanca Ojosnegros**, from the Spanish NN and Managing Authority, respectively.



The EU CAP Network also introduced the new '[Networking pages](#)' on the website. These pages provide detailed information about National Networks and various networking activities, including meetings, stakeholder mapping and good practices.

Matchmaking session



During this session, participants were invited to engage in a pairing activity aiming at identifying NN colleagues to share ideas with in peer-to-peer exchanges. The event featured 12 cards, each representing a different Greek god, with each god symbolising a unique topic for discussion. These topics included, among others, the governance of NNs, NN evaluation methods, new structures of NNs, communication and information exchanges, international cooperation of NNs, regional structures, and more.



Follow-up on the Networking Hackathon



Participants received updates and followed up on the outcomes of the [4th National Networks Meeting](#), held in Lithuania in September 2024, in the form of a Networking Hackathon. That meeting generated several creative proposals – four of which were [presented](#):

1. **Not another platform.** This team explored a new model for collaboration by organising a 'Digital Platform Fair', aimed at mapping and showcasing platforms rather than creating a new one.
2. **Rural Ambassadors.** A working group was formed to explore how NNs can engage youth ambassadors or influencers to promote a viable way of living in rural areas.
3. **Evaluation BeeZZZZ.** Led by the Evaluation Helpdesk of the EU CAP Network, this initiative offers a 'Roadmap and Toolbox' for NNs. It aims to support stakeholder involvement in CAP evaluations and improve how results are communicated in a meaningful way.
4. **MAX Net.** This idea envisions an online, moderated space designed for peer-to-peer learning and communication among and between NNs, fostering knowledge exchange and mutual support.

Participants split into groups and discussed the next steps to move these initiatives forward.



Update on CAP networks' activities



In this session, participants received [brief updates](#) from several NNs on their activities. The Romanian NN shared insights from a recent study visit to the Spanish NN, which included visits to several Spanish CAP-funded projects. The trip focused on knowledge exchange and rural development initiatives. The Polish NN invited participants to the [European Congress of Renewal and Rural Development](#) on 8 - 10 May 2025. They also updated participants about the ongoing "Network to Innovate" webinars, hosted by the Estonian, Finnish, Polish and Latvian Networks, which are a series of online thematic workshops that provide the opportunity to meet other actors in the field, exchange knowledge, and form new partnerships. The session concluded with an invitation from the Bulgarian NN to attend the next NN Meeting, continuing the spirit of collaboration and shared learning.

The EU CAP Network provided information on ongoing activities linked to networking at the EU level, including recent updates of the new ['LAG Directory'](#) and the ['Networking pages'](#) on the EU CAP Network website.

Closing remarks



Hugo Almeida, Deputy Head of Unit D1 'Rural areas and Networks' from the European Commission (EC) - DG AGRI, highlighted the value of the event. He shared insights on the usefulness of learning about the organisation of NNs and the effectiveness of sharing through interactive activities. He emphasised the value of open discussions on project competitions, as well as the lessons learned from networking events and peer exchanges, such as NN cluster meetings, study visits organised by NNs, and ongoing communication activities. He concluded by thanking participants, organisers, and colleagues for their contributions and enthusiasm, and looked forward to further exchanges between networks.