



# 2<sup>nd</sup> EU CAP Network workshop 'National networking for innovation and knowledge exchange'

**29-30 January 2025**  
**Reims, France**



Funded by  
the European Union

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# 1. Introduction

Networking plays a crucial role in driving innovation by fostering the exchange of ideas, perspectives, and expertise. One of the National CAP Networks' (NNs) objectives is to support peer-to-peer learning and interaction between all stakeholders in the knowledge-exchange process on the national level (as defined in the CAP Regulation under Article 126). Even if NNs have gained experience throughout the previous programming period, they have reported a need for annual capacity-building, support and guidance on good practices to further foster innovation and knowledge exchange to help them carry out their tasks and support the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) interventions more effectively.

Within this context, the 2<sup>nd</sup> EU CAP Network workshop on 'National Networking for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange' brought together 97 participants from 24 Member States. While the focus was on NNs, the event also gathered national and regional Managing Authorities, AKIS Coordination Bodies, Paying Agencies, innovation support services and advisors. The interactive and engaging one-and-a-half-day event in Reims, France, was organised by the EU CAP Network with a focus on innovation, knowledge exchange

and the EIP-AGR Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge exchange including EIP-AGRI. The event was hosted by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty in France and the Grand Est region. The Ministry also supported the organisation of the field visits.

The workshop aimed to create opportunities for inspirational exchange and peer-to-peer learning on experiences, approaches, and good practices in networking for innovation and knowledge exchange, with a focus on:

- Sharing experiences and identifying opportunities for new approaches to unlock the full potential of the outcomes of OG projects;
- Discussing how to support transnational collaboration and knowledge sharing, both between OGs, and between OGs and other innovative projects;
- Exploring the setting up of cross-border and transnational OGs.

# 2. Format of the workshop

The workshop provided participants with opportunities to exchange knowledge and good practices, with a significant proportion of the programme dedicated to interactive sessions. Following the welcome session, the agenda included presentations for scene-setting and sessions for inspiration on the three themes, as mentioned above.

The workshop started with the thematic topic on **how the full potential of OGs' results can be unlocked**. First, the focus was on sharing OG results to a wider population of farmers, advisors and other AKIS actors. Second, the focus was on upscaling the outcomes of OGs towards a broader impact, making use of Horizon multi-actor projects, as well as other relevant interventions in Member States' CAP Strategic Plans. Eight inspiring examples were provided from five EU countries, namely Germany, Italy, France, Belgium and Finland.

Following the presentation of these examples, participants were provided with further inspiration opportunities through the **field visits** to two OGs: **OG Harmony** and **OG Carbon Think**. Following on from the field visits, participants were divided into breakout groups to discuss concrete actions that could be undertaken to further unlock the potential of OGs' results.

The agenda on Day 2 started with the second set of thematic topics: **how to further support transnational cooperation and knowledge sharing between OGs, and between OGs and other innovative projects**. Four inspiring examples were presented as an introduction to the breakout sessions.

Lastly, the third set of thematic topics was deliberated, namely: **fostering the setting up of cross-border and transnational OGs**. The main aim for this part of the workshop was to take the outcomes from the discussions that took place during the [4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Subgroup on Innovation and Knowledge Exchange](#) and further build on them. Two inspiring examples were presented as an introduction to a breakout session.



## 3. Welcome and setting the scene

### 3.1 Introduction to networking for innovation and knowledge exchange

In her words of welcome, **Marjorie Deroi** (Head of Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, France) elaborated on the organisation of the AKIS in France. The French AKIS ensures a continuum between research, innovation, and knowledge transfer. Several tools and partnerships have been established within the AKIS, including joint technological units that collaborate between academic and applied research teams, and mixed technology networks that mobilise research, agricultural development, and education. A strong agricultural education system is in place in France, offering vocational and higher education. Since 2014, OGs have been implemented mainly at the regional level. National activities for OGs have been set up by the French CAP Network in collaboration with regional networks and other AKIS actors. The Horizon Europe Program in France is coordinated by the Ministry of Higher Education and Research, with a network of 22 National Contact Points.



Source: EU CAP Network

**Alexandra Bonine** (Grand Est Managing Authority) presented the organisation of the calls for OGs and the role of the network at the regional level. Grand Est has already provided funding for 20 OGs, with a total funding of 27.5 million euros. The regional Managing Authority has introduced several simplifications since 2024, such as the use of Simplified Cost Options and the setting up of an online platform to submit funding applications.

### 3.2 Setting the scene

In her presentation, **Inge Van Oost** (Unit D.1 "Rural areas and networks" in DG AGRI) emphasised the importance of improving knowledge sharing on OGs' outcomes and making these projects more visible. Key recommendations included enhancing dissemination through quality communication channels, knowledge platforms, and ICT tools. New communication methods tailored to how farmers learn, including videos on projects' results and social media engagement, were also suggested.



Source: EU CAP Network

Partnerships should consist of at least three distinct legal entities, of which at least 50% must be located within the Grand Est region. The Grand Est Agricultural & Rural Network has an important role in driving networks of rural, agricultural and forestry stakeholders, in promoting CAP-funded projects, and in informing its stakeholders. The network has a threefold mission regarding OGs:

1. Informing OGs on communication and other obligations, as well as on other initiatives linked to their projects (e.g., through webinar series);
2. Helping OGs to network (through thematic field visits and 'Cafés du Réseau');
3. Promoting EIP-AGRI projects (through videos and booklets).

In the final presentation of the welcoming session, **Hugo Almeida** (Deputy Head of Unit D.1 "Rural areas and networks" in DG AGRI) welcomed participants to the workshop. During his talk, he stressed the importance of this kind of event, in which the EU and NNs, but also different actors, gather to discuss how to further strengthen the AKIS system by making the best possible use of the results of OGs and other innovative projects, and setting up cooperation across regions and Member States.

The presentation also highlighted the need for better Practice Abstracts, proposing peer-review processes and ensuring that practitioners draft the content. Cross-visits and field visits were recommended for peer-to-peer learning. Networking support, innovation markets, and connecting projects with funding and scaling-up opportunities were also identified as crucial actions.



Challenges, such as maintaining contact with OGs once projects are completed, and the limited practical applicability of the outcomes of OGs that are too scientifically focused, were highlighted.

The role of AKIS Coordination Bodies was emphasised as essential for integrating all AKIS actors and ensuring knowledge flows both within and across Member States. A robust AKIS strategy involves regular interaction among actors to speed up knowledge exchange and implementation in practice. The AKIS Coordination Body acts as the central point for all AKIS-related issues, supporting the implementation of the AKIS Strategic Plan.

**Gonzague Leroux** (EIP policy officer at the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty, France) presented from the perspective of the French national level and on the role of the French Network for Agriculture and Rurality (RNAR) in communication and knowledge exchange. The RNAR supports the implementation of the French CAP Strategic Plan and stimulates agricultural and rural innovation. For instance, in 2024, the EIP-AGRI coordination at national level included support to two OGs to compete at the European EIP-AGRI Innovation Awards 2024.

This also included the organisation of a study trip for regional Managing Authorities and representatives of the OGs to Belgium to network and learn about the implementation of EIP-AGRI by other Member States, as well as participate in the activities of the EU CAP Network. Furthermore, a study to characterise and analyse OGs over the 2014-2022 period was launched at the end of 2023 to analyse the leverage and impact of OGs in France.

Several communication and dissemination activities have been further enhanced, including the launch of a flyer and video to introduce EIP-AGRI, the development of a new website, webinars presenting OGs in different sectors, regional events bringing together OGs, and a national networking event in April 2025 to promote French participation in Horizon Europe calls for projects linked to EIP-AGRI. This will further foster the involvement and collaboration of OGs in project calls and particularly in this type of project.

## 4. Inspiring stories on innovative approaches for unlocking the potential of EIP-AGRI Operational Group (OG) projects

At the start of this workshop session, several examples were shared with the aim of inspiring participants with relevant practices on how NNs and other AKIS actors can disseminate the results of OG projects to advisors and farmers, and to foster the uptake of these results.

### 4.1 Sharing OG outcomes

In her presentation, **Leonie Göbel** (German CAP Network) focused on the role of the agricultural press in disseminating OG results. She emphasised the importance of the agricultural press in Germany as the easiest and most straightforward way to reach farmers directly. She explained the media cooperation through monthly updates from the German EIP-AGRI database on new and finished OGs. Additionally, innovation brokers have an important role in connecting journalists with OGs by maintaining good relationships with them, listening to their needs, and inviting them to events. Leonie outlined the types of information that are attractive to magazines (e.g., relevant content for farmers, short and concrete results). Dissemination of OG results through the agricultural press has the benefit of reaching a broader audience of farmers, as well as requiring OGs to develop a clearer communication strategy to a wider audience.

**Giorgio Trentin** (Veneto Region, Italy) highlighted the role of OGs in advisory training: these projects provide practical and innovative solutions that can be integrated into the training. These courses include interactive sessions and demonstration activities, allowing advisors to see in real-time the application of the innovations developed by the OGs. The collaboration between OGs and training providers ensures that advisors receive up-to-date and relevant knowledge and tools to improve their services.

The examples forthcoming were organised into three groups, according to their expected impacts, which were: sharing OG outcomes, upscaling OG results, and sharing and building on OG project results through Horizon project participation.

This approach fosters a continuous exchange of knowledge and strengthens the connection between research, innovation, and practical advisory work.

**Gonzague Leroux** (French Ministry of Agriculture and Food Sovereignty) highlighted how OGs' results are being integrated into vocational school programs in France. In collaboration with the General Direction of Education and Research at the Ministry of Agriculture, a dialogue has started with the regional contacts in charge of the network of vocational schools. This has led to the listing of opportunities for interaction between students and OGs. Finally, a tool has been developed to help teachers incorporate OG results into their teaching.



Source: EU CAP Network

**Fabian Storm** (EIP Network Niedersachsen, Germany) discussed how digital platforms can effectively disseminate the results of OG projects. The EIP Network in Niedersachsen uses platforms such as LinkedIn and a digital project brochure on its website to share project presentations, event announcements, and funding opportunities. Content creation is supported by Artificial Intelligence (AI), ensuring that the information is engaging and accessible. These platforms target farmers, advisors, scientists, companies, and other stakeholders. More in-depth knowledge is offered via factsheets and background documents that help to attract a specialist audience. Additionally, dissemination activities and upscaling events, and collaborations with startups, further promote the integration and long-term sustainability of OG results in practice.



Source: EU CAP Network

## 4.2 Upscaling OG results

**Els Lapage** (policy advisor on agricultural innovation and knowledge for the Flemish Government) explained, through the OG 'MEBAT', how OG results can be scaled up through investment funds accessible for farmers. She also explained that this OG project was followed by another OG - the 'VALOBAT'. Further, partners in 'MEBAT' also applied for funding and started the multi-actor research project 'Maxbat'. The consideration and comprehension of the innovation spiral gives insights into the different funding stages before an innovation turns into a widely applied investment: building from the results of an OG project through the funding from the Innovative Investment Intervention (including advice), followed by the Normal Investment Intervention funding. The OG results lead to further research and investment, and to a new multi-actor research project.

The Impact Accelerator, presented by **Tuija Kallio** (Network coordinator, AKIS and innovation at the Finnish Rural Network), is a three-month program designed to support the scaling up of nearly or already completed innovation projects. This programme, which has been outsourced by the Finnish CAP Network to the state-owned sustainable development company Motiva, provides targeted support through workshops, mentoring and the identification of funding sources. It helps projects refine their solutions, validate benefits, design business models, pitch training, and plan follow-up actions. By offering tailored assistance and facilitating connections with partner companies and potential funders, the Impact Accelerator enhances the visibility and scalability of OG results, ensuring that innovative agricultural practices and technologies can be effectively implemented and adopted on a larger scale.

## 4.3 Sharing and building on OG project results by means of Horizon projects

**Natalia Brzezina** (policy officer for AKIS, Unit F2 "Research and Innovation" in DG AGRI) focused on how Horizon Europe can support OGs in sharing their results and building on their outcomes. In summary, this is done in three ways: (1) feeding R&I needs from practice into Horizon work programmes, (2) providing platforms for co-creation, testing, demonstration, and scaling up innovations, and (3) sharing knowledge and innovative solutions through multi-actor projects, living labs, advisory networks, and thematic networks.



Source: EU CAP Network

**Mara Lai** (CREA - Council for Agricultural Research and Economics, Italy) showcased how the [BBioNets Horizon thematic network](#) is building on OG results. BBioNets aims to set up regional Forest

and Agriculture Networks (FANs) to match bio-based technologies (BBTs) to regional dynamics, to raise awareness and increase the capacity of AKIS actors, and to secure long-term sustainability of project outcomes. BBioNets integrates OGs' results into the project activities, and it involves 12 OGs whose partners participate in FANs and European Transnational Regions (ETRs) to share knowledge and promote the adoption of BBTs. BBioNets has also developed several tools, such as an inventory of BBTs and an assessment tool to evaluate their cost and benefits, facilitating the transfer of innovative solutions to farmers and foresters. This approach ensures that OG results are effectively scaled up and adopted across different regions.

The CLIMED-FRUIT project, presented by Clara Gérardin (Institut Français de la Vigne et du Vin, France), extends the results of OGs across borders by creating a core group of nine OGs around the Mediterranean region. This project focuses on adaptation to climate change for Mediterranean perennial crops. It gathers practices and knowledge from various sources, covering a wide range of actors in the agricultural sector. The project uses digital cross-visits to share knowledge, and it disseminates results through various media. By leveraging these methods, CLIMED-FRUIT ensures that innovative solutions and practices developed by OGs are shared across different regions, enhancing climate change resilience in Mediterranean agriculture.



## 4.4 Field visits

Field visits took place to two OGs with the aim of inspiring participants with concrete examples of the uptake of their results by practice.

The OG '[Harmony](#)' developed a data exchange platform that is a secure framework providing value added to individual farm data through data processing and analysis. This value added is possible by the unprecedented cross-fertilisation of information. For instance, one of the specific applications of the platform enables cattle health data to be exchanged between cattle buyers to eradicate certain diseases beyond the strict regulatory perimeter. Once the project was finished, the platform was further developed to enhance its uptake, providing a complete consent-based system for data exchanges, including a smartphone app, as well as model data exchange contracts enabling several potential data providers to participate, among other features.



Source: EU CAP Network



Source: EU CAP Network

The other field visit was to the OG '[CarbonThink](#)' which developed a Proof of Concept (POC) that enabled the development of prototypes of digital tools for the evaluation and valorisation of agricultural carbon. These prototypes are open-source, and the farming community can use them to improve and expand their use on a larger scale. Thanks to 'CarbonThink', the first 100 field crop farms in the Grand Est region were adopting the Low Carbon Label in 2022. A follow-up project, 'CarbonThink 2', will work towards scaling up from the field level to the farm and regional level, to contribute to the milestone of 50% less agricultural emissions.

## 5. Breakout session – Unlocking the potential of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups

For the first interactive session, participants were divided into breakout groups and invited to discuss the success factors and needs to unlock the full potential of OGs through dissemination, sharing and upscaling of results. The following questions were used to guide discussions:

- How can best use be made of the OGs' outcomes in terms of sharing and upscaling in your own country/region, in relation to your AKIS Strategy?
- What is missing today? Which concrete action(s) can you take in your own country/region in relation to your AKIS Strategy?
- What are the other initiatives that can foster better sharing and upscaling of outcomes of other innovation projects, such as Horizon Multi-Actor projects?

The main outcomes of the session are summarised as follows: unlocking the full potential of OGs involves a multifaceted approach that includes, for instance, developing skills for knowledge exchange, utilising media and new tools for dissemination,

leveraging innovation support, upscaling results through private funds, and organising both online and physical meetings.

Developing skills for knowledge exchange is crucial. This involves training OG partners as multipliers in the dissemination process, providing advisory training within the scope of EIP-AGRI and organising peer-to-peer learning activities (such as field visits and on-farm demonstrations), while involving farmers in the planning and dissemination process to ensure their needs and perspectives are considered.

Utilising media and new tools for dissemination may include using Artificial Intelligence (AI) to create content for dissemination, developing applications and podcasts for a wider audience, engaging journalists and social media influencers, and producing videos and specialised articles in agricultural media; also important are creating visual and easy-to-use abstracts of outcomes for smartphones and developing knowledge portals that can improve accessibility, and adapting results for farmers' use, including language adjustments, and using digital tools.





Source: EU CAP Network

Innovation Support Services can work alongside projects and post-projects to help organise and fund activities for the dissemination and promotion of the uptake by practice. Utilising innovation brokers and science translators can facilitate the dissemination and uptake of results.

Upscaling results through private funding involves developing the economic potential of outcomes and encouraging industry involvement with commercial incentives. Training advisors and OG partners in pitching project results to potential investors can also help secure private funding.



Source: EU CAP Network

Organising online and physical meetings/events is essential for effective dissemination, including webinars, field visits, demonstration events, information day cross-visits between farmers and advisors, and study visits. Building networks based on Horizon projects, developing transnational cooperation, and utilising existing platforms can further improve dissemination.

Additionally, conducting impact assessments and evaluations to understand the effectiveness of dissemination efforts and collecting research needs and feedback can help continuously improve dissemination strategies.



Source: EU CAP Network



Source: EU CAP Network

## 6. Setting the scene for Day 2

At the start of Day 2, **Inge Van Oost** (AKIS coordination in Unit D.1 - 'Rural areas and Networks', in DG AGRI) gave an introductory presentation focusing on two topics: transnational collaboration; and emerging tools for knowledge flows, including knowledge hubs. Within the topic of transnational collaboration, the focus was on transnational and cross-border OGs, where, besides their concept, several possibilities for their funding within the EAFRD budget were explained, as well as their reporting in the EC's System for Fund Management (SFC).

There are varied examples of channels of knowledge sharing and dissemination, including NNs, online platforms, events, advisors, and thematic knowledge hubs. Examples from various Member States demonstrated different approaches to collecting and disseminating knowledge and innovations from practice, EIP-AGRI OGs, Horizon projects, and other Research and Innovation (R&I) projects. Challenges in sharing knowledge, such as information fragmentation, accessibility, relevance, and language barriers, were identified, along with potential funding sources for knowledge-sharing initiatives.



The presentation underscored the dual role of thematic knowledge hubs in supporting knowledge flows within AKIS: collecting innovative practice-oriented knowledge, and ensuring its dissemination to practitioners. Advisors, OGs, NNs, on-farm demonstrations, and digital knowledge reservoirs play crucial roles in this process. Finally, several points for reflection were raised, such as the importance of attracting relevant AKIS actors, securing finance, defining thematic focus areas for knowledge hubs, the role of these knowledge hubs in back-offices for advisors and Innovation Support Services, and their connection with existing/emerging institutions, platforms, organisations, etc.



Source: EU CAP Network

## 7. Inspiring stories on fostering transnational cooperation and setting up transnational and cross-border OGs

**Mark Redman** (Highclere Consulting) presented the [Horizon project 'PREMIERE'](#), as well as some reflections on the involvement of OGs in Horizon Europe Multi-Actor approach (MAA) projects. OGs can benefit significantly from their involvement in MAA projects, allowing them to leverage the knowledge built by other OGs across the EU. This involvement helps OGs transfer and adapt local or EU project solutions to different contexts. The PREMIERE project offers a Seed-Funding Initiative, providing financial support to practice-oriented organisations, with a focus on newcomers to Horizon Europe, to develop MAA project proposals. Additionally, the project organises activities such as a survey of OGs in Horizon Europe, a brokerage event for Horizon Europe Cluster 6, and an online focus group.

**Marija Fjodorova** (Latvian CAP Network) gave a state of play on the transnational cooperation under EIP between Finland, Estonia and Latvia, which are collaborating to set up transnational OGs. In this case, each project partner will apply for funding from its own Managing Authority, while the selected projects will be jointly implemented. A key takeaway message from this experience is the importance of cooperation and knowledge exchange on procedures and legislation between the different Managing Authorities, Paying Agencies and NNs at every step. Furthermore, NNs play an essential role in guiding applicants to find information and potential partners in other Member States, as well as in supporting cooperation and communication between project partners. The conclusion of this inspiring example is that transnational OGs can be implemented within the existing legislative framework and procedures of the CAP.

**Cristina Simon Palacios** (Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries) presented the organisation of national cross-regional calls for OGs in Spain. These calls are organised to foster agrifood innovation, as well as to ensure cross-regional collaboration. The process is designed to be complementary to regional calls for OGs, and allows stakeholders from regions that are not implementing OGs to participate in cross-regional projects. Eligibility criteria require members to be from at least two regions, with activities spanning two or more regions. The national calls have generated significant interest, with 775 applications received between 2018 and 2022, resulting in 124 approved projects receiving a total grant of €62.4 million.

The cooperation between regions is facilitated through the exchange of information about OGs and their results, and also through the administrative process, since the evaluation committee includes representatives from the Autonomous Communities, to ensure that regional perspectives and priorities are considered. The CAP Strategic Plan 2023-2027 continues this approach, while improving administrative aspects of the OG process.

**Katja Brase** (German Association of Chambers of Agriculture) presented the example of the German [Knowledge Hub on animal welfare](#) to showcase how knowledge hubs can foster transregional cooperation through their comprehensive and collaborative approach. The hub involves the participation of all federal states in Germany and involves cooperation with demonstration projects, European innovation projects (EIP-AGRI/Horizon), innovative companies, associations, etc. Targeting farmers, associated sectors, advisors, veterinarians and the interested public, the knowledge hub aims to collect, process and communicate expert knowledge, promoting the exchange of experiences and networking on animal welfare issues. The hub's organisational structure includes cooperation between sectorally organised working groups and offices, as well as state research institutions. The hub is capitalising on the communication expertise and on the network of demonstration farms of the German agricultural society and the Research Institute of Organic Agriculture – FiBL, and uses various communication tools, including collaborative workspaces, target group-specific communication concepts, and a nationwide calendar of events. The hub's established structures and well-organised database can be expanded to other topics and sectors, making it a source of inspiration and good practice for knowledge hubs in other areas and Member States/regions.



## 8. Breakout session - Matchmaking for transnational collaboration



Source: EU CAP Network

During this session, participants were invited to select a topic of interest to them and to exchange ideas to support further transnational and cross-border cooperation between OGs, and between OGs and other innovative projects. The goal of the session was to facilitate matchmaking between participants who wanted to take concrete actions in this context. The matchmaking was organised according to the following topics (which had been indicated by participants through a survey before the workshop):

- Climate and climate change;
- Water management;
- Waste, by-products and residues management;
- Animal husbandry and welfare;
- Soil management;
- Biodiversity and nature management;
- Supply chain, marketing and consumption.

On the topic of forestry competitiveness and diversification, no discussion was held due to a lack of interest in the topic from the participants.

Within the different groups, several concrete actions were proposed and agreed on, such as:

- Exchanging information on OGs over email;
- Organising joint events, such as cross-visits and conferences;
- Writing project proposals for upcoming Horizon calls (e.g. within the EU Mission 'A Soil Deal for Europe' framework).



Source: EU CAP Network



Source: EU CAP Network



## 9. Breakout session - Fostering the setting-up of cross-border and transnational OG projects

During this workshop session, participants were invited to discuss ways to foster the setting up of cross-border and transnational OGs. The starting point for the discussion was the outcomes of a session organised during the fourth meeting of the Subgroup on Knowledge Exchange and Innovation (SOIKE) that took place on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October 2023. During that session, SolKE members were asked to identify challenges and solutions for fostering transnational/cross-border OGs. The identified solutions were organised into four types, and taken up for further discussion in the workshop – these were:

- Exploring cross-border and transnational OGs, starting with smaller initiatives;
- Cooperating in identifying common challenges and matching the right partners;
- Using existing networks, including Horizon thematic networks and National Contact Points;
- Organising the call and the funding differently.

Participants were asked to further build on these solutions and come up with concrete actions for the next steps. The interactive session was organised in two rounds, based on discussion groups focusing on those four types of solutions, and participants were free to choose their preferred discussion group in which to participate. The main outcomes of these discussions are as follows:

### Exploring cross-border and transnational OGs, starting with smaller initiatives

Main action points suggested were:

- Managing Authorities modify their CAP Strategic Plans to enable NNs to use Technical Assistance funding to facilitate the set-up of small initiatives;
- NNs organise thematically-based matchmaking events, in which advisors can help identify relevant topics based on needs from practice. Challenges are language barriers and financial resources;
- National/regional governments start small pilot initiatives with national/regional funds to minimise administrative burdens and gain experience.

There are already some initiatives within this context, namely between Latvia, Estonia and Finland, who have agreed to set up transnational OGs with partners from the three countries. France has been having transnational meetings between bordering regions (e.g., Grand-Est (France) and Baden-Württemberg (Germany)) to start the collaboration between CAP Networks. Portugal and France have also been exploring possibilities to set up transnational OGs.

### Cooperating in identifying common challenges and matching the right partners

A number of suggestions were identified within the discussion groups, such as:

- NNs create a digital platform to share and match project ideas, prior to the opening of project calls;
- NNs and innovation brokers organise matchmaking events for potential partners before calls for funding;
- EU CAP Network and NNs set up a tool for matchmaking on event platforms for each networking event;
- EU CAP Network adds a regional level to the geographic filter on the EIP-AGRI projects webpage, as soon as possible;
- EU CAP Network creates an online matchmaking platform and posts project ideas on the EU CAP Network website (as on the EIP-AGRI website);
- SolKE supports project partners in finding collaborators, and helps in aligning common framework conditions for calls, sharing information at each meeting.

### Using existing networks, including Horizon thematic networks and National Contact Points

While discussing this type of solution, participants identified a few existing challenges and proposed solutions:

Problem	Solution
No money for traveling	(EU) CAP Network organises more online networking events with a thematic focus
No knowledge about what Horizon thematic networks (on OGs) do/can do	EU CAP Network makes short slides/info materials on what Horizon thematic networks can do for OGs and for NNs, to be disseminated by CAP Networks
It is difficult to find a better balance between different partners, involve farmers in projects and overcome the weighting of universities participation in projects	Advisors can motivate farmers. Consider how to stimulate cooperation to strengthen the role of farmers in the value chain



Discussion groups identified some further potential action points, such as:

- National Contact Points and NNs raise awareness on what OGs can bring to Horizon Europe, before Horizon calls open;
- Innovation brokers motivate OGs to participate, explain the benefits to OGs, and bridge knowledge gaps before Horizon calls open;
- National Contact Points / EU CAP Network organise matchmaking, explaining the benefits of Horizon projects involving OGs, and further promote the outcomes of Horizon thematic networks;
- Researchers and other types of OG partners consult the project database (on the EU CAP Network website) for potential collaborations;
- EU CAP Network to explain better what Horizon thematic networks can do for OGs, as soon as practicable;
- Build a network(s) based on Horizon projects and invite OGs to thematic meetings to exchange ideas, thus integrating transnational cooperation through Horizon projects. Organise meetings for brainstorming, including on topics/needs for OGs;
- Consider how to better valorise Practice Abstracts, and how they can help improve the visibility of the project.

### Organising the call and the funding differently

Participants also discussed this type of solution and suggested a few action points, such as:

- Managing Authorities from different Member States share/ coordinate strategic agendas and find common interests or themes, before calls. They also complete a check on regulation/ legal issues, agree on eligibility conditions for OG calls, and organise a committee to evaluate joint activities;
- NNs complete an assessment of needs, topics and potential candidates before calls, and support preliminary contacts and preparatory activities;
- Future OGs make contacts with potential partners across national/regional borders. There needs to be a clear identification of what will be internal (national) and transnational activities.

## 10. Conclusions

The workshop was aimed at sharing experiences and identifying opportunities for new approaches to unlock the potential of EIP-AGRI Operational Groups (OGs) outcomes, support transnational collaboration and knowledge sharing between OGs and other innovative projects, and explore the setting-up of cross-border and transnational OGs.

To unlock the potential of OG outcomes, the workshop emphasised the importance of developing skills for knowledge exchange, utilising media and new tools for dissemination, and leveraging innovation support. Training advisors and OG members as multipliers in the dissemination process was highlighted. The use of AI, podcasts, and engaging journalists and social media influencers was suggested. Encouraging private actors' involvement and training in pitching OG results to potential investors was proposed. The importance of organising thematic meetings, field visits, demonstration events, webinars, and information days for OGs was emphasised.

Supporting transnational collaboration and knowledge sharing between OGs and other innovative projects was another key focus. The role of knowledge hubs in facilitating knowledge flows within the AKIS was underscored, with examples demonstrating different approaches to collecting and disseminating knowledge and innovations.

The workshop also explored the setting up of cross-border and transnational OGs. Key actions included starting with smaller initiatives and ensuring cooperation between Managing Authorities and Paying Agencies, organising thematic matchmaking events, and piloting small initiatives with national or regional money. Using existing networks, including Horizon thematic networks and National Contact Points and organising calls and funding differently were explored.



Source: EU CAP Network



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