

modern AKIS

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modernAKIS Together for Systems' Innovation

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Systems

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Table of content

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5
2. INTRODUCTION 6
3. AIM OF THE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 7
   - 3.1. WHO? 7
   - 3.2. WHAT? 7
   - 3.3. WHEN? 7
   - 3.4. HOW? 7
4. TYPES OF STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT 8
5. ASSESSING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT 9
6. DESCRIBING THE ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES 10
   - 6.1. WPS NEEDS 10
   - 6.1.1 WP1 10
   - 6.1.2 WP2 10
   - 6.1.3 WP3 10
   - 6.1.4 WP4 11
   - 6.1.5 WP5 11
   - 6.2. ENGAGEMENT OF THE DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES 11
   - 6.3. COMMUNICATION WITH AKIS CBS 12
   - 6.4. AIM OF ENGAGEMENT WITH THE PROJECT 13
   - 6.5. NEXT STEPS 14
7. STAKEHOLDER AMPLIFICATION – INVOLVEMENT WITH OTHER PROJECTS 15

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1. Executive Summary

This deliverable presents a comprehensive "Engagement Strategy" tailored to the specific needs and objectives of AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems) coordinating bodies. In an era of rapid agricultural transformation, this strategy serves as a roadmap to empower coordination bodies with the tools, methodologies and approaches needed to increase the reach and impact of AKIS.

The main objective of this engagement strategy is to create a dynamic ecosystem of knowledge exchange and collaboration between the various stakeholders. By promoting the active participation of farmers, advisors, researchers, policymakers, industry representatives and other key players, the strategy aims to capitalise on the wealth of knowledge and skills in the agricultural community.

Key components of the strategy include stakeholder amplification, which involves expanding the network of stakeholders involved by establishing links with other projects, institutions and initiatives that share common objectives. This not only broadens the knowledge base, but also facilitates the cross-pollination of ideas, ultimately driving innovation and problem-solving.

The strategy emphasises continuous engagement, recognising that the complex challenges of agriculture require ongoing dialogue and interaction. Activities include workshops, webinars and online platforms that facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration throughout the project's life.

In addition, the strategy, drawn up in co-creation with the leaders of the modernAKIS WPs, integrates approaches that are tailor-made for each WP, and perfectly integrated into the Communication, Dissemination and Exploitation Plan (CDE) strategy defined in the Deliverable 5.1).

By implementing this commitment strategy, the AKIS coordinating bodies can strengthen their role as a centre for knowledge dissemination, innovation, and policy integration. The result is a more resilient, sustainable, and competitive European agriculture, capable of facing current challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity and food security.

In conclusion, the "Engagement Strategy" presented in this document provides a strategic path for the AKIS coordinating bodies to increase their impact and relevance in the ever-evolving agricultural landscape. It is a testament to the commitment to collaboration, knowledge sharing and adaptability that will ultimately lead to the future success of European agriculture.

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2. Introduction

In an age marked by swift agricultural transformations, the development and implementation of a tailored "Engagement Strategy" is critical for the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) coordinating bodies. This deliverable unveils a comprehensive roadmap designed to provide these actors with the essential tools, methodologies, and approaches required to extend the reach and influence of AKIS.

The overarching aim of this engagement strategy is to foster a dynamic ecosystem of knowledge exchange and collaboration among diverse stakeholders. By actively involving farmers, advisors, researchers, policymakers, industry representatives, and other critical actors, this strategy aspires to capitalize the vast pool of knowledge and expertise within the agricultural community.

Key components of this strategy encompass stakeholder amplification, a strategic expansion of the stakeholder network by establishing links with projects, institutions, and initiatives that share common goals. This not only enriches the knowledge reservoir but also promotes the cross-fertilization of ideas, ultimately driving innovation and effective problem-solving.

The strategy stresses the importance of sustained engagement, recognizing that the complex challenges of agriculture demand ongoing dialogue and interaction. Activities like workshops, webinars, and online platforms have been tailored to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration throughout the project's lifecycle.

Furthermore, the strategy, crafted collaboratively bilateral working sessions with the leaders of the modernAKIS Work Packages (WPs), seamlessly integrates approaches customized for each WP, harmoniously aligning with the Communication, Dissemination, and Exploitation Plan (CDE) strategy defined in Deliverable 5.1.

Through the implementation of this Strategy, AKIS coordinating bodies can solidify their position as sources for knowledge dissemination, innovation, and policy integration. The outcome is a European agricultural landscape that is more resilient, sustainable, and competitive, capable of addressing pressing challenges such as climate change, resource scarcity, and food security, among others.

In summary, the "Engagement Strategy" unveiled in this document charts a strategic path for AKIS coordinating bodies to elevate their influence and significance in the ever-evolving agricultural field. It is a clear demonstration to their dedication to collaboration, knowledge sharing, and adaptability, factors that will ultimately steer the future success of European agriculture.

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3. Aim of the engagement strategy

The successful implementation of the AKIS coordinating bodies' engagement strategy is key to strengthening the effectiveness and relevance of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS) in Europe. This strategy represents a fundamental commitment to promote collaboration and the exchange of knowledge between a diverse range of agricultural stakeholders, from farmers and advisors, to researchers, policymakers, and industry representatives. To do this, it's important to address crucial elements such as "who, what, when and how" to realise their potential.

3.1. Who?

At the heart of AKIS are diverse stakeholders, each playing a unique role in the agricultural landscape. Farmers, advisors, researchers, policymakers, educators, industry representatives and the Coordination Bodies collectively form the "Who" in this knowledge exchange ecosystem. By uniting these actors, AKIS capitalizes on the wealth of expertise and experience needed to address the complex challenges facing modern agriculture.

3.2. What?

Provide a basis for a better connection between AKIS actors, fostering the dissemination outreach, a broader exchange of experiences and greater impact.

AKIS is all about knowledge, innovation, and networks. "The What" encompasses a broad spectrum of agricultural insights, from cutting-edge research findings to time-tested traditional wisdom. This knowledge, be it about sustainable farming techniques, climate-smart practices, or innovative crop management methods, is the valuable currency of AKIS.

3.3. When?

AKIS is a dynamic and ongoing process. While it has its foundations in years of agricultural history, "The When" for AKIS is now. The need for sustainable agriculture, environmentally friendly practices, and food security is pressing. Thus, AKIS operates continuously, facilitating dialogues, collaborations, and knowledge exchange among his actors.

3.4. How?

By fostering collaboration, innovation, and knowledge exchange, AKIS strives to build a sustainable and secure future for agriculture. The engagement strategy operates continuously, ensuring ongoing dialogues and interactions among stakeholders. Specific engagement activities, such as workshops, conferences, and knowledge sharing events, occur at various times throughout a combination of in-person and online platforms, with a focus on participatory processes.

AKIS embodies a collective effort to secure the future of agriculture. "The Who" involves diverse stakeholders, "The What" encompasses knowledge and innovation, "The When" operates continuously, "The How" knows no bounds, rooted in addressing pressing global challenges. In understanding these core elements, we unlock the potential of AKIS to drive forward a more resilient, sustainable, and prosperous future for agriculture and society.

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4. Types of stakeholder engagement

With a focus on promoting collaboration and knowledge exchange, the modernAKIS project seeks to engage a diverse array of stakeholders, including AKIS coordination bodies, policymakers, and industry leaders. The modernAKIS project champions a comprehensive engagement strategy that fosters a seamless transition from informative participation to consultative, and further to collaborative engagement.

In its **informative** phase, the project proactively disseminates essential updates, critical decisions, and notable progress through diverse channels, including the modernAKIS website, interactive modules, and a rich array of virtual and physical events. By cultivating an atmosphere of open communication and knowledge sharing, modernAKIS aims to cultivate a community of well-informed stakeholders dedicated to propelling the advancement of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems across Europe.

Acknowledging the pivotal role of stakeholders, the modernAKIS project emphasizes their active involvement in decision-making and planning processes. This **consultative** phase facilitates the integration of valuable insights, feedback, and contributions from stakeholders at each stage of the project. Stakeholders are encouraged to actively shape the trajectory of modernAKIS, notably during the strategic formulation phase, the development of specialized modules, and the establishment of best practices. Through this inclusive approach, modernAKIS seeks to empower AKIS coordination bodies and enhance the efficacy of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems at both national and European levels.

At the core of the modernAKIS project lies the principle of **collaborative** participation, fostering a dynamic environment where stakeholders actively contribute to the co-creation of knowledge. Engaging stakeholders in interactive workshops, networking sessions, and joint initiatives, modernAKIS endeavours to cultivate a thriving network committed to collectively shaping the future of European agriculture and forestry. By promoting an inclusive platform for sharing ideas, experiences, and expertise, modernAKIS aims to establish a robust and interconnected stakeholder network, driving the implementation of innovative and sustainable AKIS strategies and methodologies.

Transitioning **from informative engagement to consultative** participation within the modernAKIS project entails a significant shift towards fostering a culture of active involvement and shared decision-making among stakeholders. As the project disseminates crucial updates and essential information through various channels, stakeholders are encouraged to contribute valuable insights, feedback, and recommendations, thus initiating a consultative phase. This critical transition empowers stakeholders, especially AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs), to actively shape the trajectory of the project by providing their perspectives during strategic formulation and module development.

Encouraging collaborative discussions and facilitating an open exchange of ideas further enhances the efficacy of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems, both at the national and European levels. The project's emphasis on consultative participation enables AKIS CBs to play a more instrumental role in decision-making processes, fostering an environment of shared responsibility and collective ownership, thus laying the foundation for a seamless progression towards collaborative engagement. Through this shift, AKIS CBs can effectively collaborate with their national AKIS actors, fostering meaningful relationships and driving the implementation of innovative and sustainable AKIS strategies and methodologies.

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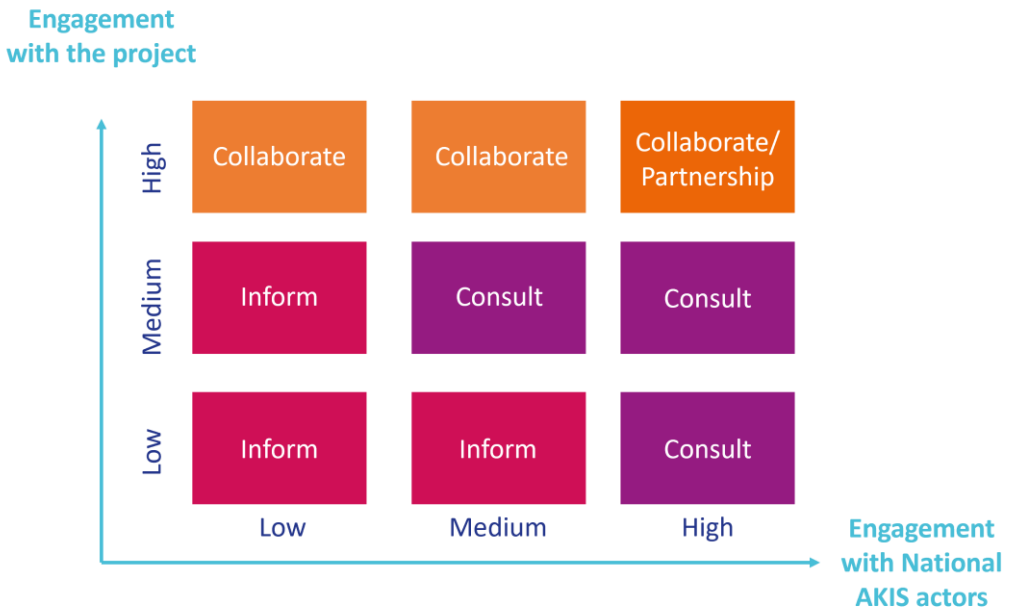
5. Assessing stakeholder engagement

To better categorize stakeholders, and their needs from the project, AKIS CBs will be asked to self-evaluate during the AKIS CB General Assembly that will take place in Zagreb, in November 2023.

Self-evaluation of AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs) is essential for modernAKIS to understand their unique needs and challenges, enabling targeted support and fostering enhanced collaboration. This approach promotes inclusivity and active participation, strengthening the project's support system.

The AKIS CBs self-evaluation will consist of AKIS CBs placing themselves in the graph below, taking into consideration two axes:

- Level of engagement with the project
- Level of engagement with their national AKIS actors



The evaluation of diverse engagement types within the project serves as a framework, not only to evaluate the involvement of AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs) in the project's initiatives but also to provide a comprehensive blueprint for their active engagement with national AKIS actors. By assessing the multifaceted nature of this participation, project partners can better comprehend and adapt to AKIS CBs needs, by fostering collaborative relationships, promoting capacity building, and facilitating extensive networking opportunities among AKIS CBs.

Simultaneously, AKIS CBs can leverage these insights to effectively engage with their respective AKIS actors at the national level, fostering a culture of open communication, knowledge sharing, and peer-to-peer learning. As the project unfolds, this comprehensive understanding of stakeholder engagement is poised to equip project partners with the necessary tools and strategies to provide continuous and robust support to AKIS CBs, ultimately fostering that their engagement moves from Informative to Collaborative, and when the two axes are firmly aligned, create a strong Partnership relationship between Project partners – AKIS CBs – National AKIS actors.

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6. Describing the engagement activities

After consulting the different project WPs, a detailed list of all the activities that will engage AKIS CBs is available below.

6.1. WPs needs

6.1.1 WP1

- Transformative AKIS journeys

To co-design the transformative journeys of change for the AKIS, the capacities of CBs will be built for a better governance, functioning and measurement of the AKISs.

- Need assessment

To assess and systematise the needs of AKIS CB a questionnaire was produced and sent.

6.1.2 WP2

- AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies

They're main objective is to facilitate peer-to-peer and best practice exchange on, among others:

✓ the (future) organisational set-up and improvement of the AKIS,
✓ current developments with relevance for AKIS
✓ the implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans / AKIS section

- Survey about the functioning of National AKIS filled in by project partners

AKIS CB have been consulted to fill in a survey detailing the way AKIS is designed in their MS.

- National CoP

AKIS CB will be the main actor, collaborating in meeting, and supporting the CoP manager, who will host and organise the CoP.

- Register as network members

AKIS CBs are invited to register as network members and participate in networking activities.

6.1.3 WP3

- Online modules

WP3 will develop 6 online modules (3 ready in February and 3 in July) aimed at AKIS Coordination Bodies and other AKIS actors. After attending all modules, the AKIS CBs will be entitled to the AKIS academy certification. Attendees will also be encouraged to share their experiences and testimonials.

- Workshops across Europe

Each MS will organise national co-creation workshops, with the support of a Capacity Building Team (made of members of the national CoP). These workshops will be aimed at AKIS actors, who will, after the workshops be able to understand, analyse, benchmark, and monitor & evaluate their AKIS, as well as their role in it.

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6.1.4 WP4

- ccCOP

A cross country Community of Practice will be created including AKIS CBs and other policy makers aiming to discuss policy, governance, and CAP interventions, ensuring the continuous improvement of AKIS Strategic Plans. The group meets twice a year, once on-site, once online, taking place during the AKIS CB General Assembly.

6.1.5 WP5

- Online workshops

Starting January 2024, the first round of online workshops with Member States will be co-organised with AKIS Coordination Bodies. There will be three rounds of workshops starting in M24, M48 and M72, organising 9 workshops in each round.

- Annual online European AKIS seminar

To optimize the C&D co-creation strategies defined in WP5, an online European AKIS seminar will take place for optimizing the knowledge exchange impact. The dissemination materials produced by the project will support the activities in this task.

The seminars will take place every year in between the two AKIS CBs Gas, around January. The main aim of the event will be to share metrics, success cases and co-create solutions.

- Two international AKIS conferences

In M36 and M82, two international AKIS conferences will be organised to reach a wider audience, disseminate the project results, and promote knowledge exchange among AKIS actors and other stakeholders. The first conference will share mid-term project results and collect feedback from AKIS actors, while the second one will present final project results.

6.2. Engagement of the different activities

Considering the established engagement types, the forthcoming project activities requiring the collaboration of AKIS CBs will be listed in the table below, categorizing the requisite engagement type as Informative, Consultative, or Collaborative.

Type of engagement	Informative (ask for/share information)	Consultative (ask for opinions and feedback)	Collaborative (co-creation and joint decision making)
WP1	Need Assessment		Transformative AKIS Journeys
WP2	Survey about National AKIS	AKIS CBs Gas National CoP	Register as network members
WP3	Online modules		Workshops across Europe
WP4			ccCoP
WP5			Online workshops Annual online European AKIS seminar Two international AKIS conferences

Moreover, the engagement strategy not only involves the project's direct interaction with AKIS CBs but also emphasizes a reciprocal approach that encourages them to actively engage with their respective national AKIS actors.

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Through an **informative** approach, the project fosters transparent communication and widespread knowledge dissemination, enabling AKIS CBs to share critical project updates and significant developments with their national networks.

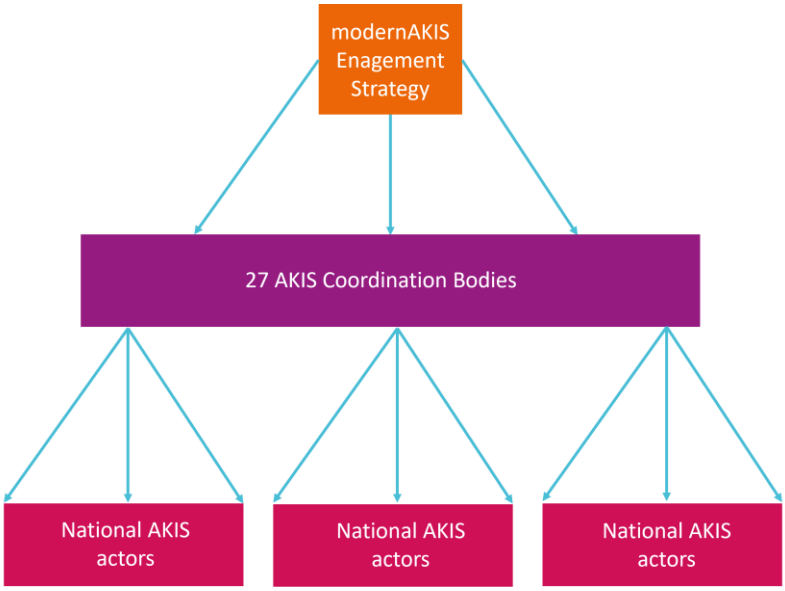
Additionally, by adopting a **consultative** stance, the project empowers AKIS CBs to seek valuable feedback and insights from their national AKIS actors, thereby ensuring a **collaborative** decision-making process that reflects the diverse perspectives and needs within the agricultural community.

The **collaborative** aspect of the strategy highlights the project's commitment to fostering a dynamic and inclusive environment that encourages the active exchange of ideas, experiences, and best practices, ultimately contributing to the advancement of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems across Europe.

Planned activities and needed engagement:

- Need Assessment
- Survey about National AKIS
- Online modules
- AKIS CBs GA
- Transformative AKIS Journeys

- National CoP
- Register as network member
- Workshops across Europe
- ccCoP
- Online workshops
- Annual online European AKIS seminar
- Two international AKIS conferences



6.3. Communication with AKIS CBs

The project has developed a focused communication strategy, as outlined in the D5.1 - C, D & E Plan, specifically tailored to effectively engage AKIS CBs.

This comprehensive strategy encompasses the definition of key messages that resonate with the needs and interests of the AKIS CBs, as can be seen in the table below:

Target group	Key message
AKIS Coordination Bodies & Managing Authorities (including policy makers)	modernAKIS will: • Build the capacity of AKIS Coordination Bodies & policy makers contributing for future impact analysis/policy evaluations. • Assure that key AKIS actors can easily access the knowledge exchange platform and apply it in their context to achieve better knowledge flows and thus a better functioning AKIS. • Draw up-to-date knowledge from the comparative AKIS analyses of the 27 MS using the co-designed benchmarking tool. • Develop knowledge that will pertain to AKIS models, strategies, governance solutions, and types of AKIS interventions beneficial to achieving CAP objectives. • Provide up-to-date learning material

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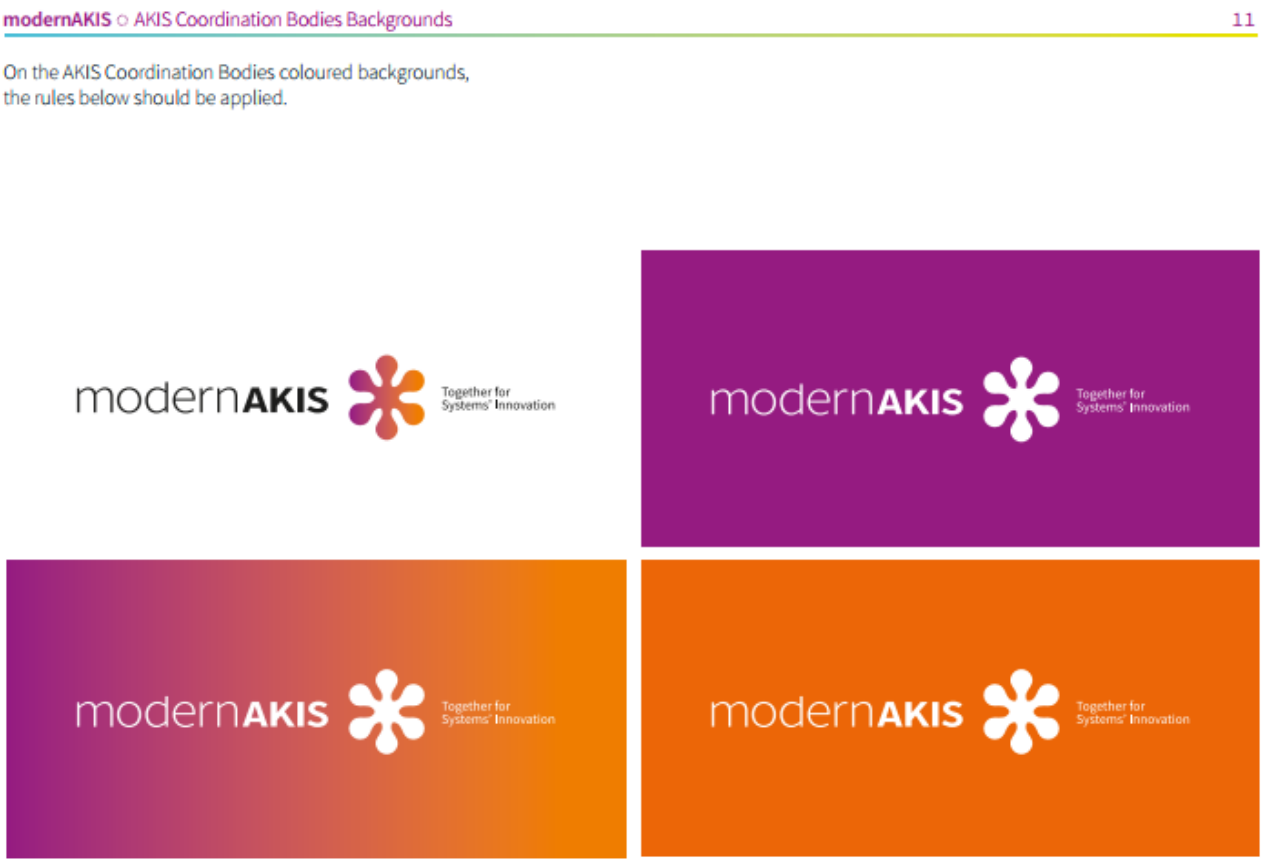
Furthermore, the strategy emphasizes the use of a distinct project image and designated colors, exclusively reserved for communication directed at AKIS CBs, ensuring that this communication sub-strategy is readily recognizable by all relevant stakeholders. Some examples are shown below:



This approach aims to create a cohesive and unified communication framework, enabling the project to foster meaningful and impactful interactions with AKIS CBs, ultimately contributing to the successful to the successful execution of the project's comprehensive engagement strategy.

6.4. Aim of engagement with the project

The different activities aimed at AKIS CBs will be crucial to ensure the continuous and active engagement in the modernAKIS project. Working closely together with project partners, AKIS CBs will have the opportunity to:

1. Enhance Capacities: Collaboration with the project enables AKIS CBs to enhance their governance structures and improve the measurement and functioning of their respective AKIS.
2. Participate in Knowledge Exchange: Through engagement, AKIS CBs can participate in peer-to-peer exchange and best practice sharing, allowing them to learn from the experiences of other AKIS actors across Europe.
3. Contribute to Policy Development: By working closely with the project, AKIS CBs can actively contribute to policy discussions, governance improvements, and CAP interventions, thus influencing the development of AKIS strategic plans at the national and European levels.

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4. Gain Certification and Recognition: Attending the project's online modules and co-creation workshops, can lead to the AKIS Academy certification.
5. Facilitate Networking and Collaboration: Close collaboration with the project grants networking opportunities for AKIS CBs, enabling them to build connections, share insights, and engage in peer-to-peer learning, ultimately fostering a collaborative and supportive environment.
6. Contribute to Project Impact: Through their active engagement, AKIS CBs can contribute to the project's overall impact by sharing their experiences, providing valuable feedback, and co-creating solutions that can be implemented and replicated across diverse AKIS contexts.

Collaborating closely with the modernAKIS project can significantly empower AKIS CBs, fostering their professional growth, enabling knowledge exchange, and enhancing their capacity to drive positive changes within their respective AKIS ecosystems.

6.5. Next steps

The upcoming phase of the engagement strategy entails the organisation of a workshop tailored for AKIS CBs at the next AKIS CBs General Assembly, in November 2023, in Zagreb, Croatia.

The primary objective of this workshop is to comprehensively present the engagement strategy, elucidating the various methods through which the project will bolster and fortify the efforts of the AKIS CBs.

Furthermore, the workshop serves as an invaluable platform to evaluate the current extent of engagement that AKIS CBs maintain with their respective AKIS actors. By fostering an open and interactive dialogue, the project aims to gather essential insights into the existing levels of collaboration and communication within the agricultural community. This critical assessment would enable the project to fine-tune its support mechanisms, facilitating a more targeted and effective approach to aid AKIS CBs in their ongoing endeavours and future initiatives, such as the online workshops, the annual online European AKIS seminar and the two international AKIS conferences.

Additionally, this engagement strategy serves only as a blueprint for the short-term involvement of AKIS CBs in the modernAKIS project activities, showcasing the dynamic nature of the document. As the project progresses, this strategy will be subject to continuous adaptation and refinement, catering to the evolving needs and challenges encountered along the way.

The ongoing monitoring of AKIS CBs' engagement will play a crucial role in gauging the effectiveness of the strategy and identifying areas for improvement and adjustment. Utilizing a range of key performance indicators and feedback mechanisms, the project team will systematically assess the level of participation, involvement, and contribution of AKIS CBs in various activities. Regular surveys, feedback sessions, and structured assessments will provide valuable insights into the effectiveness of the engagement strategy, enabling the project to make informed adjustments and adaptations as needed.

AKIS CBs active participation, feedback, and contributions will be essential not only in shaping the direction of the project in the short term but also in ensuring its overall success in the long run. By fostering a collaborative environment that encourages open communication and knowledge exchange, the project aims to leverage the collective expertise and insights of AKIS CBs, thereby driving the advancement of agricultural knowledge and innovation systems across Europe.

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7. Stakeholder amplification – Involvement with other projects

Amplifying the engagement strategy's reach is crucial for the continuous growth and development of AKIS coordination bodies. One effective approach to achieve this is through increased involvement with other projects and initiatives that share common goals and stakeholders. This chapter outlines the "Who, What, When, Where, and Why" of this strategy to broaden the network of engagement.

The Who: Stakeholder amplification involves reaching out to a broader spectrum of actors within the agricultural community. This includes collaborating with international organizations, research institutions, and NGOs, as well as engaging with local communities and non-traditional actors who can contribute valuable insights and perspectives.

The What: By engaging in other projects, AKIS coordination bodies can gain access to a wealth of additional knowledge, best practices, and innovative solutions. This engagement can lead to cross-pollination of ideas, resulting in the development of more effective strategies for addressing agricultural challenges.

The When: Involvement with other projects is an ongoing process. modernAKIS actively seek opportunities for collaboration and engagement at various stages of project development. This continuous engagement ensures a steady flow of ideas and insights. modernAKIS has worked with sister projects from the very beginning, namely EU-FarmBook, ATTRACTISS and PREMIERE. This joint work includes multiple meetings and joint events, as well as a common newsletter. In addition, joint actions are planned with projects such as i2coonect or the more recent COREnet and EU4Advice, as well as the EU CAP network, just to give a few examples.

The Where: The scope of involvement is not limited by geographical boundaries. It extends to both local, regional, national, and European projects, enabling AKIS coordination bodies to tap into a diverse range of knowledge and expertise.

The Why: The primary goal of stakeholder amplification through involvement in other projects is to enhance the impact and effectiveness of AKIS. By expanding their network and knowledge base, coordination bodies are better equipped to address complex agricultural challenges, foster innovation, and support the needs of farmers and other stakeholders.

In conclusion, involvement in other projects is a vital component of the Engagement Strategy. It allows AKIS coordination bodies to extend their reach and leverage a wide array of resources and expertise, ultimately contributing to a more resilient, sustainable, and innovative agricultural sector. This approach aligns with the core mission of AKIS, which is to create a dynamic and adaptive ecosystem that responds effectively to the ever-evolving challenges of agriculture.

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