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Project management	Institution	
Person in charge	Simona Cristiano	CREA
Work package	WP1	Impactful framework for transformative AKIS journeys
Work package leader	Simona Cristiano	CREA
Author(s)	Simona Cristiano	CREA
	Valentina Carta	CREA
	Edward Kyei Twum	CREA
Contributors	Patrizia Proietti	CREA
	Stephanie Bürger	LF Österreich
	Elena Teodora Miron	LF Österreich
	Avion Philips	TEAGASC
Reviewers	Óscar Bernárdez	FEUGA
	Ozren Hrsto	MPS
Version	V0	

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Acronyms

AKIS – Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System

CAP – Common Agricultural Policy

CD- Capacity Development

CDAIS - Capacity Development for Agricultural Innovation Systems

CNA - Capacity Needs' Assessment

CoP – Community of Practice

CB-CoPs – Country-Based Community of Practice

DEF4AKIS -Developmental oriented framework for the evaluation for the AKIS

EC - European Commission

EIP – European Innovation Partnership

ELA - Experiential Learning Assessment

EU - European Union

ISS – Innovation Support Services

KT&I- Knowledge Transfer & Innovation

M&E - Monitoring & Evaluation

MA – Managing Authorities

MAA – Multi-Actor Approach

MS – Member State

MSC – Most Significant Change

OECD – The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OG - Operational Group

SP – Strategic Plan

TAJ -Transformative AKIS Journey

WP – Work Package

1. Executive Summary

This deliverable (D1.2) presents an **interim review** of the **Transformative AKIS Journeys (TAJs)** being implemented under the **modernAKIS project**. **modernAKIS** is designed to support the capacity development of the **governing bodies of Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS)**, as well as the **key actors of change within agricultural systems**, particularly those involved in the implementation of the **Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Strategic Plans 2023–2027**. The overarching goal is to strengthen AKIS functioning on the ground across the EU, thereby contributing to a more **modernized, resilient, sustainable, and competitive agricultural sector** in Europe.

The TAJs are at the heart of this ambition. Framed in **Deliverable 1.1**, the TAJs are conceptualized as **evolutionary learning journeys** that move AKIS actors beyond familiar boundaries to explore new perspectives, confront challenges, and co-create innovative approaches. This discovery process is intended to foster institutional transformation, strengthen collaboration, and enable long-term learning.

The interim review synthesizes evidence from the first year of TAJ implementation. This includes insights from in-country capacity development meetings, participant interviews, project workshops, and feedback surveys gathered from events such as **AKIS-in-Action networking meetings**, **AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs) General Assembly (GA)**, **Project meetings**, and **ccCoP meetings**. The review traces TAJ progress through a **six-phase learning framework**, each representing a stage in the transformative journey:

1. **Disorienting Dilemma** – The starting point of transformation. Participants encounter new perspectives or disruptions that challenge existing assumptions. Activities such as eLearning modules, workshops, were relied on, introducing complexity and ambiguity to provoke reflection and mindset shifts.
2. **Critical Reflection** – Participants engage in structured introspection, reassessing their values, roles, and responsibilities within AKIS. Activities such as workshops, validation sessions for Capacity Needs Assessments (CNA), and interactive networking sessions were used.
3. **Capacity Needs Assessment** – Key actors identify gaps in skills and knowledge and co-design learning agendas. Two CNAs conducted in 2023 and 2024 shaped the project's focus by identifying 12 key topics and tailoring actions to AKIS actors' needs.
4. **Development of Capacity** – This phase focuses on strengthening four systemic capacities: navigating complexity, collaborating effectively, reflecting and learning, and engaging in strategic and political processes. Capacity-development was delivered through eLearning modules, in-country workshops, AKIS in action, AKIS in practice, benchmarking tools etc.
5. **Exploring New Roles and Self-Efficacy** – Participants begin to act in new roles, build relationships, and gain confidence in influencing change. This phase was delivered using resources such as benchmarking tools, Networking events and community of practices, AKIS interactive sessions etc.
6. **Systematization of Learning** – Experiences are captured, consolidated, and shared through platforms like AKISConnect, the AKIS Strategy Cards, Stories of Change, video interviews, and comparative analysis reports. This ensures learning is institutionalized.

Findings confirm that the TAJs have made promising progress, with visible progress in stakeholder engagement, institutional awareness, and capacity development among key AKIS actors. They are helping AKIS actors develop a shared language, identify their own development paths, and engage more reflexively with national strategies. The interim review also highlights the role of the TAJs in shifting perceptions, building trust, and fostering collaboration among diverse AKIS actors. Feedback from surveys of activities/events indicates that participants find the TAJs relevant and useful.

Several **outstanding activities** are outlined for the next phase of implementation, including:

- Finalization of a glossary of AKIS-related terms;
- Deepening and updating the Capacity Needs Assessments (CNAs);
- Co-creation of a common EU framework for assessing AKIS functionality.

The deliverable concludes with actionable **recommendations** to improve the relevance, coherence, and impact of the TAJs. These include:

- Strengthening vertical linkages between EU-level and national-level AKIS governance;
- Embedding reflexivity more deeply into capacity-building processes;
- Supporting flexible, iterative learning as a core method of institutional change;
- Continuing the development of shared reference tools and platforms that facilitate peer exchange and system-wide learning.

In summary, the interim review confirms that the TAJs are not just a set of project activities—they are a strategic and evolving mechanism for enabling transformative capacity within European AKIS. By supporting adaptive learning, critical reflection, and collaboration, the TAJs hold the potential to reshape how agricultural innovation is governed and produced across the EU—paving the way for more integrated, inclusive, and future-ready knowledge and innovation systems.

2. Introduction

The Transformative AKIS Journey (TAJ) is a key methodological pillar of the modernAKIS project, designed to support systemic change and capacity-building within the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS). Grounded in the Multi-Actor Approach (MAA), the TAJ offers a structured, reflective process that enables actors to assess, reframe, and co-develop their national and regional AKIS strategies through experience-sharing and continuous learning.

TAJ draw on the sound combination of three participatory systemic approaches to behavioral change that inspire an overall pathway of collective learning and system thinking development across the EU: (1) transformative change; (2) multi-actor (MA) approach; and (3) reflexive monitoring and evaluation in action.

The TAJs intervene on all three levels of AKIS by supporting key actors of change in developing three core capacities – plus one overarching capacity – identified by Yang et al. (2021). The capacities include: (i) capacity to navigate complexity; (ii) capacity to collaborate; (iii) capacity to reflect and learn; and (iv) capacity to engage in strategic and political processes, including the AKIS strategies within the CAP SPs (§4.2). They are essential for enhancing actors' ability to adapt and respond, thereby unlocking the innovation potential with an AKIS.

As it is designed, modernAKIS relies on an inherent multi-actor approach that ensures three interconnected functions: (1) the organization of structures (actors and their organization) and their functioning through appropriate methodologies; (2) the co-development of systemic capacities and knowledge that accordingly serve the capacity development of the key actors of change and the AKIS in Member States (MSs); and (3) the enabling mechanisms that ensure responsiveness, significance and effectiveness of MA implementation throughout the TAJs along with impact across AKISs in MSs (§4.3).

There is a systematic, reflexive assessment process that support key AKIS actors in continuously analyzing how their actions contribute to strengthening the AKIS. This process reinforces the development paths of the TAJs and feeds into iterative learning loops, enabling the ongoing adjustment of actions within their respective systems (§4). Reflexive practices have the potential to prompt participants involved in the evaluation process to view their networking activities from a broader societal perspective — especially in relation to existing barriers—so that these activities can be recalibrated accordingly.

As the TAJ evolves, it is essential to monitor its implementation and relevance to ensure that it remains aligned with the project's strategic goals and the real-world needs of AKIS actors. This necessity led to an interim review of the TAJ, undertaken to assess progress, identify areas for improvement, and support strategic alignment moving forward. The review is particularly timely, taking stock of activities already implemented, collecting stakeholder feedback, and mapping out what “still” needs to be addressed in the next phase of the journey.

The rest of this interim review (D1.2) is structured as follows. Section 3 details the methodology followed to prepare the deliverable. Section 4 retraces how the TAJs have been implemented so far. Section 5 details the six learning loops of the TAJs. Section 6 answers whether the TAJs are meeting the expectations of Key AKIS actors. Section 7 provides key insights on the TAJs. In particular, the TAJs relevance, effectiveness and insights for future development. Section 8 provides outstanding issues to address. Section 9 concludes with detailed recommendations for the modernAKIS project.

3. Methodology to prepare this deliverable

This deliverable was developed using a structured and participatory methodology, grounded in the principles of the Multi-Actor Approach (MAA) and aligned with the conceptual framework established for the TAJ (D1.1).

Key elements of the review process — including the scope, structure, and content of the deliverable — were discussed and progressively refined through regular WP1 and inter-WP meetings. These meetings activated a collaborative process in which preliminary insights, methodological reflections, and content proposals were openly shared, fostering alignment and ensuring coherence across the activities carried out by different project partners.

To ensure full engagement, raise awareness about the rationale behind the review process, and assess partners' satisfaction with the implementation of the TAJs, a final consultation with all project partners was planned prior to the formal review phase. This consultation took place during the project meeting on April 14, 2025, using Mentimeter (menti.com) to gather structured feedback in

an interactive and inclusive way. The feedback collected during this session was analyzed and incorporated into the updated version of the deliverable, ahead of the internal review scheduled for mid-July.

This multi-phase, collaborative methodology ensured that the deliverable benefited from diverse perspectives, experiences, and insights of the project's multi-actor partnership, enhancing both its relevance and quality. During the next project meeting scheduled for October 2025, a reflective session will be dedicated to discuss and agree on the outstanding activities of modernAKIS.

3.1 On what basis is the interim review made?

This interim review has been based on three questions:

- **How has the TAJ been implemented so far? Progress and key achievements at the light of the TAJs conceptualization:** The interim review builds on substantial work already done—completed actions, created materials, and updated activities.
- **Have the TAJs been relevant, effective and satisfactory? AKIS actors' feedback:** The interim review involved taking stock of feedback collected across current perceptions, relevance, and satisfaction among partners and key AKIS actors. This helps to ensure that the TAJs meet real expectations and support capacity for change.

What still needs to be integrated or adjusted within the TAJs? Outstanding initiatives: It identifies remaining actions that are planned but not yet launched, ensuring the journey progresses as intended. For example, launching a glossary of terms associated with modernAKIS to promote homogenous description and shared understanding among partners and key AKIS actors.

3.2 Relation to the activities of the Project

T1.1 strongly and constantly collaborated with the other WPs and tasks to support the timely implementation of the TAJs.

All the WP and task leaders contributed to the collection of data on the feedback from the participants on the project activities and during the inter-WP meetings.

4. How long have the TAJs (Transformative AKIS Journeys) been implemented so far?

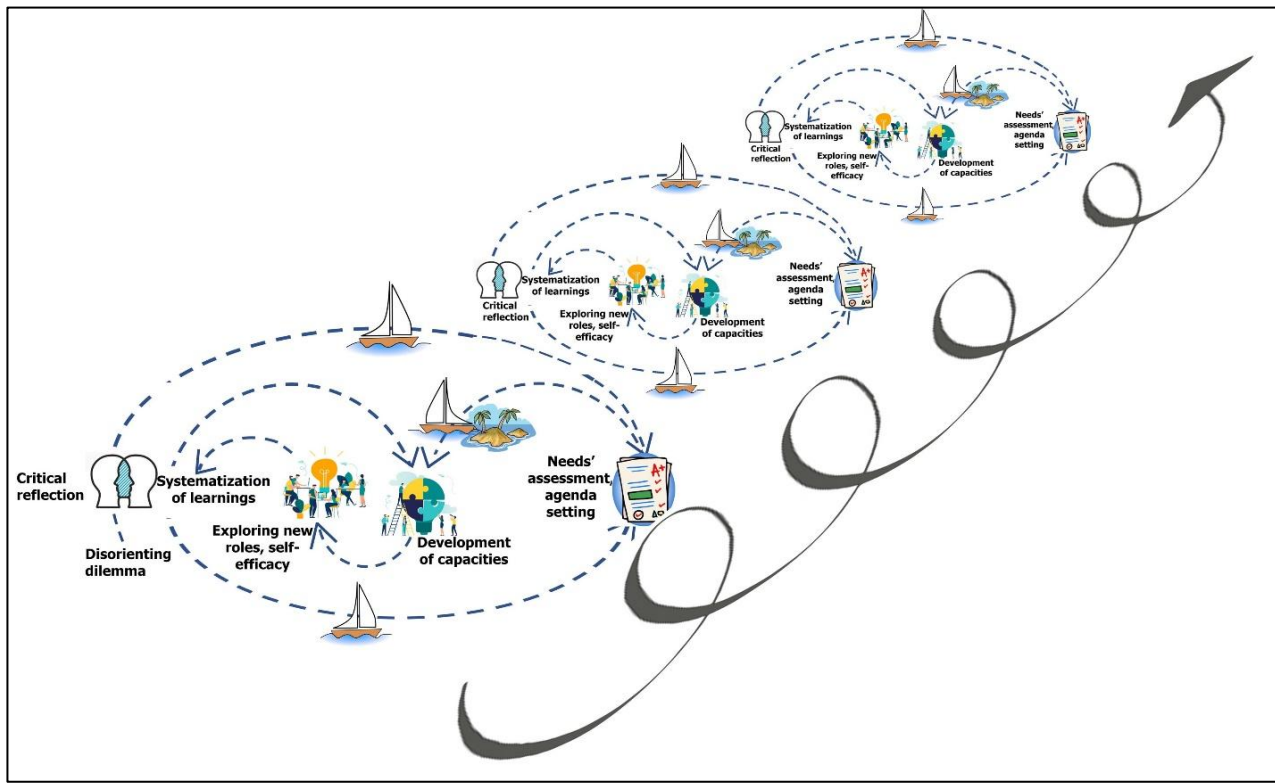
The **Transformative AKIS Journeys** (TAJs), as conceptualized in D1.1, represent a **cyclical** and **iterative** pathway of learning, development, and critical reflection designed to enhance the capacity of key AKIS change agents engaged in the modernAKIS project to navigate and strengthen the AKIS.

TAJs frame capacity development as a **dynamic**, and **progressive** process that unfolds along a **spiral** comprising **six learning loops** (D1.1 – modernAKIS) (figure 1):

- (1) a disorienting dilemma,
- (2) critical reflection,
- (3) capacity needs assessment and agenda setting,
- (4) capacity development,

- (5) exploration of new roles along with relationship-building and self-efficacy, and
- (6) the systematization of learnings.

Figure 1. Stages of the TAJs



Source: Cristiano et al. (2023) D1.1 - modernAKIS

At their core, TAJs are **iterative**, meaning that each cycle builds on the previous one, allowing actors to continuously refine their understanding and practices over time, develop new capacities, and become increasingly aware of their role within the system and the specific functions they perform. This repetition is not redundant— it is essential for deepening impact and adapting to new challenges.

They are also **reflective**. Each stage of the journey invites participants to critically examine their assumptions, roles, and behaviors. Through introspection and dialogue, individuals gain clarity and confidence in their contributions to the system.

TAJs are inherently **collaborative**. Progress is made not in isolation but through shared experiences, group discussions, and co-created learning agendas. The collective nature of the process ensures that diverse perspectives are integrated and that solutions are grounded in real needs.

Finally, TAJs are **progressive**. With each loop, actors move closer to sustained transformation. New capacities are developed, roles are redefined, and knowledge is systematized—leading to a more resilient, inclusive, and innovative AKIS.

4.1 Interim review as an integral part of the TAJs

This **interim review of the TAJs** is necessary to ensure the TAJs remain relevant, effective, and properly tailored as circumstances, challenges, and feedback from partners change over time. In fact:

- **TAJs are not static:** Due to the diverse and changing contexts of AKIS across Member States, the pathway and activities must be regularly adapted.
- **Responding to emerging needs:** The review allows for adjustments based on new capacity needs, participant feedback, and the evolution of the project's context and priorities.
- **Continuous improvement:** modernAKIS is based on cycles of learning, reflection, and action; the interim review is a planned part of that loop to refine what has been done and prepare the next stages for greater impact.

Along this interim review, D1.2 serves as a **structured pause in the TAJs' cyclical journey** — not a full revision, but a realignment—to make certain that the transformative processes are still relevant and continue to match the needs and expectations of all involved, building new capacities for the ongoing improvement of AKIS.

In this respect, this interim review of the TAJs retraces the various phases planned for implementation through modernAKIS project (See section 5 for these phases and D1.1 for detailed discussion on the phases).

5. The six learning loops of the TAJs

5.1 Disorienting dilemma



TRIGGERING AWARENESS AND QUESTIONING ASSUMPTIONS

This is the starting point of transformation. Participants are confronted with a challenge or new perspective that disrupts their usual way of thinking. It creates discomfort but also opens the door to change.

Expected result for key AKIS actors of change: **Provoking critical reflections and shift in mindsets.**

ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

- eLearning modules and the following in-country workshops (WP3) were specifically designed to introduce disorienting dilemmas, encouraging participants to question their understanding of AKIS, its components and functions, along with innovation models, actors, roles and perceptions within AKIS.
- Other activities and deliverable contributed arising these dilemmas, even implicitly, prompting participants to confront complexity and ambiguity in AKIS governance (e.g. D1.1 (WP1); workshops and serious games (WP4); D1.14 (WP1) and the workshops.

“What does adopting a strategic approach mean beyond simply planning AKIS interventions strengthening?”

CHALLENGES

- Late start of key activities (e.g. learning modules).
- Striking a critical balance between reflective questioning and practical capacity-building activities.
- Addressing participants' lower sensitivity to questioning alongside heightened expectations for capacity-building sessions.
- Addressing the limited capacity to effectively facilitate questioning sessions.
- Addressing the limited availability of in-person meetings better suited for questioning sessions.

OUTSTANDING INITIATIVES

- Better integrate reflective questioning into capacity-building sessions to accelerate learning loops and enhance participants' reflexivity.

LINK TO SYSTEM CAPACITIES

- Capacity to reflect and learn.

5.2 Critical reflection



REFRAMING BELIEFS AND ROLES

Participants engage in deep introspection, analysing their values, behaviors, and assumptions in light of the dilemma. This stage is essential for breaking down old mental models and preparing for new ways of acting.

Expected result for key AKIS actors of change: **A clearer understanding of one's position and responsibilities within the AKIS.**

ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

- Two reflexive workshops were conducted during the General Assembly of the AKIS Coordination Bodies, where participants analysed their Stories of Change—personal transformations induced by modernAKIS (WP1 & WP3).
- The validation sessions held in person to finalize the results of the surveys on the Capacity Needs Assessments (CNA) induced reflecting to prioritize needs for knowledge support through increasing awareness and action within the AKIS (WP1).
- Other examples of activities that contributed inducing critical reflection are some AKIS interactive sessions of the ccCoPs with serious games (WP4), the AKIS-in-practice! (WP1), some interactive sessions during the AKIS in action networking events. (WP2) and the eLearning modules and capacity development in-Country workshops (WP3).

"AKIS is indeed like a pudding, you have to taste/experience it to appreciate it"

CHALLENGES

- Still limited awareness of the value of reflective sessions compared to capacity-building sessions.
- Addressing the limited capacity, methods & tools to effectively facilitate reflexive sessions and capture evidence of stories of change.
- Addressing the limited availability of in-person meetings better suited for reflexive sessions.

OUTSTANDING INITIATIVES

- Make reflective sessions more routine to help participants gain greater awareness and skills in reflective processes, as well as to capture more stories of change.
- Enhance capacities to moderate reflexive sessions at Country level.
- Creation of a tool for AKIS to monitor itself, revealing stories of change of key AKIS actors.

LINK TO SYSTEM CAPACITIES

- Capacity to reflect and learn.

Reflective exercises are an integral part of the overall capacity development process outlined in the TAJs, as they complete the learning loops of the change agents involved. These exercises support the internalization of knowledge and foster deeper awareness of individual and collective transformation.

During the project implementation, the effective implementation of the methodology (van Mierlo et., 2016) has been adjusted iteratively to be adapted to the particular circumstances of the key actors of change participating in modernAKIS (e.g. numerosity, plurality and variability of persons).

So far, several activities conducted throughout the project implementation have provoked key AKIS actors of change to reflect on their learnings and enhance their capacity for transformative action within AKIS. Particularly, more abstract reflections and knowledge-based outputs have emerged through eLearning modules and the in-country capacity development workshops (WP3), as well as through interactive sessions of the ccCoPs (WP4), all of which have significantly deepened participants' learning and engagement.

Two dedicated reflective sessions were held during the 3rd and 5th in-person General Assemblies of the AKIS Coordination Bodies. These sessions were designed to foster deep individual and collective reflection among participants on the learnings and impacts of the modernAKIS project, with the ultimate goal of getting aware about the contribution of this project in enhancing the capacities to act for systemic change within AKISs.

The Most Significant Change (MSC) method mostly inspired these two sessions.

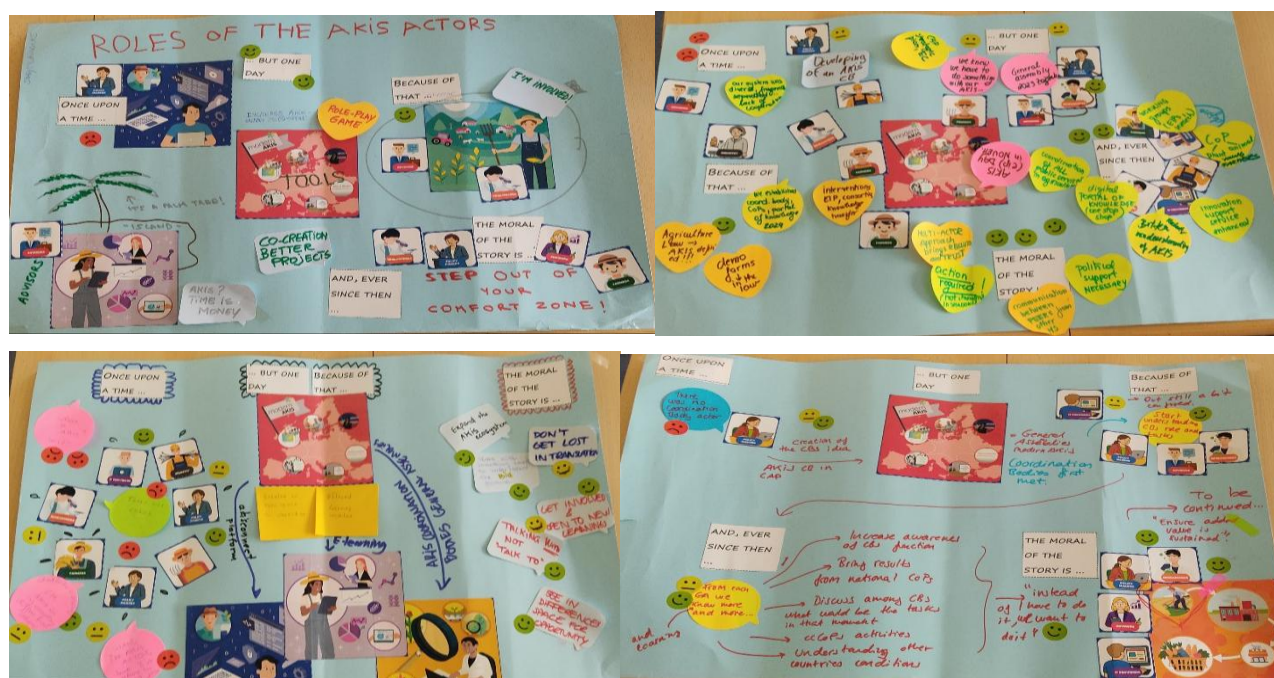
Box 1: MSC - Most Significant Change method to boost reflexivity upon modernAKIS effects on key AKIS actors of change

This method is particularly relevant for modernAKIS due to its emphasis on peer-to-peer learning, the sharing and comparison of experiences, which creates valuable learning loops. In practice, the MSC method focuses on identifying and sharing stories that describe the most significant changes experienced by key AKIS actors. These stories are then collectively selected, discussed, and analyzed to pinpoint key transformations, understand their importance, and facilitate mutual learning. The primary goal is to uncover which changes participants deem most significant and the reasons behind their choices. This approach enables underscoring the subjective and qualitative effects of modernAKIS, providing deep insights into how it genuinely affects people's lives and practices.

The reflexive exercise was structured in three progressive steps: (i) **Reconstructing Individual Stories of Change**; (ii) **Sharing Experiences in Groups Collective Reflection**; and (iii) **Storytelling Illustration** (box 2). Each step aimed at guiding participants from individual introspection to collective sense-making and storytelling (box 1 & 2).

Nine stories of change emerged from the in-person group work, and they highlight the significant positive impacts generated by modernAKIS (See figure 2 for sample poster presentation of stories of change). Several of the stories of change were recorded and are shared on a dedicated section of the YouTube channel of modernAKIS.

Figure 2. Sample poster presentation of stories of change



Box 2: Process of the reflexive exercises

Step 1: Reconstructing Individual Stories of Change

1. Participants began with individual reflection on a key learning or insight from their involvement in modernAKIS.
2. They were encouraged to pinpoint a specific activity that led to a change in: (a) their thinking; (b) their behaviours, or (c) their role within the AKIS.
3. A narrative framework was used to structure their personal “story of change”: (a) Once upon a time...; (b) But one day..., (c) Because of that...(d) And ever since then...

Step 2: Sharing Experiences in Groups

1. Participants formed groups of ten to share their stories.
2. Each group selected the most significant story for the plenary session, highlighting diverse transformative experiences.

Step 3: Collective Reflection and Storytelling Illustration

1. Groups presented and co-constructed selected stories in a plenary setting, using visual tools such as posters and stickers, groups illustrated their narratives, again following the structured storytelling format.

The individual Stories of Change are available at the playlist “[Tranformative AKIS Journey](https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMSSGZC_T3ndj_FYid08Poy6IBpKE09uO&si=UScOVWREMYH_FkkmV)” of modernAKIS YouTube channel:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMSSGZC_T3ndj_FYid08Poy6IBpKE09uO&si=UScOVWREMYH_FkkmV

All in all, the reflexive exercise served multiple purposes:

- **Consolidation of learning:** By revisiting and articulating their experiences, participants reinforced their understanding of key concepts and practices introduced by modernAKIS.
- **Initiation of new learning cycles:** The storytelling process sparked new insights and ideas for future action, along with highlighting the diversity of transformative experiences across different AKIS contexts.
- **Tackling reluctance and community building:** Sharing stories helped combat reluctance of “silent actors” and fostered a sense of belonging and mutual recognition among AKIS actors. This collaborative exercise not only consolidated individual insights but also created a shared understanding of the project’s impact. The stories were enriched with reflections on when the change occurred, what triggered it, and how it influenced roles, relationships, and actions within the AKIS.
- **Strategic reflection:** Participants linked their personal growth to broader system capacities, such as navigating complexity, collaborating effectively, and engaging in strategic processes.

Additionally, to the in-person group work held during the GAs, several “**Transformative AKIS Journey interviews**” were held and aimed to capture personal stories and real-life examples of how the modernAKIS project has contributed to strengthening and transforming AKIS at national or regional levels across Europe. The interviews will be used on modernAKIS communication channels and social media to inspire and connect AKIS stakeholders across Member States, showcasing the value and impact of the project.

So far, six interviews have been recorded. Each interview presented a unique transformation pathway – story of change –, but they collectively highlight the critical role of peer learning, capacity building, inclusive system design, practical learning, and co-creation in driving systemic AKIS development. Notably, tools like workshops, videos, and AKISconnect empowered participants; national contexts shaped the pace and depth of implementation; and all stories reflect movement from fragmented or nascent systems to more coordinated, actor-inclusive structures.

Ultimately, the stories revealed several recurring themes, allowing some valuable insights to emerge:

- **From Confusion to Clarity:** Participants moved from uncertainty about AKIS roles to a clearer understanding through structured engagement.
- **From Isolation to Ecosystem:** Many described a shift from feeling alone to being part of a collaborative network.
- **Value of Peer Learning:** Learning from others was a key driver of change. Additionally, the interviews revealed that exposure to the experiences of other countries helped local actors reimagine their own systems. Peer learning offered practical examples, built confidence, and inspired structural innovation—particularly in countries like Romania and Italy.
- **Openness and Innovation:** Exposure to new tools and metaphors helped unlock transformation.

- **Stepping out of Comfort Zones:** Embracing multi-actor approaches led to greater trust and impact.
- **Capacity Building and Conceptual Clarity:** Workshops, training materials, and joint sessions helped stakeholders better understand what AKIS is and how it functions. This foundational clarity proved essential for system coordination and strategy development.
- **From Theory to Practice—Operationalizing AKIS:** The stories showed a shift from understanding AKIS as a theoretical framework to applying it in concrete actions—such as including AKIS in national strategic plans, creating innovation support services, or setting up coordination bodies.
- **Value of Functional and Inclusive System Design:** The stories showed that involving actors across sectors—researchers, advisors, farmers, policymakers—in decision-making and innovation processes made the AKIS more functional and relevant.
- **Importance of the Multi-Actor Approach (MAA):** True change occurred when various AKIS actors were engaged in dialogue, learning, and co-designing. This fostered shared ownership, mutual respect, and actionable solutions tailored to local realities.
- **The Role of modernAKIS project as a Change Enabler:** modernAKIS provided more than tools; the project created a structured yet flexible space for experimentation, dialogue, and collective reflection. It acted as both a guide and a platform for building momentum toward systemic AKIS development.

Box 3: “Transformative AKIS Journey” interviews: Tell Your Story of Change

These questions focus on the before, the turning point, and the post-modernAKIS impact.

1. How has the modernAKIS project inspired your way of thinking/action/function as AKIS Coordination Body?
2. Can you share a specific example of how modernAKIS helped improve AKIS in your Member State?
3. Do you have any personal experiences or success stories that could inspire other Member States?
4. Which tools, resources, or results from the project have been the most useful to you? Why?
5. Were there any challenges in your Member State or region before modernAKIS?
6. Looking ahead, how do you see the long-term impact of modernAKIS on AKIS in your country or region?

The individual Stories of Change are available at the playlist “Transformative AKIS Journey” of modernAKIS YouTube channel:

https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLMSSGZC_T3ndj_FYid08Poy6IBpKE09uO&si=UScOVWREMYHFkkmV

5.3 Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA)



IDENTIFYING GAPS AND CO-CREATING A LEARNING PATH

Key actors of change assess their **capacity gaps** and collaboratively define a **learning agenda**.

Expected result for key AKIS actors of change: **They direct project activities and TAJs are tailored upon their needs.**

ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

- Two CNAs have been conducted for directing the learning agendas of modernAKIS for 2023 and 2024 respectively (WP1).
- The CNA processes brought to identifying 12 topics and a variety of typologies of activities included in the learning agenda.
- Discussion among the country-based CoPs started in view of better tailoring the CNA at country level.

"Why does the CNA include topics like climate change mitigation if the limited scope of AKIS interventions makes a significant impact difficult to achieve?"

CHALLENGES

- The CNA's relevance and targeting are under discussion.
- Less awareness of the value of conducting the CNA on the system capacities at country level.
- Addressing varying sensitivities regarding capacity development topics.
- Balancing grassroots needs with AKIS contributions to CAP objectives.
- Low level of response to the CNA survey, denoting low sensitiveness by partners and other AKIS actors

OUTSTANDING INITIATIVES

- Enlarging the scope of the CNA to more effectively capture grassroots needs/expectations (CB-CoPs).
- Clarifying the function and purpose of the CNA and the benefits for partners and other AKIS actors to actively participate.
- Promoting a major commitment by the partners to engage local AKIS actors in CNA.
- Provide clearer evidence on the linkages between the CNA results and the agenda of events/activities.

LINK TO SYSTEM CAPACITIES

- Capacity to navigate complexity.
- Capacity to collaborate.
- Capacity to reflect and learn.
- Capacity to engage in strategic political processes.

The Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) is conceived to be a central instrument – an evidence-based approach - within the modernAKIS project, designed to annually identify the real-world needs of key AKIS actors — Coordination Bodies, advisors, policymakers, farmers, educators, and researchers. It serves as a strategic tool to capture the evolving needs of key AKIS actors, ensuring that actions/activities align with on-the-ground challenges and the broader objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

So far, the CNA has been conducted twice – first in 2023 and again in 2024 – following a two-phase process each year. The first phase consists of an online survey using a Likert scale to capture participants' views on strategic AKIS topics and CAP objectives. The second phase involves co-validation during the General Assembly of the AKIS Coordination Bodies, where the results are refined and the most pressing topics and related project activities are prioritized to inform the modernAKIS learning agenda.

Participation grew from 101 respondents in 2023 to 133 in 2024, representing stakeholders from across the EU. In 2023, the most represented groups were AKIS Coordination Bodies and advisory services, followed by researchers and educators. Farmer and agribusiness participation, initially limited, showed improvement in the 2024 assessment—an important step toward ensuring more balanced and inclusive representation.

Comparing the findings of CNA 2024 with that of CNA 2023, several important trends emerged. While there was continuity in some strategic areas, new priorities and shifts were also observed, offering a refined picture of the evolving needs of stakeholders.

Main Findings

Key Shifts

- From Advisory services to Generational renewal: In 2023, advisory services clearly dominated, emerging as the number one priority (17%). However, generational renewal emerged as the top priority in 2024, with 28%.
- Strengthening AKIS Capacities followed closely at 27%, a noticeable increase from 2023 (9%). This reflects a growing concern that actors within Member States require improved skills, stronger networks, and more effective tools to achieve strategic goals.
- With governance structures more established than in 2023, participants in 2024 showed greater focus on inward assessment and improvement - asking how well their systems are working and what needs to be improved. This reflects a shift from set-up to performance and accountability.
- Monitoring and Evaluation of AKIS Strategies also gained prominence in 2024 (25%), indicating a strong signal that impact measurement and accountability are becoming a key area of concern, moving up the agenda.

Environmental and Climate Concerns

Surprisingly, Climate change and Environmental sustainability, which had been strongly rated in the 2023 online survey (with 77% of respondents affirming their importance), received less emphasis in the 2024 co-validation. Here, Climate change action scored only 20%, and other environmental goals

fell down the list. This suggests a possible gap: while stakeholders understand the importance, many may not see clear pathways to act through AKIS — or feel it's outside their area of expertise.

Economic Objectives

Economic goals such as increasing Competitiveness and ensuring Fair income for farmers were rated a strong priority (24% and 23% relatively) in 2024 and 2023 edition of CNA. In contrast, in 2023, improving farmers' position in the value chain was one of the most sensitive issues — prioritized by 88% in the online survey. The results reflect a more balanced economic focus in 2024 compared to 2023, suggesting a shift from single-issue advocacy toward broader economic strategy.

Consistent Priorities Across Both Years

Several priorities remained consistently strong:

- Modernization through knowledge, innovation, and digital transition continued to be a strong priority, scoring 12% in 2023 (second-highest priority) and 25% in 2024 (third-highest priority). This confirms AKIS's central role as a key driver of innovation and technology uptake in line with CAP's cross-cutting goals.
- Innovation Support Services (ISS) maintained relevance; at 24% in 2024, the CNA 2024 mirrored that of 2023 concern about defining and clarifying roles, securing funding, and enhancing the delivery of innovation tools.

5.4 Development of capacity



BUILDING NEW SKILLS AND PERSPECTIVES

This is the action phase, where learning activities—such as training, peer exchanges, and mentoring—are implemented

Expected result for key AKIS actors of change: **Acquiring systems thinking skills to better navigate AKIS complexity.**

ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

eLearning modules and following in-country workshops (WP3) addressed specifically developing in depth understanding on AKIS and its functioning.

Moreover, a wide range of capacity building activities and deliverables contributed developing system capacities, for example:

- Peer-to-peer and other exchanges among key actors of change (WP2/WP4 - ccCoPs & national CoPs)
- AKIS in practice (WP1)
- AKIS in action (WP2)
- WOW events (WP2)
- Tool for benchmarking AKIS performance (WP1; D1.11)
- Exploitation plan (WP5)

“When designing interventions for ISS, the modernAKIS workshop was crucial to grasp its complexity and multifaceted functions”

CHALLENGES

- Tailoring more precisely project activities to boost specific country-level learning pathways.
- Addressing the low capacity to effectively engage with any topic of the CNA.
- Enhance the communication of learning agendas and their connection with system capacities.
- Harmonization of the feedback surveys while maintaining individual specificities by WP
- Assessing needs to enhance system capacities in countries.
- Addressing the expectations on more in-person and participatory approaches to meetings.

OUTSTANDING INITIATIVES

- Timely communication materials (brochures) on learning agendas.
- Centralizing feedback surveys while preserving space for individual assessments by WPs.
- Events/materials to enhance awareness on system capacities

LINK TO SYSTEM CAPACITIES

- Capacity to navigate complexity.
- Capacity to collaborate.
- Capacity to reflect and learn.
- Capacity to engage in strategic political processes.

TAJs are the core capacity development pathways of modernAKIS, designed to strengthen key actor system capacities essential for innovation and adaptation within AKIS:

- **(C1) Capacity to Navigate Complexity:** Enables actors to take a holistic view, adapt to change, build mutual trust, and reflect collectively on values and strategies.
- **(C2) Capacity to Collaborate:** Develops actors' abilities to engage in constructive, diverse partnerships and networks founded on trust, effective communication, and shared goals to drive innovation.
- **(C3) Capacity to Reflect and Learn:** Fosters continuous individual and collective learning through critical reflection, open dialogue, progress tracking, and informed decision-making, enabling adaptive improvement.
- **(C4) Capacity to Engage in Strategic and Political Processes:** Empowers actors to actively participate in governance and transformative change at national and EU levels, supporting CAP objectives.

Together, these capacities empower AKIS actors to realize the full innovation potential of their systems through an iterative cycle of learning, collaboration, and strategic action.

Building on the annual CNAs, TAJs are refined each year to align with the evolving needs of key change agents. A fundamental element of TAJs is the MAA, which develops combined and individual capacities across organizational and institutional levels. This approach enhances intervention quality by effectively mobilizing diverse actors and strengthening their interactions to better tailor the capacity development paths.

How the CNAs Link Between CNA, Events and System Capacities

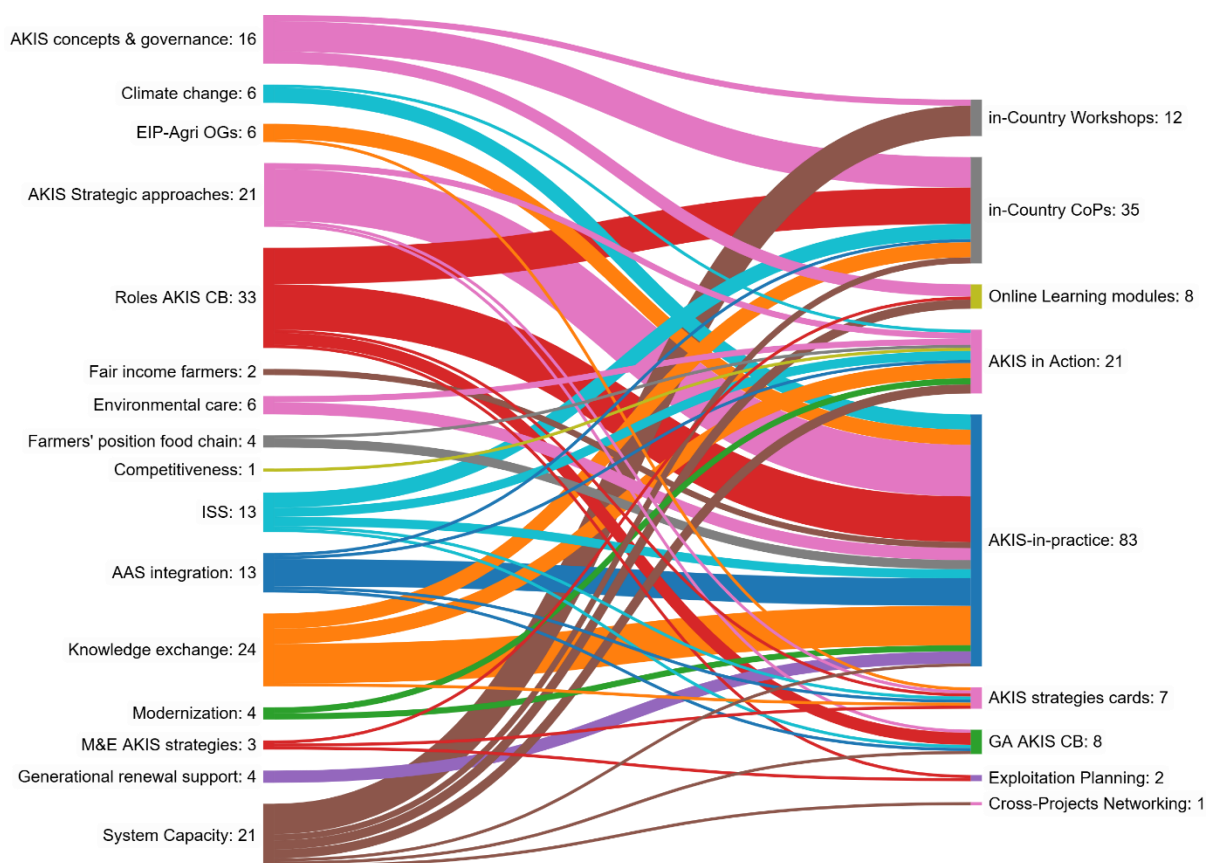
Following the validation of results, the learning agendas were shaped to include the twelve most prioritized topics each year. These topics were then integrated into project activities at both EU and national levels by tailoring the TAJs to address more generalized and country-specific capacity development needs.

The Sankey diagram (figure 3 provides a clear visual representation of how these topics have been addressed through a diverse set of project activities. Each flow illustrates the connection between a topic and the type of activity used to explore or develop it, with the width of the flow indicating a higher volume of relevant activities. The key findings are:

- **Centrality of "AKIS-in-practice!":** In general, the "AKIS-in-practice!" (Compendium of insightful new know-how and ready-for-practice solutions – D1.3 and D1.4) emerges as the primary activity through which the most relevant topics selected with the CNA are addressed, receiving the highest number of topic-related flows—83 in total as of the time of this deliverable. This indicates the "AKIS-in-practice" pivotal role in translating strategic and conceptual AKIS themes into practical, actionable formats. Notably, the topics "Roles of AKIS Coordination Bodies" (33 flows) and "Strategic Approaches for Strengthening AKIS" (21 flows) are most strongly linked to this activity. Also "Knowledge exchange" (24 flows) and "AAS - Agricultural advisory services integration" (13 flows) are highly addressed through "AKIS-in-practice".
- **Country level activities and training:** "AKIS concepts & governance" (16 flows) stands out as one of the most extensively addressed topics, with strong engagement through in-Country

Workshops (12 flows), in-Country CoPs (35 flows), and Online Learning Modules (8 flows). This distribution reflects a deliberate project-level decision to deepen in-country dialogue and reflection, building on the foundational knowledge introduced in the initial set of three online learning modules.

Figure 3. Matching of CNA topics and project activities



Made at SankeyMATIC.com

- **Practical approaches to AKIS interventions:** "AKIS in Action" (21 flows) were particularly relevant in addressing the "Knowledge exchange" and "ISS activities", as they offered opportunities to gain practical insights from real-life experiences and examples shared during the webinars.
- **Cross-Cutting Importance:** "System Capacity" (21 flows) stands out for being addressed across nearly all activity types, highlighting its universal importance in enabling AKIS transformation.
- **Strategic and Governance Focus:** "AKIS Strategic Approaches" (21 flows) and "Roles of the AKIS Coordination Bodies" (33 flows) are primarily addressed through AKIS-in-practice, the General Assembly of AKIS CBs (8 flows), and the use of AKIS Strategy Cards (7 flows). This indicates the decision to explore these topics through structured sessions, strategic dialogue among coordination bodies, and practical tools designed to support planning and implementation processes.

Box 4: MA methods

World Café Format: A dynamic method fostering collaborative dialogue by rotating participants across thematic tables to share ideas, build shared knowledge, and promote inclusion.

Gamification and Role-Play: Participants took on roles (farmers, researchers, policymakers, IT providers) to simulate AKIS scenarios, enhancing empathy and co-developing practical solutions.

Policy Lab Workshops: Collaborative forums tackling complex policy challenges through hands-on activities and multi-actor discussions to co-create actionable strategies.

Online World Café: A virtual version using tools like Mentimeter for inclusive, real-time collaboration across locations, preserving dialogue and co-creation in digital form.

Breakout Sessions with Mural: Interactive online sessions using digital whiteboards to support visual brainstorming, enabling reflection on theory and practice and joint idea development.

Sticking Barriers Game: A playful activity where participants identified barriers to digital tool adoption using stickers, promoting critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving.

Knowledge Paths Game: Role-based game illustrating knowledge flow—generation to evaluation—highlighting multi-actor collaboration and interconnected knowledge processes.

Sharing Experiences and Best Practices: Presentations of real-world cases inspired participants to adopt successful co-creation approaches.

Interactive Discussions and Q&A: Open dialogues for exchanging experiences, asking questions, and addressing challenges, reinforcing the participatory spirit.

- **Targeted Activities:** Topics like "Climate change" (6 flows), "Environmental care" (6 flows), and "Fair income farmers" (2 flows) are addressed more selectively, often through targeted activities such as "AKIS in Action," indicating a thematic focus in specific sessions.

In synthesis, from the analysis of the Sankey diagram (figure 3) it also emerges that while foundational topics like governance, knowledge exchange, and advisory integration are tackled comprehensively across many activities, thematic topics relating to CAP specific objective may need to diversify methods or increase scale to enhance their impact within AKIS.

In fact, topics like AKIS concepts & governance, knowledge exchange, and Advisory services integration show broad, balanced and comprehensive efforts across multiple activities. In contrast, topics such as Climate change, Environmental care, Fair income for farmers, and Competitiveness have activities concentrated in fewer areas, suggesting that these could benefit from diversifying methods or scaling up interventions to strengthen their impact.

Multitude of activities and MA methods

To support the MAA, TAJs employ diverse methods and tools—blending virtual, face-to-face, desk-based, on-site, and hybrid activities—that ensure broad access, flexible scheduling, and tailored content. Training, coaching, and mentoring are adapted to the realities of end-users, facilitating effective capacity building and practical application.

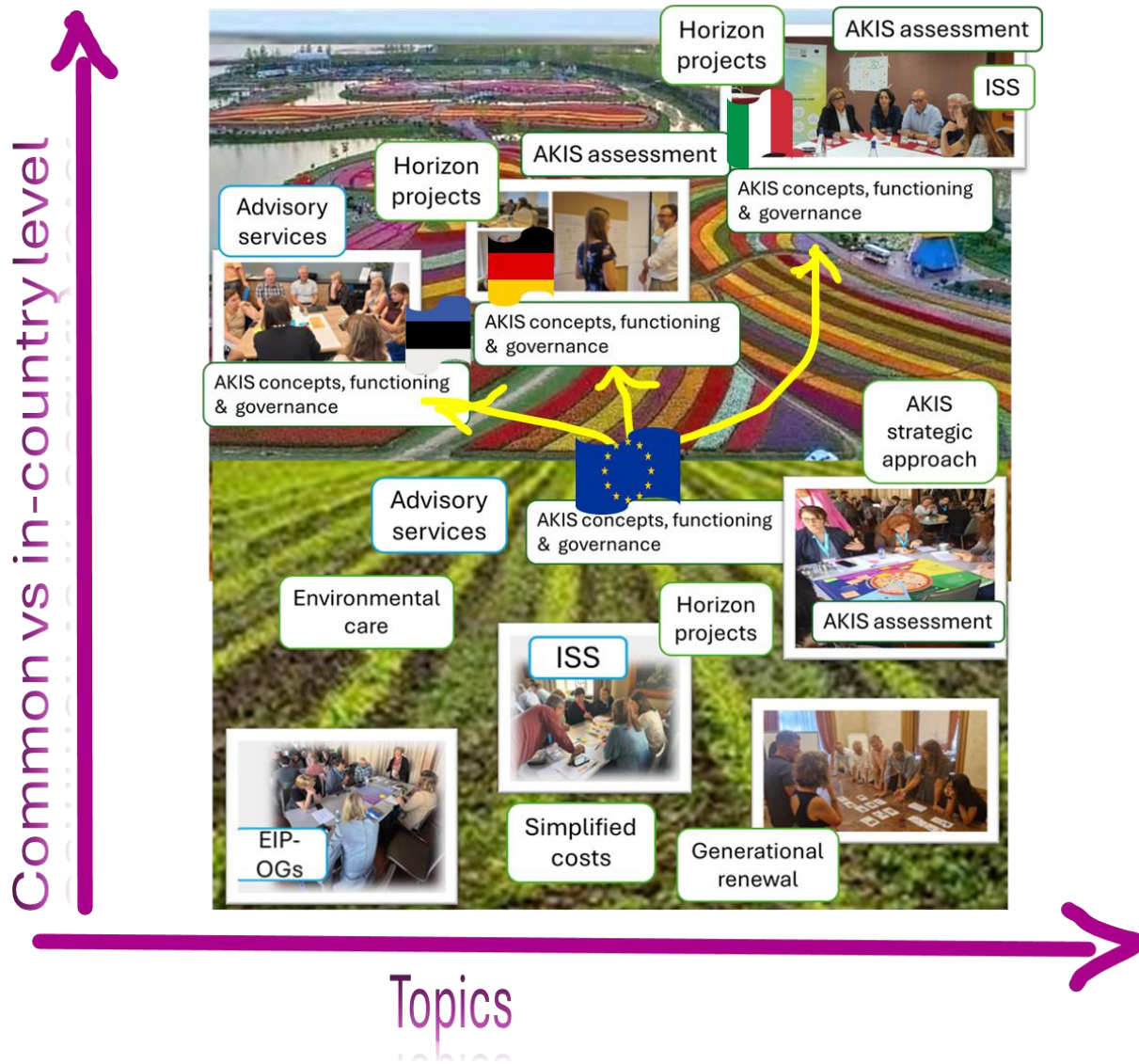
For example, within ccCoPs (WP4) a series of events fostered **collective learning, multi-actor collaboration, and systemic innovation within AKIS** through a diverse and original set of **participatory methodologies**. Co-creation was not just an activity, but a core principle guiding the entire process.

This integrated approach, combining structured formats, creative tools, and real-world examples, created an inclusive environment where participants were empowered to **co-create innovative and sustainable solutions**, making co-creation both a process and an outcome of the event (Box 4). Throughout the modernAKIS project implementation, the 'menu' of participatory methodologies has been continuously updated to support a truly multi-actor approach (MAA) as participants encounter new challenges (See D4.7 – which directly leads to D1.2 – for further formation on the activities carried out and D4.10 factsheets as a companion). This process will continue as project implementation progresses.

Multitude capacity development paths

Within the TAJs, for example through country-based Communities of Practice (CB-CoPs in WP2) and in-country workshops (WP3) that followed the learning modules (WP3), the overall capacity development pathways have been differentiated to address the specific needs of each Member State. Therefore, as shown in Figure 4, the TAJs followed a common pathway for all Member States, initially building on the CNA and encompassing shared activities such as AKIS coordination meetings, general assemblies, the learning modules, AKIS-in-Practice!, AKIS in Action networking events, and others, before diverging into tailored, in-country capacity development paths. To date, specific topics previously addressed at the European level have been further explored within the individual Member States.

Figure 4: The multitude CD paths of the TAJs in modernAKIS



5.5 Exploring new roles, building relationships and self-efficacy in new roles



APPLYING LEARNING AND GAINING CONFIDENCE

Participants begin to **experiment with new roles**, test new approaches, and build confidence in their ability to influence change. Expected result for key AKIS actors of change: greater ownership, initiative, and adaptability within the AKIS.

ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)

Participants were supported in **exploring new roles** through experiential learning and collaborative exercises.

- **AKIS** interactive sessions with serious games.
- **Networking events** and **community of practice sessions**.
- Tool for benchmarking AKIS performance (WP1; D1.11).
- Report on approaches to encourage researchers' engagement in interactive research and innovation processes (WP1; D1.16).
- Compendium of how advisors can be intensively integrated in AKIS (WP1; D1.13/D1.14).
- Report on comparative analysis of AKIS in EU Member States (WP1; D1.10).

"With modernAKIS support, we convinced policymakers and top managers to establish the coordination body in 2024"

CHALLENGES

- Systematize all the learnings and outcomes from MS and leverage them by embracing diversity, fostering peer-to-peer exchange among MS, and expanding country level learning pathways.

OUTSTANDING INITIATIVES

- Events and material for experience and learning sharing among MS.

LINK TO SYSTEM CAPACITIES

- Capacity to navigate complexity
- Capacity to collaborate
- Capacity to reflect and learn
- Capacity to engage in strategic political processes

This stage embodies actors exploring new roles and building self-efficacy, gaining confidence to perform transformative practices by applying newly acquired capacities in their professional environments. For example, this stage is deeply reflected in how CB-CoPs managed the initial and ongoing challenges of their setup and operation. For instance, when establishing themselves, CB-CoPs iteratively decide on their scope (national, regional, thematic), membership, and purpose. This involves recognizing challenges and responding with targeted solutions—a dynamic process fundamental to their establishment and continued work within AKIS.

Member States have adopted both shared and context-specific approaches, enabling AKIS actors to incrementally experiment with and internalize these new roles.

Regarding the conceptualization of the CB-CoPs, some Member States opted for a national CoP (e.g. Malta, Lithuania, Hungary), while others for thematic CB-CoP (e.g. Slovenia, Germany, Italy); Belgium – Flanders opted for a regional CoP.

Besides, many Member States faced similar challenges when setting up CoPs within their AKIS. They've applied comparable approaches to address these issues, with their strategies aligning closely with the specific challenges encountered:

- **Diversity Issues: Bottom-up involvement** and **multi-sector inclusion** helped address diversity (e.g., Austria, Belgium, Malta).
- **Collaboration Building: Strengthening institutional ties** and **themed groups** fostered collaboration (e.g., Croatia, Slovenia).
- **Avoiding Duplication: Leveraging existing groups** prevented redundant efforts (e.g., Czechia, Finland, Sweden).
- **Securing Sustainability: Institutional platforms** and **strategic planning** ensured long-term viability (e.g., Lithuania, Netherlands).
- **Increasing Accessibility: Blended meeting formats** improved access for participants (e.g., Estonia).

This combination of tailored strategies, collective decision-making, and an adaptive, relational approach has undoubtedly laid the foundation for future confidence, trust, and sustained participation. It ensures that the transformative cycle continues to evolve and effectively embed itself within diverse European AKIS systems.

5.6 Systematization of learnings



CONSOLIDATING AND SHARING KNOWLEDGE

Experiences and insights are **documented, reflected upon, and shared**. This stage ensures that learning is not lost but feeds into the next cycle, enabling deeper and broader learning loops.

Expected result for key AKIS actors of change: Disposal of consolidate insights to rely on for action and future learning cycles.

- **ACTIVITIES (EXAMPLES)** AKIS-in-practice! and videos (WP1).
- Stories of Change (WP1/WP5) & Video interviews (WP1/WP5).
- You tube channel (WP5).
- The AKIS Strategy Cards.
- Report on comparative analysis of AKIS in EU Member States (WP1; D1.10).
- Compendium of how advisors can be intensively integrated in AKIS (WP1; D1.13/D1.14).
- The **AKISConnect platform** serves as a repository and exchange hub for these learnings (WP2).

"I have used the AKIS online training modules a lot and they have been really helpful to explain the AKIS concepts to 28 different AKIS actors"

CHALLENGES

- Limited recognition of own capacity and relevance in contributing to the systematization of learning.
- Low recognition of the value of theoretical/conceptual background.
- Translating the project results into more practical and operational decision-support tools (e.g. AKIS-in-practice; benchmarking tool).
- Dispersion of large volume of materials across multiple online platforms, creating challenges in identifying and organizing relevant information.

OUTSTANDING INITIATIVES

- Major and early engagement in conceptualizing/designing materials .
- Balancing theoretical/conceptual with practical knowledge
- Provision of user-friendly decision-support tools for knowledge systematization.
- Review the webplatform.

LINK TO SYSTEM CAPACITIES

- Capacity to navigate complexity.
- Capacity to reflect and learn.
- Capacity to engage in strategic political processes.

The core of knowledge systematization in modernAKIS is embodied in WP1—specifically through tasks T1.2, T1.3, T1.4, and T1.5—which play a crucial role in consolidating, structuring, and sharing knowledge to support capacity development via multiple learning loops involving key actors of change.

By systematically collecting, reviewing, and translating knowledge into ready-to-use practical materials, these tasks ensure that experiences and insights are thoroughly documented. This process enables continuous reflection, effective interpretation, and thoughtful digestion of information, thereby inspiring innovative actions and fostering ongoing learning and adaptation.

WP1 acts as a dynamic integrator by connecting all other work packages, fostering continuous learning loops where knowledge evolves through practice and reflection.

The strategies employed by WP1 are multiple and have been constantly (re)designed along the project in view to effectively rendering knowledge available. Some examples (Visit <https://akisconnect.eu/> for all strategies):

- **Compendium of AKIS-in-Practice! (T1.2) and the examples of advisor integration and innovation support services (T1.4):** A collaboratively curated, living repository of practical solutions for AKIS strategy implementation, widely disseminated and through a variety of methods and tools (deliverable, single practices, video interviews to protagonists and workshops).
- **Get-inspired4AKIS! practices (T1.2):** Operationalizes prior research results into practical interventions aligned with CAP Strategic Plans.
- **AKIS Strategy Cards (T1.2):** User-friendly distillations of countries' AKIS strategies, enabling information, benchmarking, reflection, and strategic adaptation.
- **Multimedia Storytelling (T3.4):** Videos sharing practitioner experiences of learning and action for change.
- **Podcasts by CNAs (T1.2):** Flexible audio formats that deliver up-to-date systematized knowledge back to those who contributed it, offering informal and accessible knowledge transfer about actual the capacity development needs and expectations of key actors of change.
- **Benchmarking tool (T1.3):** Developed through the consolidation of relevant scientific knowledge on methods and indicators for monitoring and assessing AKIS. Build upon the inputs and expectations of the key actors of change; this practical tool facilitates data collection on the internal and external state of AKIS within Member States. It enables the creation of benchmarks, supports comparative analysis, and informs evidence-based decision-making processes.
- **Approaches and practical incentives to encourage researchers' engagement in interactive research processes (T1.5):** These were initially gathered through a comprehensive review of existing reports and literature and subsequently discussed with AKIS actors to co-create practical solutions that foster more realistic and effective researcher involvement in multi-actor approaches.

6. Are the TAJs satisfying the expectations of key AKIS actors?

The feedback collected across the diverse range of AKIS-related events reveals a multifaceted picture of strengths, challenges, and opportunities that collectively shape the ongoing development of the AKIS community. Overall, participants express strong appreciation for events that are well-organized, professionally delivered, and grounded in relevant, practical content. High-quality speakers, engaging facilitation, and interactive formats emerge consistently as key factors that drive participant satisfaction and meaningful learning experiences.

However, this positive assessment is tempered by notable variations between events. Some gatherings, particularly certain editions of the AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies, faced criticism for ineffective balance between presentations and participant engagement, as well as content that was perceived as overly generic or insufficiently tailored to attendees' needs. These disparities underscore the importance of continuous reflection and adaptation within the event design process, ensuring that each activity aligns closely with evolving stakeholder expectations and contributes effectively to capacity building within the AKIS.

Participants' calls for more interactive approaches, deeper specialization, and locally relevant content further highlight the community's desire for events that go beyond traditional lecture formats and foster active exchange, collaboration, and practical application. Moreover, repeated emphasis on the need for pre-event consultation points to an appetite for co-creation, where the perspectives and priorities of participants directly influence the shape and focus of the activities.

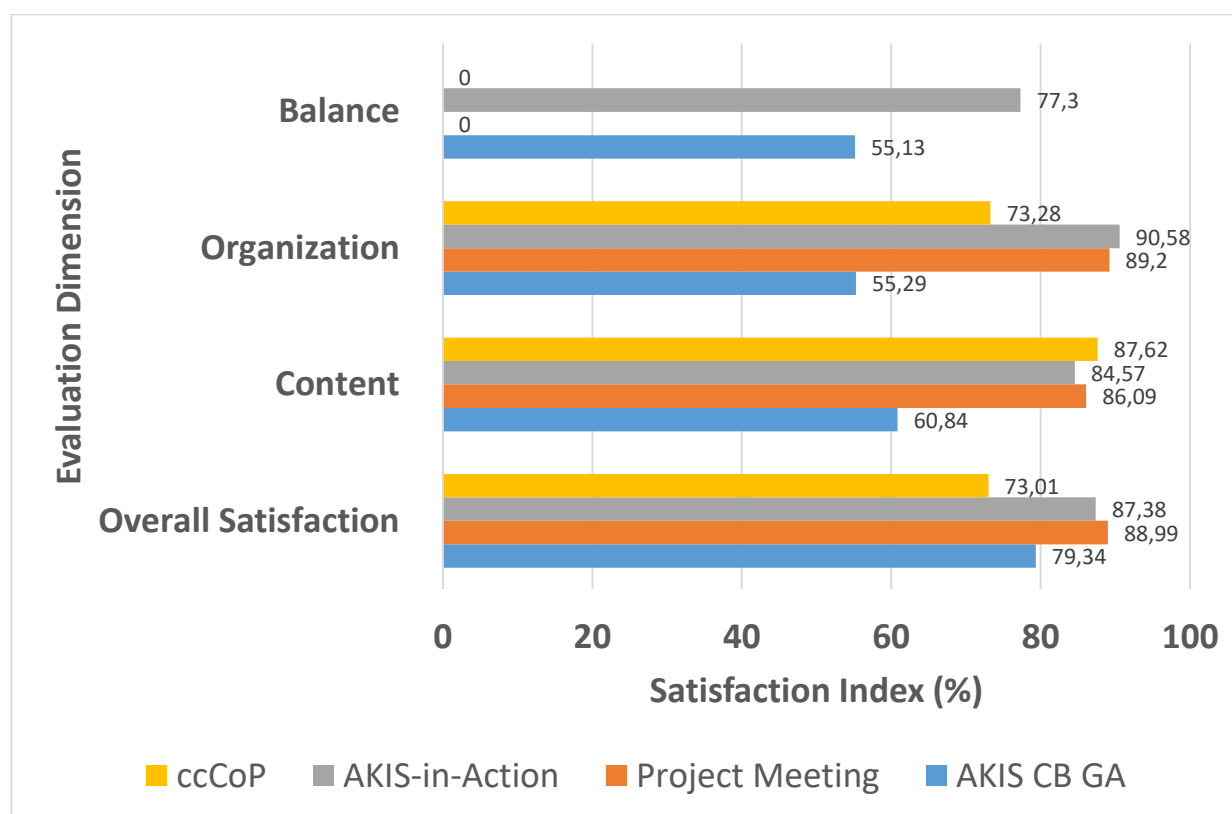
This nuanced feedback sets the stage for a detailed exploration of each event category, illuminating specific achievements and lessons learned that would inform the ongoing evolution of the AKIS journey. Through this iterative process of evaluation and refinement, the initiative strives to build a resilient, adaptive system capable of supporting transformative change across diverse agricultural knowledge and innovation systems.

To simplify evaluation and enable benchmarking, a **Satisfaction Index** was developed based on responses to the following common questions:

- Did the meeting fulfil your expectations?
- Was the information provided useful for you?
- How would you rate the overall quality of the event (program, presentations, speaker, organisation etc.)?
- How was the balance between presentations and interactive sessions?

This index provides a structured and comparable measure of participant satisfaction across different events.

Figure 5. Degree of satisfaction of participants by typology of event



Source: Authors' elaborations based on modernAKIS surveys

In the followings, a brief indication of most insightful findings emerging from the feedback surveys by type of event (figure 5):

AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs) General Assemblies (GAs):

- **Satisfaction:** Overall experience, the only evaluation dimension that reached –nearly– strong satisfaction (79.34%). The rest, content relevance, organization and balance reached a moderate/lower level of satisfactions. Despite these, some individual AKIS CBs GA events received high ratings. In particular, the 4th CBs GA reached strong satisfaction for content relevance (84.91%) and overall experience (89.93%). The 1st CBs GA reached strong satisfaction for overall experience (90.80%). These reflect well-organized, relevant, and professionally delivered events. The evolution (figure 5) clearly reflects intense efforts to improve overall experience over time, for example, from addressing lower levels of engagement observed during the 2nd and 3th General Assemblies. Figure 5 also highlights organization and balance as key evaluation dimensions that warrant attention.
- **Insights into improvements:** (1) planning informed by pre-event participant feedback to align design with expectations, through surveys or consultations to understand potential participants' needs, roles, and expectations beforehand. This helps tailor content, format, and delivery for better alignment; (2) increase opportunities for in-person meetings. (3) reinforce interactive formats: attendees report of an imbalance between presentations and engagement while they likely want more opportunities to engage, discuss, or participate rather than just listen passively.

Project Meetings:

- **Satisfaction:** Participants consistently **reported very high** (an average of 88.09%) **satisfaction** with all aspects, including overall experience, content relevance, quality of speakers, program structure, and delivery. **Key factors for success** included practical, well-aligned content and engaging formats. Figure 5 also highlights balance as key evaluation dimension that warrant attention.
- **Insights into improvements:** Future events should **maintain quality standards** and continue tailoring content to professional needs, emphasizing interactivity and practical application.

AKIS in Action Networking Events:

- **Satisfaction:** **Individual** events received **very high satisfaction (between 81 and 93%)** for overall experience, content usefulness, and organization. Jointly, AKIS in action networking events received a strong satisfaction (average of 86.86%). Participants appreciated clear structure and knowledgeable speakers, but noted a need for more engagement opportunities in some cases (e.g., Digital Repositories and Bridging Research and Practice event at 77.30% satisfaction). In fact, there is a growing interest in interactive formats—including Q&A sessions, workshops, breakout discussions, polls, and case studies—to complement traditional presentations. The finding suggests that attendees may have found some events too lecture-heavy or lacking opportunities for engagement, such as discussions, Q&A sessions, or hands-on activities.
- **Insights into improvements:** Continue providing high-quality, evidence-based content while increasing interactivity (Q&A, workshops, discussions) in future events.

ccCoP Meetings:

- **Satisfaction:** Generally **high satisfaction** (average of 78.82%) with overall experience, content relevance and organization. Unlike other event types, interactivity and comfortability with using participatory tools (e.g., Mural) was evaluated, receiving a very high satisfaction (average of 85.68%). The evolution (figure 5) identifies balance between presentations and interactive sessions as the main dimension that warrant attention. Some inconsistency in satisfaction (e.g., ccCoP4 rated much lower than ccCoP2), indicating format or content may not always align with participant needs.
- **Insights into improvements:** Participants benefited from knowledge gain and expressed interest in **more advanced, specialized content**, particularly on digitalization in advisory services.

In-country Workshops:

- In-country workshops at most have one evaluation dimension that is consistent across some (few) countries. The evaluation dimensions across countries are not always consistent. Also, they are not entirely consistent with evaluation dimensions on AKIS CBs, Project meetings, AKIS in Action and ccCoP.
- **Satisfaction: Overall positive experience** as participants valued interactive formats, gained a better understanding of AKIS and systems thinking, and welcomed multi-stakeholder

discussions. Usefulness of information and willingness to recommend received very high satisfaction (an average of 81.5% and 89% respectively).

- **Insights into improvements:** (1) simpler, locally tailored content, deeper exploration of complex topics, ongoing dialogue, and more structured sessions. (2) Desire for follow-up mechanisms and more time for in-depth engagement was expressed. (3) Using consistent and shared evaluation framework across countries.

7. Key insights on the TAJs: relevance, effectiveness and insights for future development

In addition to reviewing the level of satisfaction, a more in-depth assessment of the TAJ was conducted with partners during a Project Meeting in April 2025. This process provided timely insights into the relevance and effectiveness of the TAJ. These findings are intended to inform targeted adjustments that will enhance the project's relevance, effectiveness, and impact in its upcoming phases.

The feedback confirms that modernAKIS is already making a strong contribution, particularly in the areas of knowledge sharing and networking.

Overall, the results highlight that modernAKIS is highly valued by participants for its relevance and quality. It is seen as effective in strengthening systemic capacities and improving the practical performance of AKIS actors. However, some areas—such as the quality and usability of deliverables—could benefit from further refinement to maximize knowledge impact and participant satisfaction.

In summary, the survey provides valuable feedback on participant engagement and confirms that modernAKIS is playing a meaningful role in capacity development. Participants report gaining new knowledge, expanding their networks, and adopting more collaborative and innovative approaches. While the project is successfully fostering participation and knowledge exchange, there remains a clear opportunity to enhance local impact, clarify key concepts, and strengthen capacities for more effective collaboration. These insights should guide future efforts in capacity building, glossary development, and strategic outreach within the modernAKIS network.

To build on this momentum, the project could consider **deepening support in areas like strategic implementation and stakeholder engagement**, while promoting **cross-country learning and practical application of the project results**. These efforts will be key to sustaining the transformative potential of AKIS across Europe.

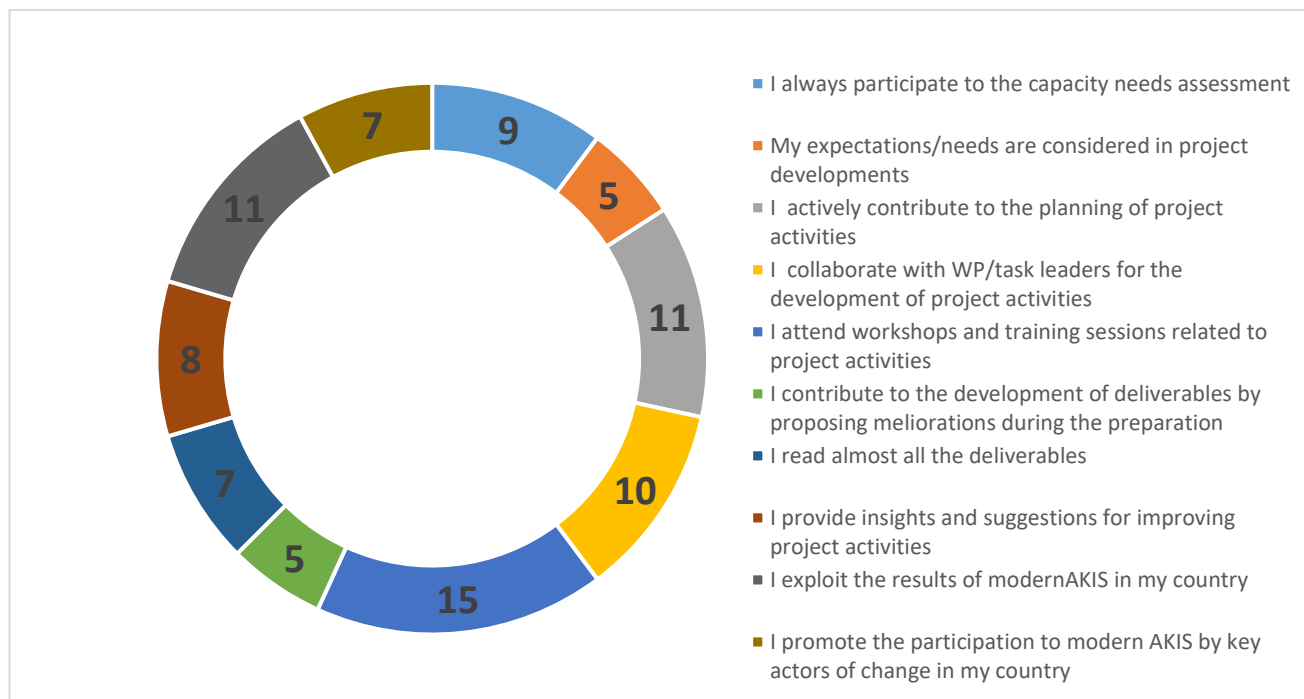
Engagement in modernAKIS Activities

Participants were asked to assess how they perceived their engagement in the modernAKIS project (figure 6). Overall, the responses reveal a **moderate to high level of involvement**, with notable variation across different forms of participation into the project activities. While the core community is active and responsive, opportunities exist to **deepen involvement**, especially in terms of **translating project outputs into national contexts** and **encouraging wider participation** beyond the immediate network. In fact:

Areas of Strong Engagement

- A substantial number of respondents reported that they **attend workshops and training sessions** and **read most deliverables**, demonstrating that the project's knowledge-sharing initiatives effectively reach a broad audience.
- Many participants also indicated they **actively contribute to planning activities** and **collaborate with work package and task leaders**, reflecting healthy co-ownership and distributed leadership within the network.

Figure 6. Results on assessment of actors' engagement in modernAKIS activities



Areas for Improvement

- Fewer respondents reported that they **contribute to deliverables** or **apply project results in their own countries**, highlighting opportunities for improvement in **local implementation and practical application**.
- Similarly, while some participants promote involvement among key change agents, this activity remains limited (figure 7), suggesting that **outreach and mobilization efforts** require strengthening to achieve broader national-level impact. This interpretation is reinforced by a **limited network participation observed in several countries**, indicating that current engagement strategies may not be effectively penetrating national agricultural knowledge systems.

Figure 7. Areas for improvement in modernAKIS engagement with actors



Relevance & Quality

Participants were asked to rate their agreement with several statements assessing the quality and relevance of modernAKIS activities.

Project partners generally find the TAJs relevant and are satisfied with modernAKIS activities (figure 8). The results suggest that while the **interactive, in-person components** of the project are highly valued, there is room to enhance the **impact and accessibility of written outputs** and to further refine the **format of sessions** to ensure a more engaging balance. In fact, in:

Areas of good satisfaction

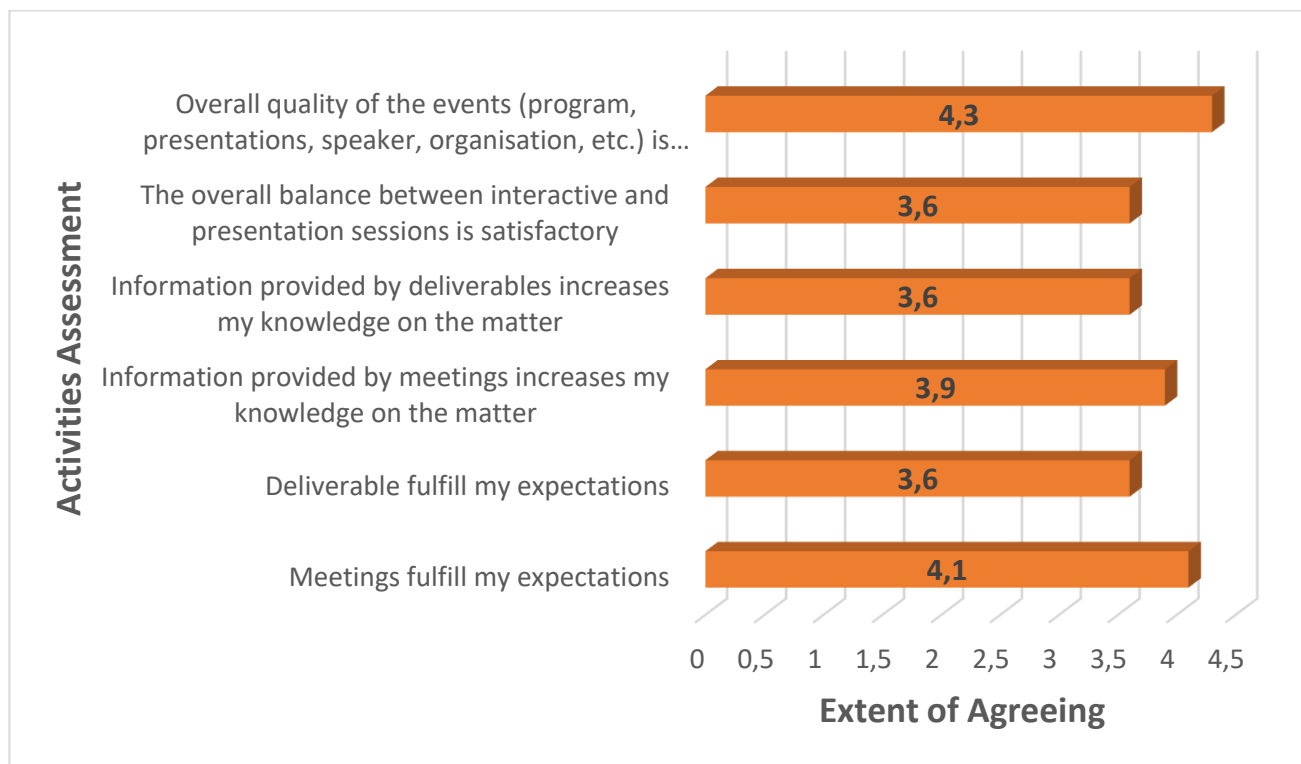
- The results show a generally **positive perception**, with the **overall quality of events** receiving the highest average score (4.3 out of 5), followed by **meetings fulfilling expectations** (4.1) and **knowledge gained from meetings** (3.9).

Areas of improvement

- Slightly lower scores were given to **deliverables** (3.6), both in terms of meeting expectations and increasing knowledge, and to the **balance between interactive and presentation sessions** (3.6) (figure 8).

Figure 8. Results on satisfaction assessment of modernAKIS activities

To what extent do you agree with the following ASSESSMENTS about modernAKIS activities?



Contribution to Performance Improvement of modernAKIS

Project partners were asked whether modernAKIS is helping them perform their roles and functions within their national AKIS and identified specific areas where modernAKIS has contributed to improving their performance (figure 9).

Feedback confirms that the current TAJs are not only conceptually aligned with the needs of the actors but also provide a coherent and comprehensive capacity development pathway. This pathway effectively supports the project's overarching goal of empowering AKIS actors in both their daily activities and strategic responsibilities. Notably, modernAKIS activities are making a substantial contribution to enhancing some key system capacities among AKIS actors, including (C1) navigating system complexity, (C2) fostering collaboration and (C4) engaging in strategic and political processes.

The majority of respondents (20 in total) expressed that modernAKIS is helping them perform their **roles and functions within the AKIS** either *"to a great extent"* (11 votes) or *"somewhat"* (10 votes).

This indicates a **strong perceived value** of the project in supporting stakeholders' operational and strategic engagement in their national systems, although there is still a significant portion of participants who feel only partially supported. In terms of:

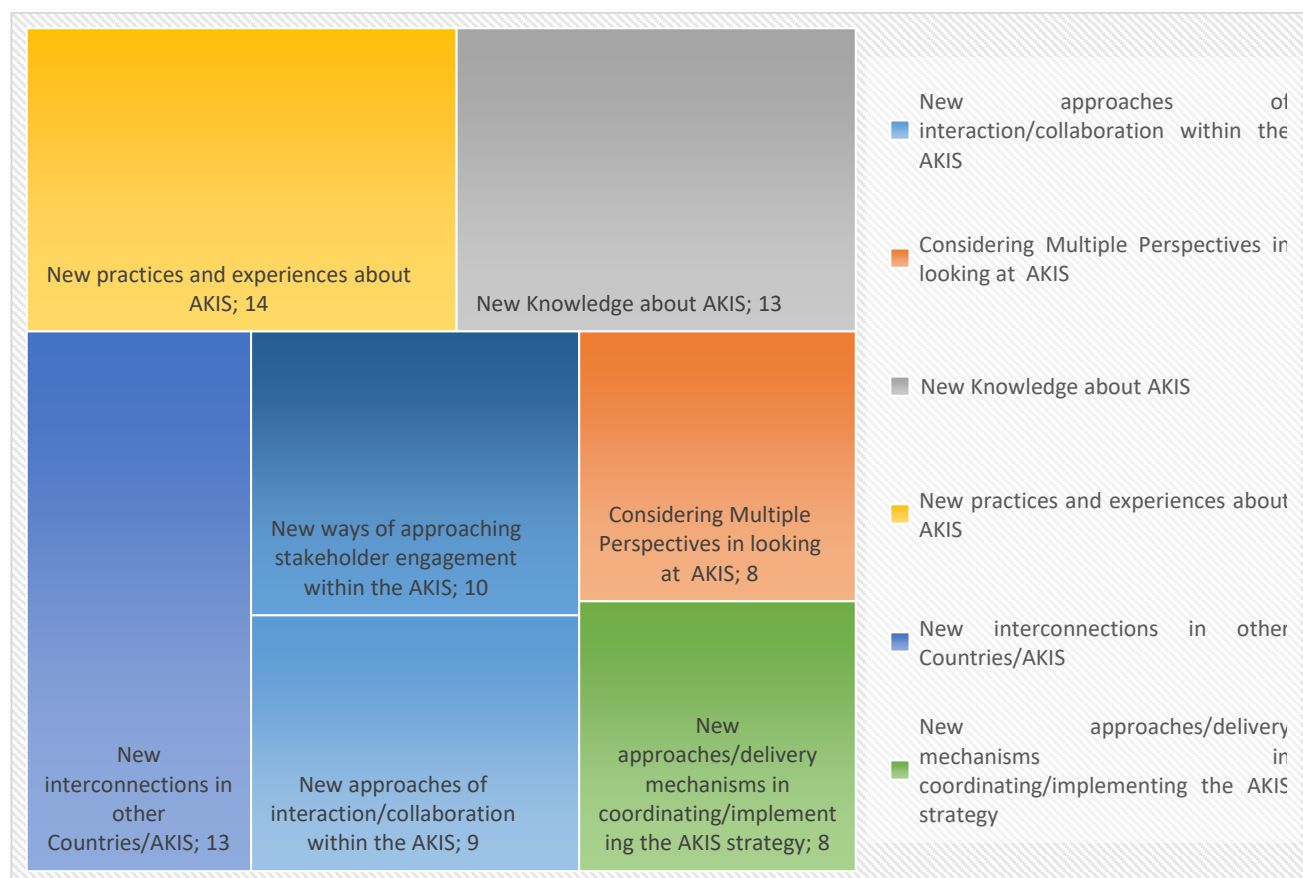
Areas of Capacity Strengthening

- These results suggest that modernAKIS is particularly effective in **exposing participants to innovative practices, enhancing conceptual understanding, and facilitating cross-border learning**—all of which are essential for systemic transformation.
- These findings highlight the project's success in fostering **learning, innovation, and cross-border exchange**, peer learning and exposure to diverse approaches while also supporting **strategic thinking and systems-level coordination**.

Areas of improvement

- The relatively lower scores for areas like **delivery mechanisms** and **multi-perspective analysis** suggest that these may be **emerging areas of interest** where further support, tools, or training could be beneficial.

Figure 9. Areas of modernAKIS contribution to actor performance



Areas of contribution to actors' performance

When asked which aspects of their performance modernAKIS is contributing to improve, respondents highlighted a **diverse range of capacities**, reflecting the multifaceted nature of AKIS work. The most frequently selected areas were (figure 9):

- C2 - Capacity to collaborate (32 votes):
 - New interconnections in other countries/AKIS (13 votes)

- New ways of approaching stakeholder engagement (10 votes)
- New approaches of interaction/collaboration within the AKIS (9 votes)
- C1 - Capacity to engage di strategic political processes (22 votes)
 - New practices and experiences about the AKIS (14 votes)
 - New delivery mechanisms for coordinating/implementing AKIS strategies (8 votes).
- C4 - Capacity to navigate complexity (21 votes):
 - New knowledge about AKIS (13 votes)
 - Considering multiple perspectives in looking at AKIS (8 votes)

Areas of reinforcement

- Enhance capacity building on monitoring and evaluation of AKIS and their strategies, along with reflection and learning processes for more adaptive and impactful action within the AKIS (C3).
- Deepen support for strategic planning and implementation, including tools for AKIS strategy delivery, monitoring and evaluation (C4 & C3).
- Provide more tailored support to national contexts, possibly through country-specific tools, mentoring, or peer learning (C3).
- Promote cross-sectoral and multi-actor dialogue to strengthen systems' thinking and inclusive governance. (C1 & C2)
- Expand international exchange opportunities to further enhance interconnections and peer learning. (C2).

8. Outstanding activities

8.1 Glossary

A [glossary](#) was developed to ensure a common understanding of key terms and concepts related to AKIS. It addresses the needs of partners and key change agents in modernAKIS by providing a shared reference for frequently used terminology. Recognizing the collaborative nature of the work and the significant overlap in terminology, the glossary was jointly created with the ATTRACTISS project to facilitate clear communication and cooperation among partners and stakeholders involved in both initiatives. Its development involved a comprehensive review and harmonization of terms drawn from existing AKIS literature, project documents, and EU policy frameworks. Experts and AKIS coordination bodies actively contributed to refining definitions to align with the shared perspectives and requirements of the community.

All in all, the glossary includes a number of forty-one terms.

To maximize accessibility and usability, the glossary has been translated into all official EU languages. These translations will be validated by project partners through a [EUSurvey form](#) by September 2025 and subsequently made publicly available on AKISconnect.eu.

Overall, the glossary will serve as a living resource that can be integrated into e-Learning modules, workshops, training manuals, policy briefs, or knowledge-sharing platforms. Also, it will create an accessible reference tool to standardize communication across AKIS actors.

8.2 A more tailored and comprehensive CNA

The current yearly Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) is conducted at the European level via an annual survey, with results validated by AKIS coordination bodies during the General Assembly (GA). Until 2025, this CNA has been structured around general topics aligned with the objectives of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and will continue with possible revisions.

The key innovation in the revised CNA is its decentralization and greater customization. Starting in 2026, the CNA will also be implemented at the national level within each Country Community of Practice (CoP). This approach will enable a more precise tailoring to country-specific needs and better capture the diverse requirements of modernAKIS activities, by including an evaluation of system capacities—currently missing at the European level.

The enhanced CNA aims to:

- Support AKIS coordination bodies and other key actors of change in understanding the current state of system capacities, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement.
- Facilitate country-level dialogue around opportunities and actions to improve AKIS.
- Emphasize the importance of regularly assessing system capacities to ensure that Member States have the necessary resources to strengthen their AKIS.
- Provide a recurring “health check” that leads to targeted, country-specific actions to build system capacity.

In practice, the country-level CNA will involve annual surveys conducted during dedicated CoP workshops in each Member State. Trained local facilitators will guide the process using semi-structured questionnaires and tailored workshop agendas. CoPs will analyze the outcomes to identify key challenges and barriers, then define specific capacity-building needs, including relevant topics and activities.

This new, multi-level, and participatory approach enables more accurate, actionable insights and fosters continuous capacity development tailored to national contexts within the broader European AKIS framework.

8.3 Co-creation of an EU common framework for the assessment of the AKIS

Deliverable 1.1 identified the need for a common EU framework to assess AKIS, emphasizing that integrating AKIS into the CAP Strategic Plans will promote systematic evaluation and reinforcement of national and regional AKIS. While CAP plans require evaluating AKIS strategies and their policy

contributions, they do not explicitly mandate assessing AKIS as an integrated system—particularly its actual functioning and the innovations resulting from CAP implementation. Current EU guidelines focus mainly on evaluating strategic approaches within CAP interventions. However, a comprehensive framework must also capture how AKIS operates in practice at national and regional levels.

Therefore, a dual evaluation approach is essential: one to assess the real-world functioning and effectiveness of AKIS across Member States, and another to evaluate the strategic AKIS plans within the CAP framework. This combined approach will provide policymakers and stakeholders with thorough, actionable insights to strengthen AKIS, supporting agricultural modernization and wider rural development goals.

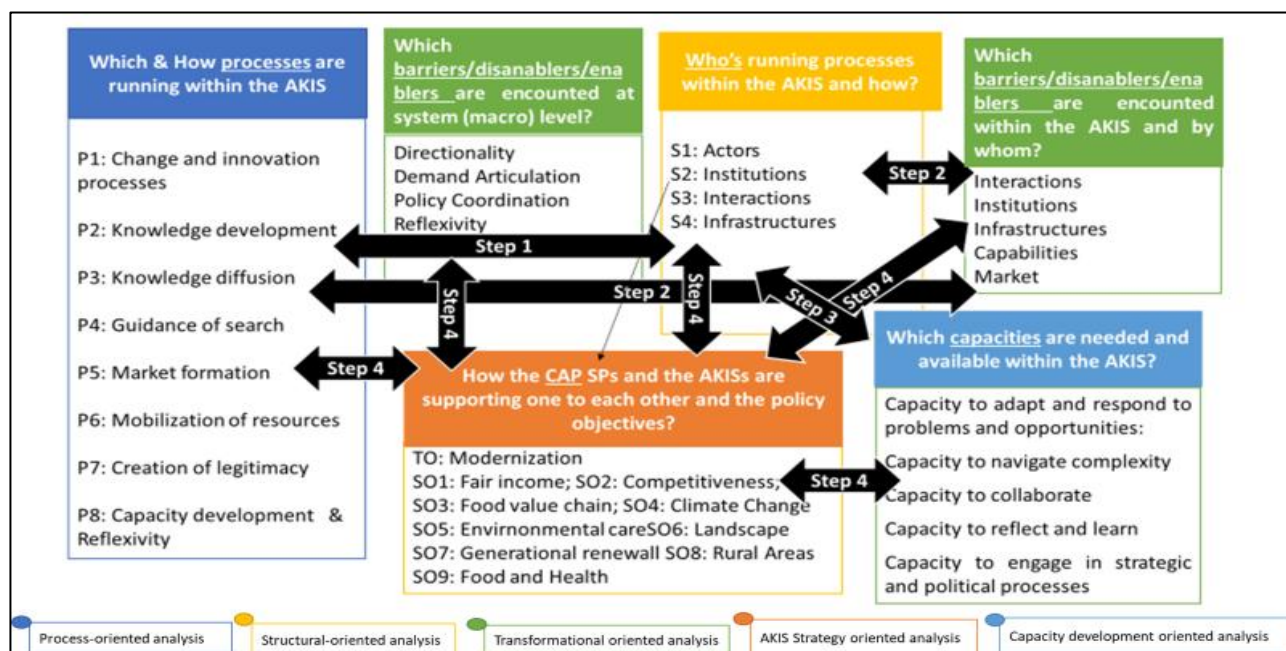
In this context, Deliverable 1.1 laid the theoretical and conceptual groundwork for co-creating this EU common framework.

The resulting Developmental-Oriented Evaluation Framework for AKIS (DoAF4AKIS) is designed to be co-developed with key AKIS actors of change, primarily AKIS coordination bodies. It integrates four established analytical perspectives for innovation systems: structural, functionalist, transformative-oriented, and capacity development.

Practically, DoAF4AKIS—including its topics, methods, tools, timing, evaluation questions, and indicators—will be finalized during modernAKIS implementation (month 38) through collaboration with the network's key actors (T2.2) and other stakeholders such as CAP SP evaluators and the European Evaluation Helpdesk for CAP.

DoAF4AKIS will follow a stepwise approach that combines AKIS assessments with evaluations of CAP strengthening strategies, delivering comprehensive, utilization-focused knowledge to inform policy and stakeholder decisions (See figure 10).

Figure 10: General framework of the DoAF4AKIS



During the first 36 months, modernAKIS coordination bodies began co-developing the assessment framework through a participatory approach to build awareness and capacity. Key activities included a workshop on AKIS evaluation (March 2025), a learning module (WP3), and the co-definition of a benchmarking tool (February–July 2025).

At the May 2025 assembly, working groups formulated evaluation questions addressing AKIS structural and functional aspects, aiming to enhance assessment and strategic planning.

Furthermore, the planned development of the Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) at Member State level, within the CB Communities of Practice (CB-CoPs), will support AKIS actors in defining relevant questions, criteria, and indicators to assess system capacities in each Member State.

These outcomes provide a strong foundation for finalizing the framework by 2026, demonstrating a shared commitment to strengthening AKIS's role in addressing contemporary agricultural challenges.

9. Overall Conclusions and Recommendations

The insights from the survey clearly underline valuable feedback on the current phase of modernAKIS, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement to maximize its transformative potential:

- **Improving the usability and impact of deliverables, enhancing their quality, and** improving the way and how knowledge is packaged and shared. This means ensuring that deliverables are not only of high quality but also presented in formats that can reach a broader audience, easy to use, and apply in day-to-day practice.
- **Enhancing interactivity in events.** This would require ensuring that events are not just information-sharing platforms but also spaces for meaningful dialogue and collaboration among AKIS actors.
- **Providing more targeted, context-sensitive support, by better tailoring events/activities to the needs and capacities of the AKIS actors.** This requires taking into account local conditions, cultural contexts, and the varying levels of technical expertise across actors.
- **Strengthening strategic and systemic capacities.** This involves establishing mechanisms that strengthen institutional collaboration, leadership, coordination across MS AKIS, equipping actors not just with technical skills but also with the ability to think systemically, anticipate future challenges, and design sustainable solutions

These improvements would help ensure that the project not only informs but also empowers AKIS actors to lead change effectively within their systems.

- There will be an implementation of a **better tailoring of the TAJs to the evolving needs and capacities** of key AKIS actors by deepening the understanding of system complexity and strengthening collaborative and strategic engagement capacities.
- There is a focus on **enhancing deliverable quality and knowledge dissemination**, as satisfaction with deliverables and information flow received slightly lower scores, so improvements in how knowledge is packaged and shared are expected.

- The project will also emphasize **innovative approaches to stakeholder engagement and cross-country collaboration**, building on what participants identified as major contributions in performance improvement.
- Efforts to **systematize learnings and improve interactive versus presentation session balance** in events aim to maintain high engagement and satisfaction.

Feedback surveys

- Feedback surveys are not fully put in use for all the project activities and are often different across the events. This limits their potential to timely inform project adjustments along with common reflection on feedback and melioration. This calls for a centralized feedback survey that must be completed by all project partners, as well as a significant portion of AKIS actors in each of the member states.
- Low degree of feedback/responses by participants coupled with small sample size. This limits the reliability and validity of results making it difficult to make generalized conclusions. This signals the need for better engagement to increase responses as well as overall sample size in future surveys.
- Feedback surveys are less systematically used for on-going melioration of activities designs and implementation. This calls for structured internal follow-up procedures.
- General concerns about the actual engagement of some partners across tasks' implementation.

Activities

- Some confusion of the participants on the multitude of activities of the project. We must ensure that the links between activities are clear so that participants feel they are participating in a capacity development path and can personalize it. The planning of activities must be clearly communicated in advance (6 months), through informative brochures that indicate the capacity development path.
- Adjust the format of events to include more interactive elements, such as discussions, peer exchanges, or hands-on sessions.
- Increase interactive elements such as peer exchanges, group discussions, in-person and hands-on activities.
- Adjust the balance between presentation and participation to create more dynamic, engaging experiences.
- Creation of a tool for AKIS to monitor itself, revealing stories of change of key AKIS actors.
- In accordance with current framework, iterative and multilevel reflexive exercises will be implemented at both the EU and national levels, engaging the respective in-country communities of practice.
- Given the resources spent, it would be useful to know, how many AKIS actors the e-Learning modules reached.

Deliverables

- Enhance the clarity, accessibility, and practical relevance of deliverables.
- Consider co-designing deliverables with users to ensure they meet real needs and are more widely used.

10. References

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- modernAKIS Project. (n.d.). *Feedback surveys from AKIS-in Action Networking events, AKIS CBs General Assembly, ccCoP meeting, and Project meetings* [Internal project data]. European Commission, Horizon Europe, Grant Agreement No. 101060527.
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11. Annex

Table 1A presents the types of events and evaluation dimensions on which feedback was collected from events' participants.

Table 1A. Evaluation dimensions and Event types

Evaluation dimension/ Type of Event	Overall Satisfaction	Content	Organ.	Balance	Event Structure	Presentation Quality	Know. Gain	Consistency	Comfortability
AKIS CB GA	X	X	X	X	.	.	.	.	.
Project Meeting	X	X	X	X	.	.	.	.	.
AKIS-in-Action	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	.	.
ccCoP	X	X	X	X	.	X		X	X

"X" denote evaluation dimension was included in survey question, "." denote absence of evaluation dimension.

The common evaluation dimensions were overall satisfaction (Did the meeting fulfill your expectations?), content relevance (Was the information provided useful for you?), organization (How would you rate the overall quality of the event (program, presentations, speaker, organisation, etc.)?), Balance (How was the balance between presentations and interactive sessions?). Other evaluation dimensions were Event Structure (How appropriate was the event structure for acquiring knowledge that you will apply in your work?), Presentation Quality (How would you rate the quality of the presentations?), Knowledge Gain (How much has your knowledge grown after participating in this event?), Consistency ((Do you think the game accurately represented the different steps and scenarios of knowledge flows in AKIS? (Analysis, Strategy Design, Implementation, Evaluation & Adaptation)), Comfortability (Did you enjoy the dynamic of the final interactive session "Sticking Barriers Game"? Did you feel comfortable using the Mural tool?

Table 2A. Satisfaction results of events' participants

Type of Event	Overall Satisfaction (%)	Content (%)	Organization (%)	Balance (%)
AKIS CB GA	79.34	60.84	55.29	55.13
Project Meeting	88.99	86.09	89.20	.
AKIS-in-Action	87.38	83.38	89.83	77.30
ccCoP	75.57	87.62	73.28	.

80%-100% denote high satisfaction, 60%-79% moderate satisfaction, 40%-59% low satisfaction, below 40% very low satisfaction.

Table 3A. Topics from CNAs and relating Activities to explore them

Topics	Project Activities
AKIS Concepts & Governance	In-country workshops In-country CoPs Online Learning modules
Climate Change	AKIS-in-Action

Topics	Project Activities
	AKIS-in-Practice
EIP-AGRI OGs	AKIS-in-Practice AKIS strategies cards
AKIS CB Roles	In-country CoPs AKIS-in-Practice AKIS strategies cards GA AKIS CBs Exploitative planning
Fair Income for Farmers	AKIS-in-Practice
Environmental Care	AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice
Farmers Position in Food Chain	AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice
Increasing Competitiveness	AKIS-in-Action
Innovation Support Services	In-country CoPs AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice AKIS strategies cards GA AKIS CBs
AKIS Advisory Services Integration	In-country CoPs AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice AKIS strategies cards GA AKIS CBs
Knowledge Exchange	In-country CoPs AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice AKIS strategies cards
Modernization through Fostering Knowledge, Innovation and Digital Transition in Agriculture	AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice
M&E the AKIS Strategies Under the CAP	Online Learning modules AKIS strategies cards Exploitative planning
Generational Renewal Support	AKIS-in-Practice
System Capacity	In-country workshops In-country CoPs Online Learning modules AKIS-in-Action AKIS-in-Practice GA AKIS CBs Cross-Projects networking