



modern **AKIS**

Together for
Systems' Innovation



**Funded by
the European Union**

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be held responsible for them.

Modernisation of Agriculture through more efficient and effective Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems

Grant agreement number: 101060527

HORIZON Coordination and Support Actions

Deliverable 2.1

Framework, methods and instruments for successful AKIS Communities of Practice and an international AKIS CB network

Due date of deliverable: M6 – 28th February 2023

Actual submission date: M6 – 28th February 2023

Call: HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01

Topic: HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01-25

Start date of the project: September 1st, 2022

Duration: 84 months

End date of the project: August 31st, 2029

ProjectID: 101000250

TYPE			DISSEMINATION LEVEL		
R	Document, report	☒	PU	Public	☒
DEM	Demonstrator, pilot, prototype	☐	CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	☐
DEC	Websites, patent fillings, videos, etc.	☐			
OTHER		☐	CI	Classified, as referred to Commission Decision 2001/844/EC	☐

Project management	Institution	
Person in charge	Marleen Gysen	ISP
Work package	WP2	
Work package leader	Mara Lindtner	LKÖ
	Marleen Gysen	ISP
Author(s)	Marleen Gysen, Wim Ceulemans	ISP
	Mara Lindtner, Florian Herzog,	LKÖ
	Dora Miron	
Reviewers	Nuria Rodriguez	FEUGA
	Kevin Heanue	TEAGASC
Version	V1	

Citation: Ceulemans W., Gysen M., Herzog F., Lindtner M., Miron E. (2023). Framework, methods and instruments for successful AKIS Communities of Practice and an international AKIS CB network (Deliverable 2.1). modernAKIS Project, Horizon Europe Coordination and Support Actions. <https://modernakis.eu/results-and-resources/>

Table of content

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	6
2. INTRODUCTION	9
2.1. OBJECTIVES.....	9
2.2. LINK WITH OTHER TASKS AND WORK PACKAGES	9
2.3. APPROACH.....	10
3. MODERNAKIS NETWORK.....	11
3.1. OBJECTIVES.....	11
3.2. CONCEPT	11
3.3. TYPES OF NETWORK MEMBERS	13
3.4. NETWORKING ACTIVITIES AND FACILITIES.....	13
3.5. SETTING-UP PROCEDURES AND TIMELINE OF THE MODERNAKIS NETWORK	14
4. COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE	18
4.1. OBJECTIVES.....	18
4.2. CONCEPT	18
4.3. SETTING-UP PROCEDURES AND TIMELINE OF THE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE	20
4.4. CoP ACTIVITIES.....	22
4.5. SUPPORT FROM WP2 TO THE CoP MANAGERS	23
5. ENGAGING THE DIFFERENT ACTORS	24
5.1. METHODS AND TOOLS FOR ENGAGING AND ACTIVATING THE NETWORK ACTORS.....	24
5.2. FACILITATING KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE: THE MODERNAKIS PLATFORM	27
6. MONITORING AND ASSESSING QUALITY NETWORKING	28
6.1. EVALUATION ACTIVITIES.....	28
6.2. NETWORKING RISK MANAGEMENT	29
7. REFERENCES	30

Figures and tables

Figure 1: modernAKIS network layers	12
Figure 2: modernAKIS network lifecycle	14
Figure 3: CoPs lifecycle	20
Table 1: Description of the setting-up procedures for each lifecycle phase of the modernAKIS network.....	15
Table 2: Communities of Practice: composition and necessary competences	19
Table 3: Description of the different lifetime phases of the country-based CoPs.....	21
Table 4: Networking risks and risk management measures (adjusted from Wielinga and Robijn, p.155 and p. 169)	29

Acronyms

AKIS	Agricultural and Knowledge Innovation Systems
CB	Coordination Body
cbCOP	Country-based Community of Practice
ccCOP	Cross-country Community of Practice
COP	Community of Practice
Dx.x	Deliverable x.x
GA	General Assembly
KOM	Kick-off meeting
MS	Member State
TAJ	Transformative AKIS Journey
Tx.x	Task x.x
WPx	Work Package x

1. Executive Summary

The modernAKIS network aims to provide a space for peer-to-peer and best practice exchange on AKIS related topics, room for decision making on the priority topics to shape the modernAKIS project activities, a pool of key AKIS actors of change to co-design and apply the transformative AKIS journeys and a channel to create a shared understanding and communicate with one voice. The modernAKIS network members will be supported by a digital community platform for knowledge exchange and community building.

The network consists of three layers:

- (1) The **AKIS Coordination Bodies** (CBs) are at the centre of the network. They coordinate the AKIS in their respective country and are responsible for the AKIS Strategic Plan implementation as well as the reporting to the European Commission.
- (2) The key AKIS actors of change are actual/potential protagonists in their AKIS, and they actively participate in AKIS dynamics through helping knowledge flows and innovations. They may come from various professional fields and organisations. The most relevant of them will be members of the Communities of Practice.
- (3) A wider network of key actors involved in other EU relevant projects, networks as well as relevant ministries.

Within the three layers of the network, there are different types of membership. Depending on the membership type, members have access to different networking activities and tools:

- **AKIS CBs** (layer one) have a special position in the network. They are the ones to participate in the AKIS CBs General Assemblies (GA) and to take the final decision on the topic setting for the modernAKIS project activities.
- **Core members** are those key AKIS actors of change (layer two) who participate in country-based and cross-country Communities of Practice.
- **Regular members** can be everybody who registers on the community platform, although key AKIS actors of change (layer two) and the wider network (layer three) will be targeted specifically.

Being an AKIS CB or a core member is bound to the role the person has within their organisation, while being a regular member is bound to the person.

The affiliation and level of involvement of the different actors may vary over time. In addition, the network itself will evolve during its lifetime and require different actions at different times: (1) The **emergence phase** (September 2022 – August 2023) serves to consolidate the idea of the network and create a common vision and value proposition. Project partners are automatically members of the network. AKIS CBs and other key actors of change are invited to join the network by the project partners. Project partners and the WP2-leads keep record of network members in an Excel-list on the modernAKIS SharePoint. (2) During the **initialisation phase** (September 2023 – February 2024), more and more network members commit themselves to join the network via the project partners. Project partners actively engage with other projects and existing networks according to the networking action plan, developed in Task 2.5, so that more and more people get to know and participate in the modernAKIS project. (3) During the **growth phase** (March 2024 – August 2029), the network experiences organic growth as well as growth initiated by the WP2 team and the project partners. Through the communication activities of the project, more and more people join the network. Formal registration happens directly on the digital community platform, developed in Task 2.4. (4) During the **self-organisation phase** (after the project, from September 2029) network members start to organise themselves. Networking activities emerge beyond the project activities.

Networking activities and facilities provided by the modernAKIS project will include, amongst others, the bi-yearly AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly, a community platform for knowledge exchange, a modernAKIS newsletter, yearly national AKIS events as well as AKIS conferences and open calls for thematic contributions. The activities will be coordinated with the project partners.

At national and regional level, the AKIS network will act through 'Communities of Practice'. The **modernAKIS communities of practice (CoPs)** will enlarge the project's scope by sharing AKIS understanding and identity and by strengthening the multiplicity of key actors of change in the MS. To that purpose, these modernAKIS CoPs will link key AKIS actors of change to facilitate the uptake of knowledge and innovation. Their aim is:

- to help learning processes of practitioners within country/regions,
- enable practitioners to benefit from AKIS,
- connect actors and projects at all levels to foster innovation,
- improve links between all actors to encourage wider use of available knowledge and innovation.

modernAKIS CoPs will be organised and facilitated at two levels:

- (1) **Country-based CoPs (cbCoPs)** will be set up at a country or regional level to help multi-actor interaction and dialogue, reflexive social learning, support the AKIS CB and trust building among the local key actors of change in order to allow well-tailored common understanding, visioning and self-organisation of AKIS functioning at national/regional level. At least one CoP per MS will be established. Countries might decide to set up more than one CoP if this is useful.
- (2) **Cross-country CoPs (ccCoPs)** will be set up EU wide. They will focus on the learning between countries, while identifying and discussing pathways to increase cooperation and networking. ccCoPs will be organised around topical areas pertinent to the CAP Strategic Plans of the MS: policy, governance and CAP interventions; advisors; connecting research and practice; knowledge access and knowledge flows; life-long-learning education; digitalisation.

For the setting- up and operationalisation of the cbCoPs, different phases are defined. (1) During the **emergence phase** (March 2023 – October 2023), the cbCoPs will be composed. cbCoP managers are nominated and key AKIS actors of change will be identified, selected and invited. WP2 leaders will support the project partners and cbCoP managers by providing inspiring coaching sessions and communication material. (2) cbCoPs will meet for the first time during the **initialisation phase** (November 2023 – October 2024). These first meetings are used to introduce the modernAKIS project and the AKIS concept. cbCoP members will co-create a common vision for the following years. (3) During the **implementation phase** (November 2024 – August 2029), the cbCoPs meet regularly and fulfil their function (as co-created during the initialisation phase). The cbCoPs will give input to the AKIS CBs and will start organising national and/or regional workshops for creating AKIS value and enhancing knowledge flows and will nominate members for participation in the intensive camps (WP3). (4) During the **self-organisation phase** (after the project, from September 2029) the different national and/or regional CoPs continue to meet, exchange knowledge and support their AKIS CB on their own, according to the MS needs.

The setting-up of the ccCoPs will be supported by the WP4 team, in particular Task 4.3 leader FEUGA. The first meetings of the ccCoPs are scheduled to take place before October 2023.

The cbCoPs will meet at least twice a year, of which at least one meeting in person. They gather at least one month prior to the AKIS CB General Assembly meeting (which meets twice a year) to give input to that meeting. Both the frequency of the meetings of the ccCoPs and the format of these meetings vary depending on the ccCoP.

For **networks to work well** they need to provide an environment where exchange and dialogue can happen, members feel challenged and safe at the same time as the network provides a clear structure. Some interesting links to inspiring methods and tools are provided.

A **modernAKIS knowledge exchange platform** will be built to facilitate knowledge exchange and act as a one-stop-shop for all modernAKIS network members and their interests. This AKIS knowledge platform will play a key role in smoothing the network functioning and serve the wider streamlining of the multi-actor approach adoption. It will support direct and mediated knowledge exchange among AKIS actors from across EU countries and regions and, at the same time, be instrumental to on-going monitoring of knowledge flows and needs for support from the project. Tools and functionalities of the platform will include spaces for open dialogue, constant access to the capacity building toolbox, direct contact with the project facilitators, and others.

Quality networking depends on a large extent on active engagement of members, a good network organisation and trustful relationships amongst members. Evaluation activities will both target a quantitative assessment of members' participation in activities via attendance lists, community platform tracking and monitoring of contribution to project surveys as well as a qualitative assessment of soft criteria via event feedback and feedback mechanisms on the community platform.

Building up a network entails several risks. Members might flee, fight, freeze or flock. Fleeing means withdrawing themselves of network activities. It is then important to inspire members, e.g. through reminding them of the shared ambition that existed at the beginning of the network creation. A healthy competition is important for ensuring quality. However, when people feel injustice and boundaries are crossed it turns into fighting. It is then helpful that both parties get recognition, have the opportunity to express themselves and are listened to. A network needs structure, meaning that working modalities have to be clarified. However, if the structure is too tight and members fear sanctions, they will freeze. In this case, it is important to create a safe space in which people can move again, like for example an experimental change where conditions are temporarily adjusted. Flocking means that members start to think along the same lines, they are willing to adjust to the group and suppress their own doubts so to not disturb the harmony. When flocking happens, it is helpful to shake up the group. For this it needs either people who can steer up the group with humour or a person with a lot of authority to point out defects.

2. Introduction

2.1. Objectives

According to the Grant Agreement, the project's main objective is to improve AKIS actors' capacities to leverage individual, organisational and systemic resources needed for the transformation towards more coherent, effective and efficient AKIS systems and the transition to a more sustainable management and use of natural resources in farming and forestry.

The project will therefore, amongst others:

- **build and foster a European network of at least 1.000 key AKIS actors**, including AKIS Coordination Bodies (AKIS CBs) from all EU MS, who will spearhead the transformation of the AKIS systems towards a more effective governance and modernised European agri-food sector
- **provide a forum to support AKIS CBs to identify change management issues** arising around AKIS systems, including success factors and multi-faceted barriers, and enable them to find adequate governance solutions to improve knowledge and innovation sharing
- build capacities of key AKIS actors and coach them to **set-up and sustain local/regional/national AKIS Communities of Practice (CoPs) in all EU member states (MS)**, linking projects and practitioners from research, education, advisory, farming practice and EIP Operational Groups to facilitate the uptake of knowledge and innovation through dynamic peer-to-peer learning experiences

The main objective of this deliverable is to guide the consortium partners in selecting the key AKIS actors, EU wide and in their respective region/country, and to set up the Communities of Practice. Therefore, it will outline the setting-up procedures for the modernAKIS network.

In particular this deliverable consists of a report bringing together:

- Procedures for setting up the EU wide modernAKIS network (section 3) as well as the cross-country and country-based Communities of Practice (section 4)
- Tools and methods for engaging and activating the different actors and procedures for facilitating knowledge exchange (section 5)
- Criteria to monitor and assess quality networking according to practitioner/AKIS stakeholders' experiences and needs (section 6)

2.2. Link with other tasks and work packages

In general, WP2 frames the capacity-building activities in WP3 and WP4 by setting up effective networking structures within each MS and informs WP1 on the needs of key AKIS actors of change.

This deliverable is specifically linked to *T1.1 Conceptual and Methodological Framework for Transformative AKIS journeys*, which describes in detail in D1.1 the key AKIS actors of change, their selection criteria and their engagement during their Transformative AKIS Journeys. Procedures and guidelines that are developed in this deliverable will serve as input for setting up and operationalising the modernAKIS network (T2.2), the national/regional AKIS Communities of Practice (T2.3) and the cross-country Communities of Practice (T4.3). T2.4 will provide, amongst others, a digital communication platform for the AKIS network members for knowledge exchange and community building.

2.3. Approach

The modernAKIS project is a multi-actor project and therefore follows a participatory approach. This deliverable D2.1 is a co-creative result of:

- (1) The WP2 workshop during the kick-off meeting (KOM) in Rome: input from all consortium partners (November 2022)
- (2) Input and feedback from Task 2.1 partners (December 2022)
- (3) Feedback from all consortium partners (January/February 2023)
- (4) Desktop research by LKÖ and ISP (November 2022 to February 2023)
- (5) Review by Kevin Heanue (Teagasc) and Nuria Rodríguez (FEUGA) (February 2023)

3. modernAKIS network

3.1. Objectives

The modernAKIS network will fulfil several objectives:

- It will provide a space for peer-to-peer and best practice exchange on amongst 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
- It will provide AKIS CBs the room for exchange and deciding upon the topics to shape the project activities of WP1 (good practice collection), WP2 (AKIS CBs General Assembly) and WP4 (cbCoPs and ccCoP). The process for this is defined in Chapter 4.5 of D 1.1.
- It will provide a pool of key AKIS actors of change to co-design and apply the transformative AKIS journeys, take up active roles within the modernAKIS project (e.g. community managers), engage in country-based and cross-country CoPs (WP4) and be trained in the necessary tools and capacities to understand, analyse, benchmark and monitor & evaluate the AKIS in their respective country as well as their role(s) and agencies therein (WP3).
- It will provide key AKIS actors of change a communication channel to create a shared understanding of topics with relevance for AKIS and a strong position to communicate with one voice.

3.2. Concept

The modernAKIS network, outlined in Figure 1, consists of three layers:

- (1) The **AKIS Coordination Bodies** (CBs) are at the centre of the network. They are the ones to coordinate, either alone or with supporting teams/national AKIS networks/platforms/competence centres, the AKIS in their respective country by providing the frameworks as well as the means for interconnecting all key AKIS actors of change. They are responsible for the AKIS Strategic Plan implementation as well as the reporting to the European Commission. Key areas the AKIS CBs address in their activity are:
 - the organisational set-up of the AKIS,
 - how advice and innovation support are provided,
 - how advisors, researchers, and CAP networks work together in the (future) AKIS to strengthen knowledge flows, and
 - a strategic outline of how digital technologies and innovations support the modernisation of agriculture through the AKIS.
- (2) The **key AKIS actors of change**. Key AKIS actors of change are actual/potential protagonists in their AKIS, and they actively participate in AKIS dynamics through helping knowledge flows and innovations (see D1.1 *Conceptual and Methodological Framework for Transformative AKIS Journeys*). Key AKIS actors may stem from various professional fields and organisational bodies, as exemplarily identified during the brainstorm session at the modernAKIS KOM in Rome in November 2022:
 - AKIS coordination bodies
 - Farmers/foresters and their representatives
 - SMEs and rural entrepreneurs
 - New entrants in agricultural activities
 - Young farmers and women
 - Advisors, innovation support services and other providers of specialised services
 - Researchers and academics

- Business organizations and suppliers
- Financial bodies
- NGOs
- CAP Networks and other networks
- Consumers
- Students and schools

The modernAKIS network is open to all actors who meet the criteria presented in D1.1.

(3) The **wider network** consists of other key actors, including:

- Members of other projects addressing some aspects of AKIS like ATTRACTISS¹, EU-FarmBook², ClimateSmartAdvisors³, Premiere⁴
- Members of national and international networks and organisations like IALB⁵, EUFRAS⁶, FAO⁷, YPARD⁸
- AKIS professionals at national government and EU-level, e.g., employees of relevant ministries, the EIP-Agri Service Facility and the SCAR AKIS Working Group.

This third layer of the network is an open layer. This means that relevant actors may join and leave the network over the course of the project. Moreover, it is important to be open to actors, who might not be foreseen in the beginning, joining the wider network during the course of the project.

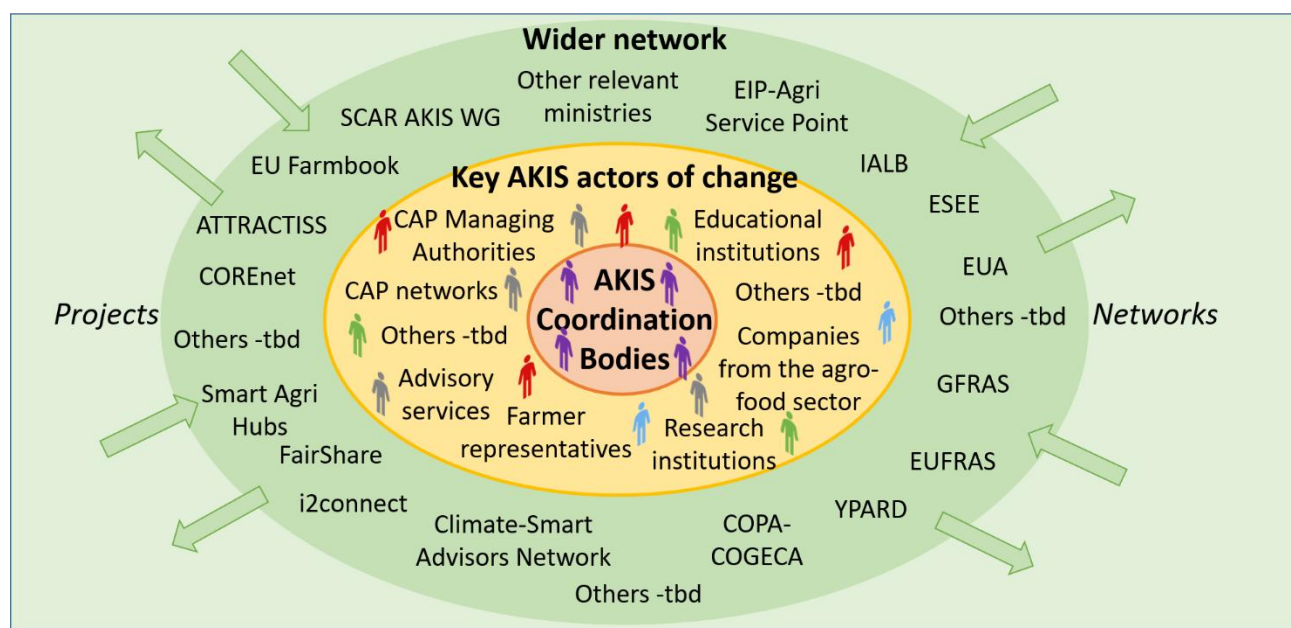


Figure 1: modernAKIS network layers

¹ AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to deepen the function of Innovation Support Services, HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01-26

² eufarmbook.eu; HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01-24

³ HORIZON-CL6-2021-CLIMATE-01-03

⁴ HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01-14

⁵ Internationale Akademie für ländliche Beratung, www.ialb.org

⁶ European Forum for Agricultural and Rural Advisory Services, www.eufaras.eu

⁷ Food and Agriculture Organisation, www.fao.org

⁸ Young Professionals for Agricultural Development, www.ypard.net

3.3. Types of network members

Within the three layers of the network, there are different types of membership. Depending on the membership type, members have access to different networking activities and tools.

- **AKIS CBs**

AKIS CBs make up the first layer of the network and they have a special position within the modernAKIS network. They are the ones to participate in the AKIS CBs GA and to take the final decision on the topic setting for the modernAKIS project activities (see Chapter 4.5 of D1.1). Membership as an AKIS CB is bound to the role the person has within their organisation. If the person changes their job position, they stay as a regular member within the network, but lose their status as AKIS CB. Each country will have one national AKIS CB. Some countries like France, Italy and Germany will additionally have regional AKIS CBs.

- **Core members**

Core members are those key AKIS actors of change (layer two) who participate in cbCoPs and ccCoPs. Participation in these communities and for the calls happens exclusively via invitation. Membership as a core member is bound to the role the person has within their organisation. If the person changes their job position, they stay as a regular member within the network, but lose their status as core member. Community managers of cbCoPs and ccCoPs will be responsible to inform the WP2 team when a core member has changed their job position. Per country there will be at least one cbCoP with a maximum amount of 20 participants. Hence, it is estimated that about 500-600 network members will be part of this category.

- **Regular members**

Everybody can become a regular member of the modernAKIS network via registration on the community platform, although key AKIS actors of change (layer two) and the wider network (layer three) will be targeted specifically. There will be a validation process of the registered email addresses via an automatically generated email with a code. Regular members can be both natural persons as well as organisations. In the first case, membership is bound to the person. Therefore, even if the person changes organisation, they stay registered. In the case of organisations (not natural persons), contact details of a main contact person must be provided. Organisations can apply to be shown as AKIS actor on an overview map. In this case, an internal validation via the respective country project partner will be required. For both organisations as well as natural persons, membership is unlimited in time.

3.4. Networking activities and facilities

A network thrives on the interaction of its members. Therefore, modernAKIS will implement a set of activities and provide facilities where network members can come together and exchange. The different types of network members will be addressed via different activities and facilities:

AKIS Coordination Bodies

- The AKIS CBs will meet twice a year in their **General Assembly**, once online and once in person. The main objective is to facilitate peer-to-peer and best practice exchange on, among other things:
 - 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
- The community platform will offer a specific feature for AKIS CBs to connect to each other outside of the GAs. This feature will be co-created with them according to their needs.

Core members

- Core members will meet regularly via the country-based and cross-country Communities of Practice (see Chapter 4).

- The community platform will offer a specific feature for core members to connect to each other outside of the GAs. This feature will be co-created with them according to their needs.

Regular members

All activities and facilities targeting regular members will be available for AKIS CBs and Core members as well.

- Members will receive a modernAKIS newsletter. The newsletter will be a joint publication with other AKIS-centring projects like ATTRACTISS, EU-FarmBook and Premiere. Hence, the creation of the newsletter will be a networking activity amongst the involved projects as well.
- A community platform will be accessible for all members. Its primary function is knowledge exchange. Moreover, it is the place where registration to the network will happen.
- Project partners will implement yearly national online AKIS events.
- modernAKIS will organize two international AKIS conferences during the project duration.
- modernAKIS will co-organize networking events with other projects (e.g. ATTRACTISS, EU-FarmBook, Premiere, ClimateSmartAdvisors)

3.5. Setting-up procedures and timeline of the modernAKIS network

Previous chapters described the type of actors to be involved in the network and their positioning in the different network layers. However, their affiliation and level of involvement may vary over time. In addition, the network itself will evolve during its lifetime (Figure 2) and require different actions at different times. Recognizing the respective phase of the network is important, in order to set expectations of members, provide suitable activities as well as apply the correct instruments for engagement and activation.

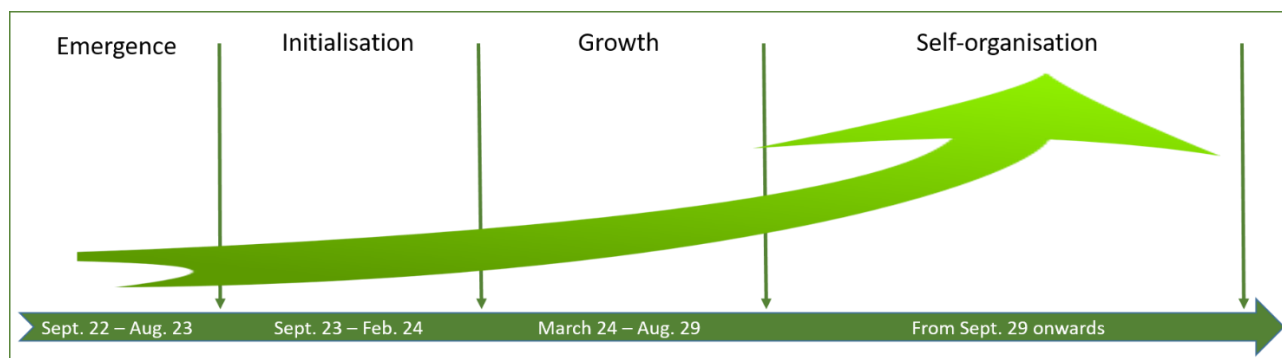


Figure 2: modernAKIS network lifecycle

Initially, during the **emergence phase**, the idea of the network developed during the project application period is fine-tuned and receives the final touches. It includes elaborating on what the network is and what purpose it serves, who should be included, which content and activities it will provide and how engagement should work. The first network members will be the project partners, AKIS CBs and members of the CoPs. In this phase it is particularly important to create a shared ambition among them. Members need to perceive an added value in belonging to the network to become engaged. Co-creation sessions will be held in order to achieve this level of commitment. This deliverable and the initial engagement of members, among others the AKIS CBs GA, first meetings of the CoPs, project partners meetings, are all part of this phase.

During the **initialisation phase** modernAKIS project partners identify and seek-out key actors of change, who are like-minded in their pursuit and committed to creating a well-functioning AKIS in their region or country. In this phase it is important to build on the already existing networks of project partners. The network needs promoters who will champion the idea and will put in extra energy to make it move forward. In this phase spaces, where a diversity of people can exchange on topics important for them, will be created.

Network **growth**, the third phase, means that the number of network members is growing, the network is mature and is generating and distributing more content, members are establishing deeper and more trustful

relationships and activities. This is the phase when the modernAKIS network builds relationships with other communities. Regular exchanges inside and outside the network take place. Key network actors develop a roadmap for transition to the self-organization phase and take the necessary steps to ensure network sustainability.

The **self-organisation phase** kicks in after the end of the modernAKIS project and is the phase when the network is self-sustaining through membership activities. Network members establish and enforce the governance mechanisms.

Table 1 describes in detail the activities and tasks that are planned along the network lifecycle phases.

Table 1: Description of the setting-up procedures for each lifecycle phase of the modernAKIS network

Emergence phase: September 2022 to August 2023	• Network membership for project partners is automatic. • Project partners accede as network members. WP2-leads keep record via an Excel-list on the modernAKIS Sharepoint. • Project partners invite AKIS CB to join the network (“bespoke approach”) using introductory texts/invitation letter templates and information packages (e.g. flyer) provided by the WP2 leads; if necessary, it is recommended to translate and adapt it to suit the needs at national/regional level • Project partners sign up the AKIS CBs for the network by filling in the Excel-list on the modernAKIS Sharepoint. • Project partners are the ones to coordinate project activities with the AKIS CBs • Selected members of project partner teams join AKIS CBs for the first set of activities; these are used to co-create a common vision and a value proposition. The goal is to create an ownership feeling with the AKIS CBs for modernAKIS. • Project partners integrate cbCoPs manager and members into the network list (Excel lists in SharePoint) • Project partners, especially WP and Task-leads, start actively networking with other projects and networks according to the networking action plan, developed in Task 2.5, so that more and more people get to know modernAKIS. • Members join the network via registration. Registration works via the project partners in the beginning (answering the individual invitation, email or letter). As soon as the community platform is set up, registration works via it. Members who registered previously to that will be asked for their consent to transfer their data to the platform once it is set up.
---	--

initialization phase: September 2023 to February 2024	• WP2 team provides information package (support materials, criteria and processes) to identify and approach key actors of change. The information package consists of: ○ an initial list of roles which correspond to the typology of key actors of change, ○ criteria for selection of people representing these typologies, ○ an information package for potential network members, comprising at least a flyer outlining the benefits and a draft invitation letter for becoming a network member, ○ a consent form to transfer the members' data to the community platform once set up. • Project partners identify key actors of change (<i>see D1.1</i>) and invite them to join the network. • Interested key actors of change subscribe via project partners directly via platform. Project partners register them via an Excel-list on the modernAKIS Sharepoint. Project partners are responsible to keep the Excel up to date for their respective country. • Project partners invite key actors of change to join project activities • The project partners co-create a Working Agreement for the network including a code of conduct, decision-making procedures, activity planning, timelines and communication channels as part of the yearly partner meeting. • WP2 and WP4 leads make sure that activities of the cbCoP, ccCoP and network procedures, timelines, communication channels and activities are aligned for a coherent user experience of network members • First events are used to co-create a common vision and a value proposition, with the different members of the network • Project partners, especially WP and Task-leads, actively network with other project and networks according to the networking action plan so that more and more people get to know modernAKIS.
Growth phase: March 2024 to August 2029	The modernAKIS network growth follows several streams in this phase: ○ Organic growth through social media posts, project events and activities alone or in cooperation with other projects, open calls of interest etc. Registration happens directly on the platform • WP2 team, in coordination with concerned project partners, identifies and invites the potential modernAKIS network members on EU level, other projects and networks (third layer) - addressing the presidents / coordinators asking them to invite their members (multiplier effect). • Project partners identify potential modernAKIS network members (organisation and individuals) in their respective country (provide contact persons, functions within an organisation); they invite potential members to join the network via an individual invitation in their respective country ("bespoke approach"). • WP2 team provides ongoing support, FAQs for "how to" and successful examples of engaging network members

Self-organisation phase: from September 2029	• Network members start to organize themselves • Networking activities emerge beyond the project activities • Sustainability of the network relies on the community • Governance of the community platform relies on the community • Funding is under the responsibility of members
--	---

4. Communities of Practice

4.1. Objectives

At national and regional level, the AKIS network will act through 'Communities of Practice'.

Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly (Wenger, 2011⁹).

Communities of practice bring actors with different knowledge and experience together and can strengthen their capacity to work and learn creatively together.

The **modernAKIS communities of practice (CoPs)** will enlarge the project's scope by sharing AKIS understanding and identity and by strengthening the multiplicity of key actors of change in the MS. To that purpose, these modernAKIS CoPs will link key AKIS actors of change to facilitate the uptake of knowledge and innovation. Their aim is:

- to help learning processes of practitioners within country/regions,
- enable practitioners to benefit from AKIS,
- connect actors and projects at all levels to foster innovation,
- improve links between all actors to encourage wider use of available knowledge and innovation.

4.2. Concept

modernAKIS CoPs will be organised and facilitated at two levels:

- (1) **Country-based CoPs (cbCoPs)** will be set up at a country or regional level to help multi-actor interaction and dialogue, reflexive social learning, support the AKIS CB and trust building among the local key actors of change in order to allow well-tailored common understanding, visioning and self-organisation of AKIS functioning at national/regional level. At least one CoP per MS will be established. Countries might decide to set up more than one CoP if this is useful.
- (2) **Cross-country CoPs (ccCoPs)** will be set up EU wide and by nomination by the cbCoPs. They will focus on the learning between countries, while identifying and discussing pathways to increase cooperation and networking. ccCoPs will be organised around topical areas pertinent to the CAP Strategic Plans of the MS. In part, these topical areas are already pre-defined by the project proposal. They will be supplemented by the needs of the modernAKIS network (see subchapter 3.6), such as: policy, governance and CAP interventions; advisors; connecting research and practice; knowledge access and knowledge flows; life-long-learning education; digitalisation.

At the modernAKIS KOM in Rome in November 2022, several partners expressed concern that establishing a cbCoP in their country would lead to a **potential duplication of an already existing AKIS group**. It is certainly possible for existing groups to function as modernAKIS cbCoPs if they meet the requirements and principles of modernAKIS cbCoPs. **The focus lies on the functioning of the CoPs.** In many cases, national/regional CoPs will effectively benefit from existing resources, the facilitation of CAP networks and Rural Development Networks. On the other hand, already existing AKIS groups will benefit from support from the modernAKIS partner in their country and - through the EU-wide modernAKIS network - will be part of a larger network within which they can exchange knowledge, good examples and experiences. As ccCoP members, they will also have the opportunity to provide input and participate in the action learning events (intensive camps) and the online learning modules (WP3).

⁹ Wenger, Etienne (2011). Communities of practice: A brief introduction.

<https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/11736>

Table 2 describes the composition of the CoPs and the necessary competences of its members.

Table 2: Communities of Practice: composition and necessary competences

	Country-based CoPs (cbCoPs)	Cross-country CoPs (ccCoPs)
Who?	Each cbCoP needs a community manager and community members. The project partner will nominate the community manager from their staff. They are the ones to organise the CoP activities, actively engage members, keep track of administrative issues and report to WP2 leaders LKÖ and ISP. Project partners and community managers, in consultation with the AKIS CB, select members for the CoP and invite them. The CoP will consist of: • CoP community manager • AKIS CB • key AKIS actors of change in the MS/region (see subchapter 3.1 <i>modernAKIS network concept</i> and D1.1 <i>Conceptual and Methodological Framework for transformative AKIS journeys</i> for the detailed description of the selection and criteria of these actors of change) We recommend limiting the number of members of the cbCoP to keep it workable and manageable. We suggest a maximum of about 20 members.	cbCoPs nominate participants for ccCoPs, depending on their expertise and profile. Countries will have the possibility to also nominate experts that are not a member of the cbCoP. ccCoP community managers will be the ccCoP leader or co-leader organisation. • ccCoP1: Policy, governance and CAP interventions ○ leader: AKI ○ co-leader: FEUGA ○ AKIS CB, policy makers, ... • ccCoP2: Advisors ○ leader: APCA-CRAO ○ co-leader: ISP ○ advisors • ccCoP3: Connecting research and practice ○ leader: FEUGA ○ co-leader: AKI ○ farmers and researchers • ccCoP4: Knowledge access and knowledge flows ○ leader: FEUGA ○ co-leader: AUA ○ AKIS CBs, other intermediary agents, farmers and researchers • ccCoP5: Education ○ leader: FEUGA ○ co-leader: AUA ○ trainers and potential future trainers at different levels

Competences?	Community manager: • familiarity with the AKIS concept • experience with multi-actor engagement • “network entrepreneur” • fluent in English Community members that are nominated for the cbCoPs and the intensive camps need to be fluent in English. D1.1 gives a detailed overview of capacities, (soft) skills and attitudes of the key AKIS actors of change to select for the CoPs.	Community manager: • expertise in one of the ccCoP areas • experience with multi-actor engagement • “network entrepreneur” • fluent in English Community members: • expertise in one of the ccCoP areas • fluent in English
--------------	--	---

4.3. Setting-up procedures and timeline of the Communities of Practice

Country-based CoPs

Four stages in the lifetime of the cbCoPs have been determined, visually depicted in Figure 3 and described in more detail in Table 3.

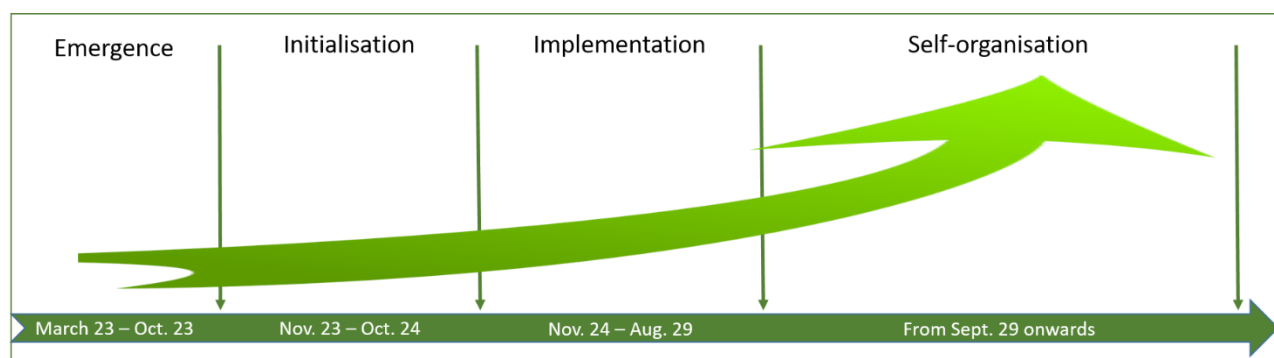


Figure 3: CoPs lifecycle

Initially, during the **emergence phase**, the cbCoPs will be composed (at least one in each MS). cbCoP managers are nominated and key AKIS actors of change will be identified, selected and invited. WP2 leaders will support the project partners and cbCoP managers by providing inspiring coaching sessions and communication material (what are the cbCoPs and ccCoPs, who should be included, what purpose do they serve, how to manage them in an interactive and co-creative way).

cbCoPs will meet for the first time during the **initialisation phase**. These first meetings are used to introduce the modernAKIS project and the AKIS concept. cbCoP members will co-create a common vision for the following years.

During the **implementation phase**, the cbCoPs meet regularly and fulfil their function (as co-created during the initialisation phase). The cbCoPs will give input to the AKIS CBs and will start organising national and/or regional workshops for creating AKIS value and enhancing knowledge flows and will nominate members for participation in the intensive camps (WP3). In this phase, WP leaders LKÖ and ISP will organise another round of coaching sessions to empower the cbCoPs to play their role effectively.

The **self-organisation phase** starts after the end of the modernAKIS project and is the phase where the different national and/or regional CoPs continue to meet, exchange knowledge and support their AKIS CB on their own, according to the MS needs.

Table 3: Description of the different lifetime phases of the country-based CoPs

Emergence phase: March to October 2023	<u>March-April 2023:</u> 1. In each MS, the assigned project partner (responsible for the cbCoP in the MS) decides on the number of cbCoPs in consultation with the AKIS CB. 2. The project partner nominates a skilled cbCoP manager (in most cases someone of the project partner staff). <u>May-October 2023:</u> 3. cbCoP managers participate in the macro-regional coaching sessions, organised by WP2 leaders LKÖ and ISP. 4. For each cbCoP, project partner and cbCoP manager identify and invite potential cbCoP members in consultation with the AKIS CB. The recommendation is that each CoP has a maximum of 20 participants. 5. cbCoP members accept invitation. 6. cbCoP managers keep an Excel list of the community members on the modernAKIS platform – <i>first draft by end of June 2023</i> 7. cbCoPs nominate representatives and additional experts for the ccCoPs 8. Validation of the composition of the cbCoPs and ccCoPs by WP2 and WP4 – <i>by end of September 2023</i> cbCoP managers report to WP2 leaders ISP and LKÖ according to the reporting template – September 2023.
Initialisation phase: November 2023 to October 2024	First cbCoP meetings are used to: • Introduce modernAKIS project and the AKIS concept • Build trust • Co-create a common vision about what the cbCoP should do and will do in the next 6 years (see also 4.4 CoP activities) • Co-create a Working Agreement (commitment, code of conduct, decision making, timeline, communication channels, ...) cbCoP managers report to WP2 leaders ISP and LKÖ according to the reporting template – September 2023. A shared cbCoP and ccCoP calendar will be created on the modernAKIS platform.
Implementation phase: November 2024 to August 2029	• ccCoPs will meet at least twice a year (at least one meeting in person) • cbCoP managers participate in the macro-regional coaching sessions • Nominated members participate in the intensive camps (WP3) (from year 3) • ccCoPs will organise national/regional workshop for creating AKIS value (T3.1.) and enhancing knowledge flows (T3.2) - WP3 workshops • From 2025: start of the consultation round for the new CAP -> input from the ccCoPs (= benefit for attracting ccCoP members) cbCoP managers report yearly to WP2 leaders ISP and LKÖ according to the reporting template.

Self-organisation phase: after the end of the modernAKIS	• cbCoPs continue to meet, to exchange knowledge and support AKIS CB even after the end of the project, according to the needs of the MS • Funding is the responsibility of the CoP (e.g., search for funding as EIP group) and the MS
---	---

Cross-country CoPs

The setting-up of the ccCoPs will be supported by the WP4 team, in particular Task 4.3 leader FEUGA. They will collect the names of the nominated cbCoP members and the activity reports of the various ccCoPs .

The first meetings of the ccCoPs are scheduled to take place before October 2023. But since the cbCoPs have to appoint the participants in the ccCoPs and they themselves still have to be established first, this will be tight timing. Meanwhile, good practices from the partners (related to each thematic ccCoP) will be collected in order to advance work and to be able to propose themes based on these ideas once the ccCoPs are formed.

During the implementation of the ccCoPs, the experts that participate must report regularly back to their respective cbCoP.

4.4. CoP activities

Country-based CoPs

The cbCoPs will meet at least twice a year, of which one meeting in person. They gather at least one month prior to the AKIS CB General Assembly meeting (which meets twice a year) to give input to that meeting.

The cbCoPs will:

- collect capacity development and topical needs regarding AKIS from a national/regional standpoint
- co-design the Transformative AKIS Journeys (WP1)
- support the AKIS CB with expert opinions upon request
- prioritize topics to be addressed in the action learning events (intensive camps) and the online learning modules (WP3, T3.1 and T3.2)
- collect regional/national needs to be discussed in the General Assembly of the AKIS CBs (WP2, T2.2)
- collect topics and needs for expert discussions in the respective cross-country CoPs (WP4)
- collect best practices (T1.2) to be used in a national/regional context
- organise national and/or regional workshop for creating AKIS value (T3.1.) and enhancing knowledge flows (T3.2)

Cross-country CoPs

Both the frequency and the format of the meetings of the ccCoPs vary depending on the ccCoP:

- ccCoP1: Policy, governance and CAP interventions: 1 onsite meeting + 1 online meeting / year
- ccCoP2: Advisors: 5 face-to-face workshops + 9 online workshops in total during the project (2 meetings / year)
- ccCoP3: Connecting research and practice: 1 online meeting / year
- ccCoP4: Knowledge access and knowledge flows: 1 online meeting + 1 onsite workshop / year
- ccCoP5: Education: 1 online meeting / year

Within each topical area, ccCoP members will consider and collect insightful practices to enhance knowledge flows and methods to assess end-user needs and opportunities.

4.5. Support from WP2 to the CoP managers

WP2 will provide a “flying doctors” service (helpdesk), which will support the project partners (and the CoP managers) with implementing the CoPs. It does not offer helpdesk activities for the AKIS implementation itself in the MS. This is a function of EIP Agri Support and the national CAP networks (according to the EC General Regulation art. 126 3c).

Besides that, coaching sessions will be organised by ISP and LKÖ to empower CoP managers to play their roles effectively within managing the national CoPs and in the AKISs.

- Coaching session 1 (during emergence + initialisation phase)
- Coaching session 2 (during implementation phase)

Unlike the capacity building activities in WP3 that focus on all AKIS actors of change, these coaching sessions are for the CoP managers and will focus on setting up and managing the CoPs.

Topics that will be covered during the coaching sessions:

- What are the objectives of the CoPs?
- How do you work together? How do you coordinate the co-creation processes in order to achieve your CoPs’ targets?
- How do you facilitate dynamic, hybrid and (a)synchronous community interactions?
- How to link and manage knowledge flows between cbCoPs and ccCoPs?

To support and inspire the CoP managers, WP2 will provide:

- AKIS country reports (elaborated in i2connect project: <https://i2connect-h2020.eu/resources/akis-country-reports/>); these reports will get an update in 2024
- D1.10 Report on comparative analysis of AKIS in EU member states
- Short description (flyer/brochure) of the modernAKIS project, including clear goals of the CoPs, benefits and added values for the members, etc.
- Templates for reporting, agenda, etc. (emergence phase, meetings, etc.) 

5. Engaging the different actors

5.1. Methods and tools for engaging and activating the network actors

For networks to work well they need to provide an environment where exchange and dialogue can happen, members feel challenged and safe at the same time as the network provides a clear structure.

It's all about...

Needs	⇒ Actions
<i>...Attitude</i>	
1. Mutual trust amongst all	⇒ cultivate trust, not control
2. Engagement of participants	⇒ collaborate generously
<i>...Purpose</i>	
3. Win-win relations	⇒ emphasize “return on relationships”
4. Common purpose and principles	⇒ clarify your shared purpose
5. Common focus on target group(s)	⇒ define your target groups
6. Shared knowledge needs	⇒ assess user needs
<i>...Organisation</i>	
7. Joint capacity building and learning	⇒ employ co-creative methodologies
8. Complementary knowledge and capacities	⇒ convene the right people
9. Continuous interaction	⇒ organize nodes not a hub
10. Cooperation framework and methods	⇒ coordinate your actions

1. Mutual trust amongst all

Strong relationships amongst network partners and a culture in which actors routinely invest resources into building long-term, trust-based relationships are critical to collaborative success. Trust generates openness for sharing knowledge and ideas. Trust shouldn't be confused with people liking each other or agreeing. Instead, trust within a network is about finding common ground and working together to achieve mutual goals. A network may be tempted to quickly “get to the action” and let relationships develop naturally over time. However, it is proven that trust is the single most important factor behind successful impact networks. Networks move at the speed of trust. Therefore, trust should be cultivated intentionally, rather than passively. So, *cultivate trust, not control*

2. Engagement of participants

Generous collaborators do not count transactions, giving only as much as they get in return. They assume positive intent, communicate frequently, and consistently look for opportunities to work with others in support of shared goals, not personal gain. They are “successful givers”. Givers play a valuable role in networks with other network members correctly perceiving them as selfless and agenda-less. “Givers” share credit without demanding any in return, which spurs co-networkers to flock to their ideas. Their generosity earns them deep and lasting respect, which translates into potency. So, *collaborate generously*

3. Win-win relations

Win-win is a strategy in which all the parties benefit one way or another. There are no losers. In a conflict situation, when the participants are trying to work out a resolution, a win-win strategy is one in which everybody is accommodated. Instead of focusing on what each individual member of the network wants, by aiming at how much can be accomplished together, all participants come out winning. This is only possible by constantly engaging in efforts to build strong relationships. Unless built on a foundation of mutual respect and integrity, collaborations are unlikely to succeed, regardless of how much formal structure or strategic planning went into them. So, *emphasize “return on relationships”*

4. Common purpose and principles

A network's purpose is its reason for being. It's what inspires people to join and contribute their time and energy. Clarifying a common purpose is an essential early step in forming an impact network and is how a network stays coherent, even as it grows. Purpose must be clear enough initially to identify the right partners and encourage them to meet. As a network clarifies its purpose, articulating its shared principles is also helpful. Principles are fundamental beliefs about how network members intend to conduct themselves and work together in pursuit of the network's purpose. They guide members' behaviour and decision-making by linking values with action. Together, purpose and principles create a foundation for vibrant and coherent self-organization of the network. So, *clarify your shared purpose and principles*

5. Common focus on target group(s)

The ultimate goal of a knowledge network is to co-create the knowledge needed by its target group(s) to overcome challenges or to respond to opportunities. To this end, the co-creation between network actors needs a demand-driven approach based on the needs of the target group(s). It is thus important to define the target group as sharply as possible through a detailed target group analysis, since not only the outcome of the network development process, but also the development and dissemination approach, the communication channels, language and information must match with the one's used by the target group in order to realize uptake of results. Ideas are born, checked with the target group, and then further optimized. Finding a sharp target group definition will help you to create a tone of voice that really speaks to the one you envisage to advance. Ideally, your target group is well represented in the network, appointed in the formal role of the "guardian of the focus". So, *define well your target group(s)*

6. Shared knowledge needs

Knowledge needs assessment can be defined as determining if gaps exist between "what is available" and "what should be available" in terms of the knowledge needed to achieve its purpose. It is essential that distinctions are made between needs, wants and interests. Network members undertaking efforts to assess knowledge needs should understand that "needs" refer to something considered necessary or required to accomplish the networks' purpose. "Wants", on the other hand, are considered desirable or useful, but not essential. "Interests" indicate an individual's concern or curiosity about something. If real knowledge needs are determined but are not available in the network, either new network members should be actively recruited... or the purpose ambition level should be reassessed. So, *assess your knowledge needs*

7. Joint capacity building and learning

Tackling the purpose of the network requires mapping the system, examining the problem from diverse perspectives, finding challenges and potential solutions. It also requires understanding the context, societal, political or sectoral trends, dynamics, existing assumptions and related evolutions. By bringing people together, we can address an issue from many angles at once, see the big picture, and make decisions that benefit the whole system, not just part of it. Through a joint learning process, a network and its members bring the pieces together so the group can jointly make sense of the whole puzzle. Different roads towards viable solutions must be sought. Co-creation plays a key role in stakeholders' engagement towards this endeavour. So, *employ co-creative methodologies*

8. Complementary knowledge and capacities

Fundamentally, cultivating a network is about bringing people together to create a more interconnected whole. Connections are central to what makes a network work. Successful connection amongst the "right people" creates a generative space where people interact, think, talk, and collaborate in new ways. It creates moments where participants envision and build a solution to a challenge together. The "right people" collectively represent all parts of the system, have the ability to get things done, and are willing to cross boundaries and work with people who may have very different perspectives and priorities. Real progress on complex problems requires uncommon collaboration across divides. So, *convene the right people*

9. Continuous interaction

Impact networks aren't just about relationships, they're also about flows: getting information, knowledge, and resources to where they're needed most. When flows are accelerated across a network, people are better able to coordinate their actions, sharing new or promising practices with one another, and reducing unnecessary duplication. A node network -unlike hub-and-spoke networks- enables continuous interaction amongst all network nodes, thus making communication faster and more resilient. In addition, in a node network all partners are peers mobilizing a constellation of resources and skills that enables the achievement of a shared vision. The network itself becomes the primary vehicle for delivering mission impact. So, *organize nodes not a hub*

10. Cooperation framework and methods

By identifying and coordinating work, participants can leverage organisational resources, collaborate around common goals and avoid duplication of efforts. Because emergent collaborative solutions are dynamic, the most effective networks assign and coordinate roles as well. Network roles may include a "core team" to handle certain governance decisions and a facilitator to design and lead the convenings and to serve the network's emergent needs. **CoP participation guidelines** ("rules of the game") lay out what the CoP values and the way the CoP would like to work (The Communities of Practice Playbook, 2021). They include behaviours and enabling conditions and they address potential activity hurdles. Guidelines help to develop a 'safe place' to work, encourage participation and also help newcomers to understand what the community is about and how they can get involved. They are created together: they do not need to be cast in stone but can evolve. So, *coordinate your actions*

Some interesting links to inspiring methods and tools:

- H2020 LIAISON practice recommendations: management of co-innovation processes and facilitation of a group events (including How-to-guides on coming together, good planning, healthy partnerships, connected partnerships and achieving impact): <https://liaison2020.eu/your-material/>
- "Gamestorming": a set of co-creation tools used by innovators around the world: <https://gamestorming.com/>
- "The Art of Hosting": an approach to leadership that scales up from the personal to the systemic using personal practice, dialogue, facilitation and the co-creation of innovation to address complex challenges: www.artofhosting.org

5.2. Facilitating knowledge exchange: the modernAKIS Platform

A modernAKIS knowledge exchange platform will be built to facilitate knowledge exchange and act as a one-stop-shop for all modernAKIS network members and their interests. It will serve as

- (1) virtual interaction space between AKIS network members
- (2) ticketing system for the “flying AKIS doctors”
- (3) digital repository of the project including event streams and recordings from local level workshops
- (4) delivery space for online courses

This AKIS knowledge platform will play a key role in smoothing the network functioning and serve the wider streamlining of the multi-actor approach adoption. It will support direct and mediated knowledge exchange among AKIS actors from across EU countries and regions and, at the same time, be instrumental to on-going monitoring of knowledge flows and needs for support from the project.

Tools and functionalities of the platform will include spaces for open dialogue, constant access to the capacity building toolbox, direct contact with the project facilitators, and others.

Representatives from AKIS CBs as well as the cbCoPs and the ccCoPs will actively participate in the design process of the platform in order to:

- declare their needs in terms of actual content to be included
- specify functionalities to be built
- test each version of the platform, and provide feedback iteratively, in a structured way
- define which part of the content will be translated in which languages.

6. Monitoring and assessing quality networking

6.1. Evaluation activities

Quality networking depends on a large extent on active engagement of members, a good network organisation and trustful relationships amongst members.

More specifically the following quality criteria apply:

- Members share a common ambition
- Members are engaged and actively taking part in the networking activities
- Members put effort into networking activities and obtain clear benefits
- The network has clear structures, communication pathways are clear and tasks are well distributed
- Members are open to change and show a willingness to adapt to changing circumstances
- Members have a clear "we" - identity without flocking

WP2-leads will regularly implement evaluation activities in order to be able to respond in time to emerging difficulties. Evaluation activities will both target a quantitative assessment of members' participation in activities as well as a qualitative assessment of soft criteria.

Quantitative assessment

The quantitative assessment tools serve to evaluate the number of members, which are actively engaged and to how many of the different types of network members (regular members, core members and AKIS CBs) the network is able to reach out. The main tools to conduct the quantitative assessment are:

- Attendance list of events

For all events and meetings held as part of the networking activities and the cbCoPs as well as the ccCoPs, there will be attendees lists. Attendees lists permit an overview of the number of people as well as the diversity of people participating.

- Community platform tracking

Many of the networking activities will take place via the community platform. WP2-leads will keep track of the number of members using the virtual interaction space, accessing the digital repositories of the project, the participation in online courses and booking via the ticketing system for the "flying AKIS doctors".

Qualitative assessment

The qualitative assessment tools seek to understand the value members see in the network, if their expectations are met, how comfortable they feel with the network structure, how clearly a "we" identity is formed and how responsive members consider the network to be. The main tools to conduct the qualitative assessment are:

- Event feedback

For events which target either the AKIS CBs, the core members and / or the regular members as the AKIS CBs GA, ccCoP, cbCoP meetings as well as AKIS conferences and online courses, participants will be requested to fill out a feedback form with questions targeted at assessing the quality of networking.

- Feedback mechanisms on the community platform

On the community platform, a feedback form will be permanently available. Members will be guided the survey. After the deadline, WP2-leads will assess the results.

6.2. Networking risk management

Building up a network entails several risks. Members might flee, fight, freeze or flock. This chapter will deal with these four risks and how they can be overcome.

Exchange means that members feel like the efforts they are putting into the network pay off. If an imbalance happens here, members start to flee. In practical terms, this means that they no longer attend meetings, do not answer emails, are simply not involving themselves anymore in activities. A measure to prevent this is to inspire the members, e.g. through reminding them of the shared ambition that existed at the beginning of the network creation.

Network members challenge each other as “quality evolves in competition”. It is about “the showdown of strengths and the search for complementarity.” (Wielinga and Robijn, 2020, p. 136). Members aim at figuring out their position in the network, setting their own boundaries. Competition becomes unhealthy when people feel injustice and boundaries are crossed. Then it turns into fighting. Winning over the other gets into the focus. In this case, it is important that both parties get recognition, have the opportunity to express themselves and are listened to.

A network needs structure, meaning that working modalities have to be clarified. What are the objectives? How are tasks divided? How do members interact with each other? What are the rules and how are they enforced? Hence, there need to be clear objectives, task responsibilities and monitoring of the process. This gives safety and space in which to operate. When people are unsatisfied with the structure, but do not feel like they have the means to change it as they might be afraid of the sanctions and are unable to flee as maybe their income depends on their position in the network, they will freeze. “In freezing, life stops flowing. The energy disappears from the system.” (Wielinga and Robijn, 2020, p. 153). In this case, it is important to create a safe space in which people can move again, like for example an experimental change where conditions are temporarily adjusted.

Networks need space where dialogue can happen, in the sense of learning environments. “What can we learn from each other and with each other?” (Wielinga and Robijn, 2020 p.138); “How do we inspire each other to rise above ourselves?” (Wielinga and Robijn, 2020, p.139). Network members need space for real conversation, where they can be creative and co-create together. When network members are satisfied with what has been achieved together and they feel a strong “we” identity, there is a risk of flocking. Flocking relates to the phenomenon of “groupthink”. People start to think along the same lines, they are willing to adjust to the group and suppress their own doubts so to not disturb the harmony. They do not only limit themselves, but also critically observe those who think differently. Group pressure arises. When flocking happens, it is important to shake up the group. For this it needs either people who can steer up the group with humour or a person with a lot of authority to point out defects.

Table 4: Networking risks and risk management measures (adjusted from Wielinga and Robijn, p.155 and p. 169)

Nourishing pattern	Risk	Risk management measure
Exchange – Balance between effort and benefit	Flee – withdrawal of network activities	Inspiring members by connecting ambitions to what the network can offer
Challenge – Competition for quality	Fight – crossing boundaries, wanting to win	Giving recognition and seeking a common ambition
Structure – rules of the game and network organisation	Freeze – no authentic input as members fear sanctions	Creating safe space and experimenting
Dialogue – space for learning and co-creation	Flock – suppressing criticism and protecting collective identity	Shaking up and giving space to suppressed doubts

7. References

- Allee, V. (2000). Knowledge Networks and Communities of Practice. OD Practitioner
- Brodie, R., Fehrer, J., Jaakola, E., Conduit, J. (2019). Actor Engagement in Networks: Defining the Conceptual Domain. Journal of Service Research 22(3)
- Catana, G.C., Debremaeker, I., Szkola, S.S.E., Williquet, F. (2021). The Communities of Practice Playbook. <https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC122830>
- Ehrlichman, D., Sawyer, D., Wei-Skillern, J. (2015). Five Steps to Building an Effective Impact Network. Stanford Social Innovation Review.
- Follett, M. P. (1924). Creative experience. Longmans, Green and Co.
- Grant, A. (2014). Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success.
- Klerkx, L., Leeuwis, C. (2009). Operationalizing Demand-Driven Agricultural Research: Institutional Influences in a Public and Private System of Research Planning in The Netherlands. The Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension 15(2)
- Lin, N. (1999). Building a Network Theory of Social Capital. Connections, 22, 28-51.
- Lung Yu, P. (2000). Forming Win-win Strategy — A New Way to Study Game Problems. DOI:[10.1007/978-3-642-57311-8_3](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-57311-8_3)
- McCaslin, N. L. and Tibeziinda, J. P. (1997). Assessing Target Group Needs. Improving Agricultural Extension,
- Sofranko, A., Khan, A. (1988). It is not that simple. Improving needs assessment. Journal of Extension, volume 26, p14-16
- Wenger, Etienne (2011). Communities of practice: A brief introduction. <https://scholarsbank.uoregon.edu/xmlui/handle/1794/11736>
- Wielinga, E. and Robijn, S. (2020). Energising networks – Tools for co-creation. ISBN: 978-90-8686-351-8 <https://doi.org/10.3920/978-90-8686-904-6>