

modern AKIS

Together for Systems' Innovation

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modernAKIS Together for Systems' Innovation

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

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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	☐

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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

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1. Executive Summary

The main goal of the modernAKIS network is to offer a platform for peer learning, knowledge exchange and in general a networking facility on:

- the (future) organisational set-up and improvement of the AKIS,
- current developments with relevance for AKIS, including intervention design, AKIS strategies etc.,
- the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the CAP Strategic Plans / AKIS section.

The report at hand, which covers the timeframe of September 1, 2023 to August 31, 2024, updates the reader on three key aspects related to the modernAKIS network:

a) the evolution and growth of the network itself as well as its support through a digital networking platform AKISConnect.eu
b) the networking activities of AKIS Coordination Bodies – who are at the centre of the modernAKIS network, as well as
c) the networking activities addressed both to the AKIS Coordination Bodies but also the larger network.

Initial information on these activities are available in D2.2. The networking report on AKIS.

Growth and evolution of the network

Registration to the modernAKIS network commenced in June 2023. By the end of August 2023, 270 members had already registered. Using the original registration procedure (i.e. registration via an online form) until end of February 2024, the network grew organically to 764 members, 364 males and 463 females. On March 1, 2024, the AKISConnect.eu platform was launched and the network (including member registration) migrated to the new online environment. In preparation of the launch, already registered network members were invited to accept migration to the new digital environment. Despite repeated requests, only about 30% of the original network members accepted the invitation, so the network on the digital platform started with about 230 members. Between March and August 2024, the network grew organically to 626 members.

A strategically important decision was to merge the networks of modernAKIS and ATTRACTISS. The latter is an EU-funded project, aiming to improve capacities of Innovation Support Service providers as well as to support their integration into AKIS. The synergy potential between the two projects has been clear from the onset and the projects worked in close collaboration since the start. Upon agreement with REA /the European Commission, the new network is expected to have at least 1.650 members, which is the total sum of members the two projects had planned individually.

Networking activities for the AKIS Coordination Bodies

In the timeframe covered by this report two AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies took place. The first one was in Zagreb (Croatia) in November 2023 and the second one in Madrid (Spain) in April 2024. Topically the first focused on how knowledge flows can be established and fostered within the AKIS, while the second event focused on the integration of advisors into the AKIS. A well-established and valued section of each General Assembly is the experience exchange on the challenges, experiences and solutions on the job between AKIS Coordination Bodies. Independently of the overarching topic of each event, this section is and will be a consistent part of each meeting.

Besides the General Assemblies WP2 organized a networking event for policy makers in June 2024, which featured the authors' of the OECD report "Policies for the Future of Farming and Food in the European

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Union." The event offered participants the opportunity to exchange with the OECD staff as well as among the participants in general.

In addition, WP4 offered in June 2024 a capacity development event on the implementation of standardized costs in AKIS interventions. The event enabled also networking between the AKIS Coordination Bodies as well as other policy makers and technical staff involved in the implementation of the interventions (e.g. paying agencies etc.).

Networking events

Understanding how a well-functioning AKIS is useful/valuable in one's own area of activity is an important motivator and initiator for the interaction of different key AKIS actors as well as for the overall system. Thus, modernAKIS networking events aim to integrate the key AKIS actors of change beyond the AKIS Coordination Bodies into the peer learning and experience exchange. Based on the Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) done by WP1 a yearly plan for networking events is defined and executed. Results from the CNA drive topics and speakers of the networking events.

Between November 2023 and August 2024 four networking events with a total number of 738 participants took place. Topics ranged from success stories for fostering knowledge flows, evaluation of innovation policies, using the multi-actors approach and AKIS mind-set to create successful commercial labels and design and implementation of AKIS measures for climate change mitigation.

During the second half of 2024, networking events will address the role of advisors for climate change mitigation, digital repositories and their role in well-working AKIS, rural innovation systems as well as women-led innovation for a stronger AKIS.

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2. Introduction

The Horizon Europe-funded modernAKIS project builds its activities around a network respectively several communities of key AKIS actors who are willing, have the necessary knowledge and have the leverage to become actors of change and spearhead the transformation and modernization of the European agri-food sector.

The aim of the network is to foster enhanced collaboration among individuals and organizations from all 27 EU Member States, providing a platform for sharing ideas, resources and expertise. Knowledge available at different AKIS levels in the Member States as well as the one created or collected by the modernAKIS consortium can be easily shared among the network members. The Communities of Practice set up by the project, who are set-up and operated by the project, and who are part of the network enable social connections as well as increased collaboration opportunities.

modernAKIS uses several instruments for networking:

- Communities of Practice
  - At national and regional level
  - At trans-national level
- AKIS Coordination General Assemblies
- modernAKIS networking events
- Discussion fora on AKISConnect (upcoming)
- Newsletters
- AKIS conferences
- Joint networking events with other projects

The AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies as well as the networking events are presented in detail in this document. The Communities of Practice are reported on in deliverables from WP2, T2.3 as well as several deliverables of WP4. The discussion fora are subject to presentation in the deliverable from WP2, T2.4. The Newsletters and upcoming AKIS conference are part of WP5 deliverables. Joint networking events with other projects are presented in this deliverable if they are organised.

The **multi-actor approach** is central to the modernAKIS project. The consortium partners are regularly invited to co-create the topics as well as the content for the modernAKIS events. Furthermore a wide diversity of actors is invited and welcome to engage with the different community-based activities we are providing.

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3. The modernAKIS network: initial growth

The composition of the modernAKIS network is conceptualized in D2.1. It remains at the basis of all network-building activities, and is central to all project activities. The key AKIS actors, who will spearhead the transformation of the AKIS systems towards a more effective governance and modern European agri-food sector, are structured in three layers in the network:

1. the AKIS Coordination Bodies (CBs), who are at the centre of the network
2. the key AKIS actors, and
3. the wider network

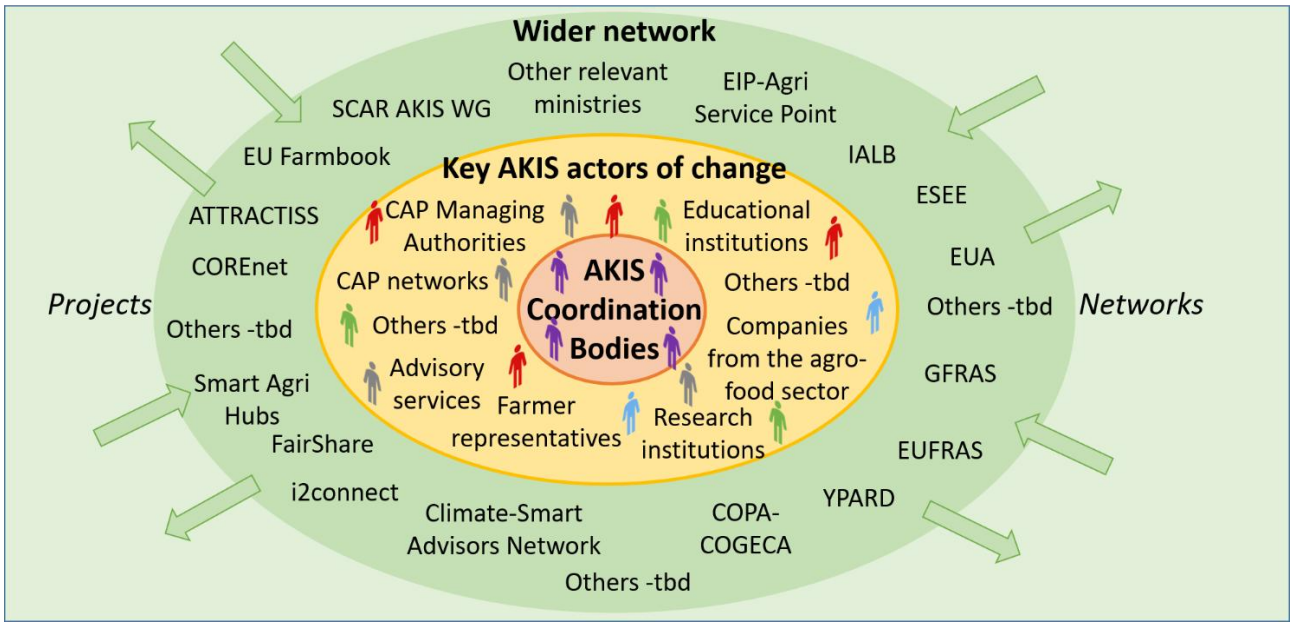

Figure 1: modernAKIS network layers

AKIS Coordination Bodies remain at the core of the network. Key AKIS actors of change are the main group of actors in the network. While originally the modernAKIS network intended to involve at least 1.000 members from all European countries, this key performance indicator has been adapted in the context of the AKISConnect platform.

Because ATTRACTISS and modernAKIS co-create and manage the network jointly in AKISConnect since March 2024, the key performance indicator is now 1.650 members, summing up the intended maximum audience of both networks. This actually represents not a linear but above projection increase, because it can be reasonably expected that several key AKIS actors would have registered in both networks, thus being counted once in each network. However through the merger a higher absolute number of actors is reached.

Since Innovation Support Services are key AKIS actors, we expect this synergy to deliver at least the following benefits:

- Greater outreach
- The network will offer more activities as both projects contribute
- Avoiding stakeholder fatigue
- The focus is on AKIS and its actors instead of projects

The original goal of the modernAKIS network to provide a space for peer-to-peer and good practice exchange on

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- 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

stays the same. The network and activities of the ATTRACTISS project fit fully into the above objectives as innovation support services are an integral part of AKIS with their role to foster the transformation of European agriculture towards an innovation ecosystem.

More specifically, network members will have the following benefits:

- Develop knowledge on AKIS
- Share experiences and learn from other agricultural and rural actors across Europe
- Co-create and co-design the modernAKIS learning agenda
- Participate in networking events to meet other AKIS actors and exchange on AKIS in other EU Member States as well as specific AKIS-relevant topics
- Participate in capacity building events to increase the capacity to act as a key actor within the respective AKIS
- Be part of the modernAKIS community platform
- Receive invitations to events, capacity development and training opportunities.

Network inception and initial growth – September 2023 to February 2024

Registrations to the modernAKIS network commenced in July 2023. Since its start, the modernAKIS network is open to everybody. The underlying assumption is that people register for a network if they perceive it as useful for them. We would thus expect that due to the type of content presented and delivered by AKISConnect the natural selection of registrants will tend towards key AKIS actors and AKIS Coordination Bodies.

Potential network members were contacted in 2023 directly by modernAKIS project partners. To help the project partners in motivating key AKIS actors to join the network the online registration form (via JotForm) was translated in 21 languages and a flyer depicting the advantages of network membership was delivered. modernAKIS uses JotForm for online surveys, events and network registration due to its compliance to GDPR as well as its relative ease of use.

The ongoing network registrations were shared on a weekly basis with the modernAKIS partners via the project SharePoint, so that they could monitor the progress of the network development in their country.

Network registrations until mid-August 2023

Until the final preparation of the deliverable D2.2, 270 persons had registered as network members. Their geographical distribution as well as the roles they occupy are presented in detail in D2.2.

Network registrations September 2023 to February 2024

During all this time, the AKISConnect platform was still under development, thus we continued with registrations via the JotForm. In the six months covered by this deliverable, the total number of network members increased to 763, an increase by 493 network members.

After the initial push to sign up network members, the communication efforts were less intense, which is well represented in the drop in registration numbers. The increase of registrations in November 2023 coincides with the first physical AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly in Zagreb (see Chapter 3) as well as with the first online networking event (see Chapter 4), which had about 500 registrants.

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It is worth noting that there seems to be an **organic network growth at about 50 registrations/month**, which can be observed both from September 2023 to February 2024 (cf. Fig. 2) but also from March 2024 (cf. Fig. 14) onwards, when AKISConnect went live. Considering an average monthly registration of 50 persons this would mean a total network at the end of 2029 of additional 3.000 persons, well above the target defined in the project application.

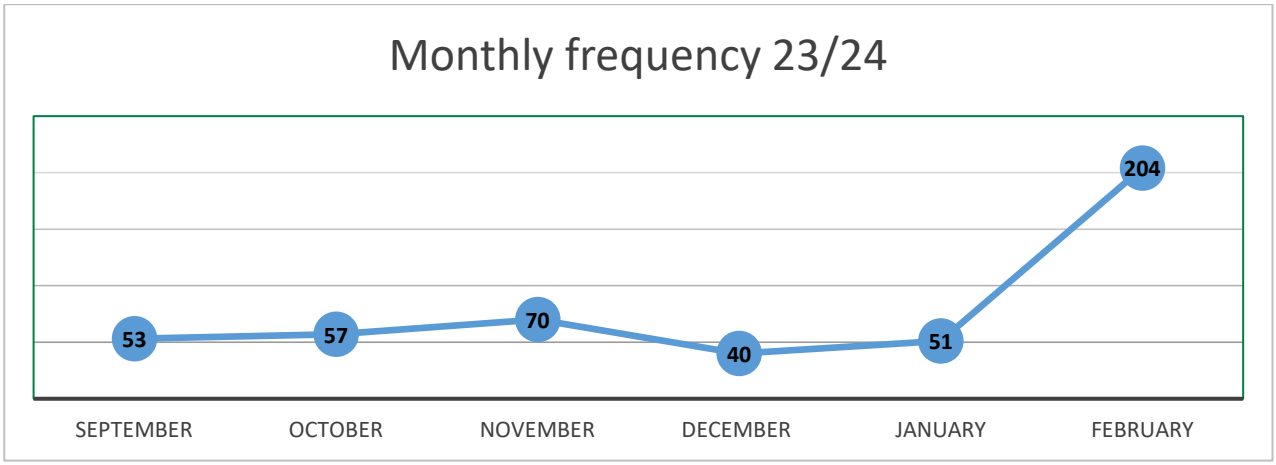

Figure 2: modernAKIS network monthly registrations

However it is also observable, that when a conscious communication push towards engagement of potential network member is done the number increases to somewhere between 100 and 200 registrations per month. How this insight will drive activities 2024-2025 is presented in chapter 3.3.

Even in the initial registration phase, we can observe that **geographically** the network covers all 27 European member states, however with a rather uneven distribution. The distribution is not necessarily correlated to country size or maturity of the AKIS system, but rather with the early availability of a "de-facto" AKIS Coordination Body and their involvement in the modernAKIS project early on. For example, Denmark and France are lagging behind other countries in establishing their AKIS Coordination Body, which is reflected in the graph below. Ireland established their AKIS CB only at the end of 2023.

On the other hand, Romania, Slovakia and Italy were involved early on in the project and even though, for example, Romania and Slovakia have a rather weak AKIS, engaging key AKIS actors early on, proves to be a good support factor for the network.

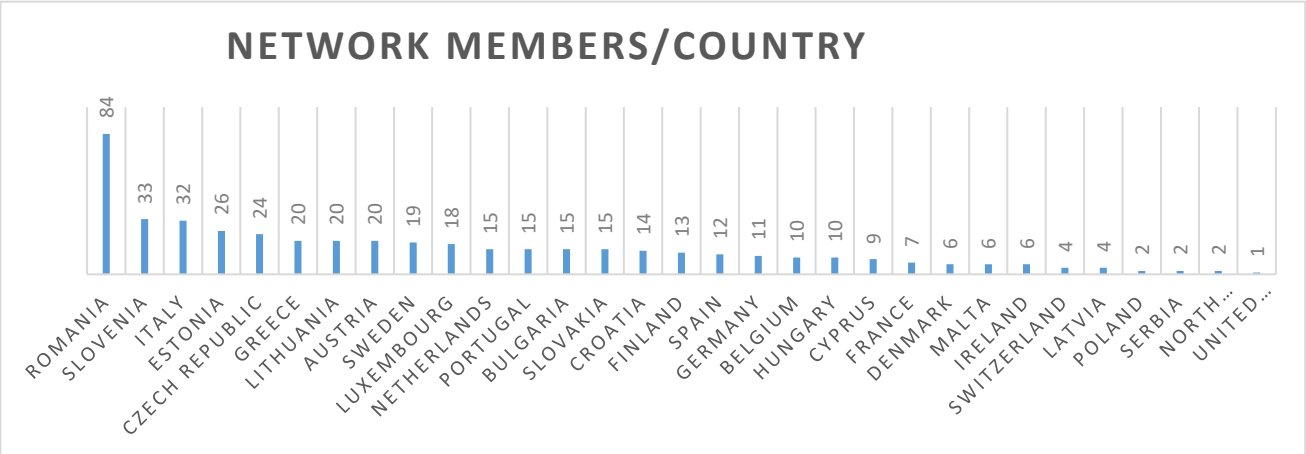

Figure 3: Geographic distribution of network members per country (February 2024)

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Based on the percentage distribution Western Europe is lagging significantly behind Central and Eastern Europe in network registrations. One potential reason might be the lack of established networking and open capacity building infrastructures in these countries which makes the networking opportunity more attractive, while in Western European countries with more established systems some form of networking was already built up.

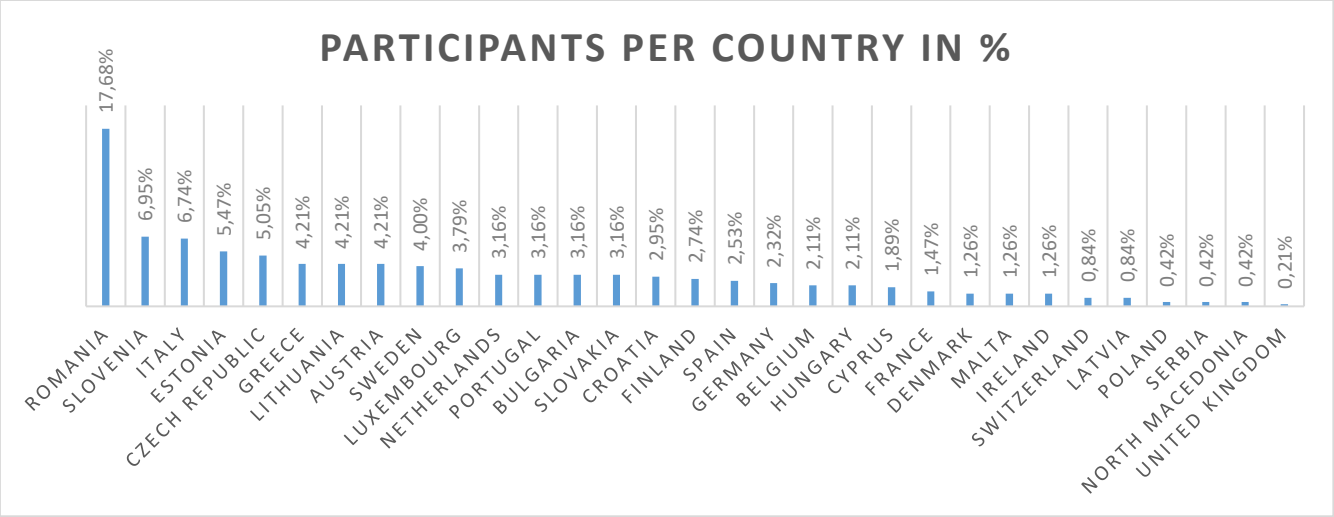

Figure 4: Geographic distribution (in %) of network members per February 2024

When looking at individual network members the **gender distribution** trends slightly towards females with 433 network registrations, while men are represented with 316 persons. A number of 14 members identified as "another" gender. Overall, the gender distribution seems balanced, with no specific need to address one gender more than the other(s).

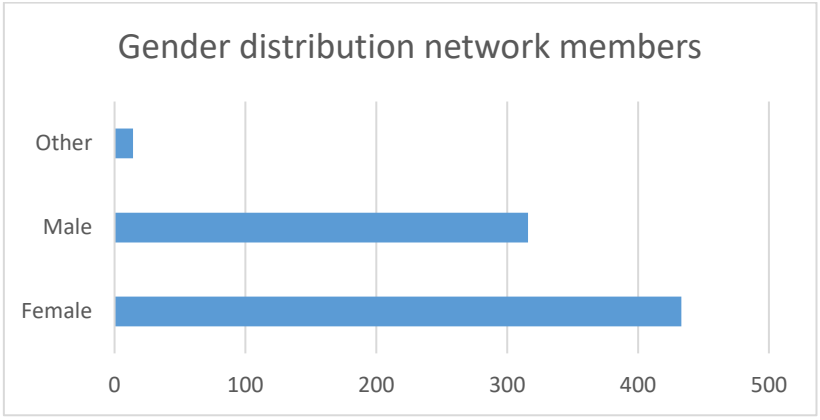

Figure 5: Gender distribution of network members per February 2024

The **distribution according to roles** shows a balanced distribution of key AKIS actors across the different roles. The roles identified for the key AKIS actors remain unchanged since the start of the network and are based on the categories defined in D1.1. Upon registration to the network, people can select one or multiple roles that they inhabit. Almost 30% of network members inhabit more than one role from the different categories of key AKIS actors.

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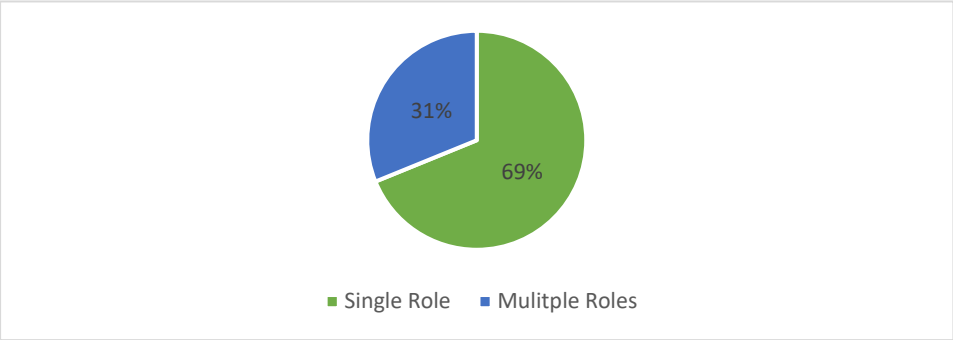

Figure 6: Single vs. multiple-roles distribution among network members per February 2024

There are about 130 combinations of key AKIS actor's categories, which are possible when combining the different categories. We have selected only the most frequent four of them. However, it can be seen that these cover only 5% of the cases. A deeper analysis should be done in the future to understand what the combinations are, how they are distributed geographically and what is influencing this confluence of roles for each AKIS. This might be a worthwhile task in another research project.

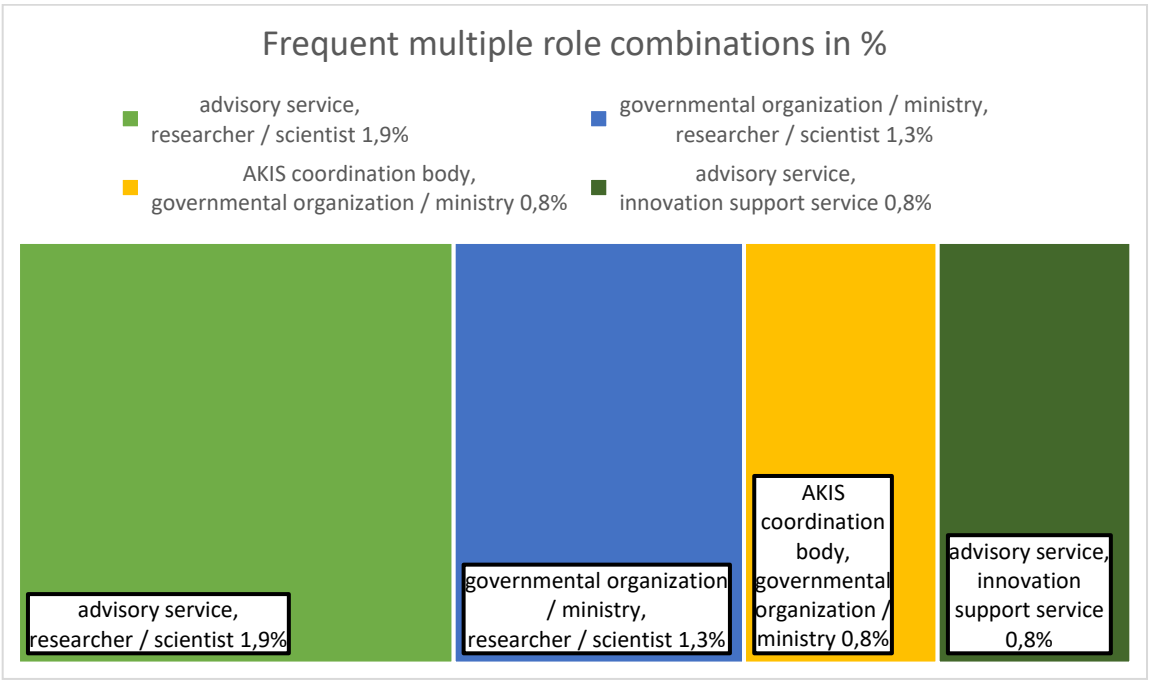

Figure 7: Most frequent role combinations among network members per February 2024

If we look at the 69% of network members, who have indicated a single role, then the distribution of the roles looks like in Fig. 8. Advisors, researchers and governmental employees represent the highest percentage of network members (each around 14%), while AKIS Coordination Bodies represent 3% of the overall network, which is a total of 23 persons, which matches quite well with the total number of persons who were officially appointed until the end of February 2024 by the European Member States.

In general it can be said that there is a broad distribution of roles within the modernAKIS network, which mirrors well the wide variety of key AKIS actors groups addressed by the project. While not specifically targeted it is good to see that also farmers and foresters are represented and active in the network as well as consumers and business organizations.

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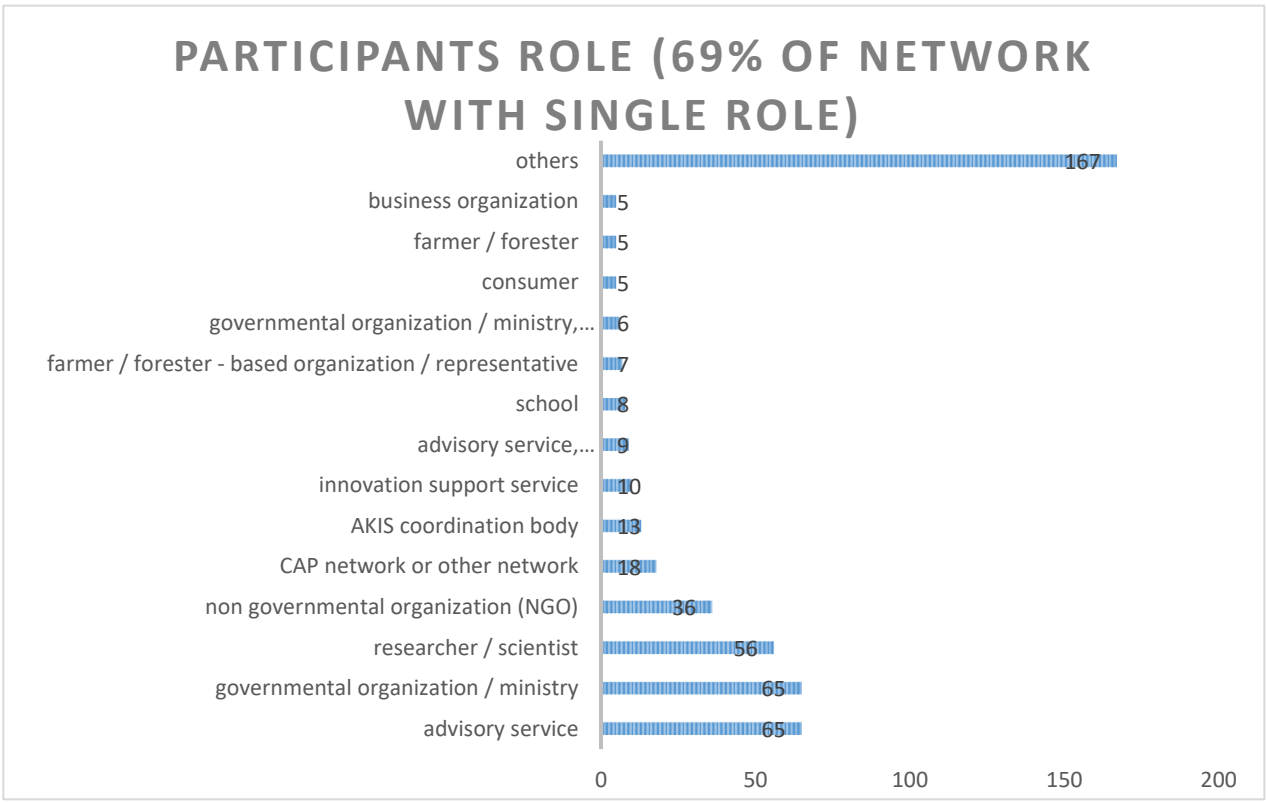

Figure 8: Role distribution among network members per February 2024

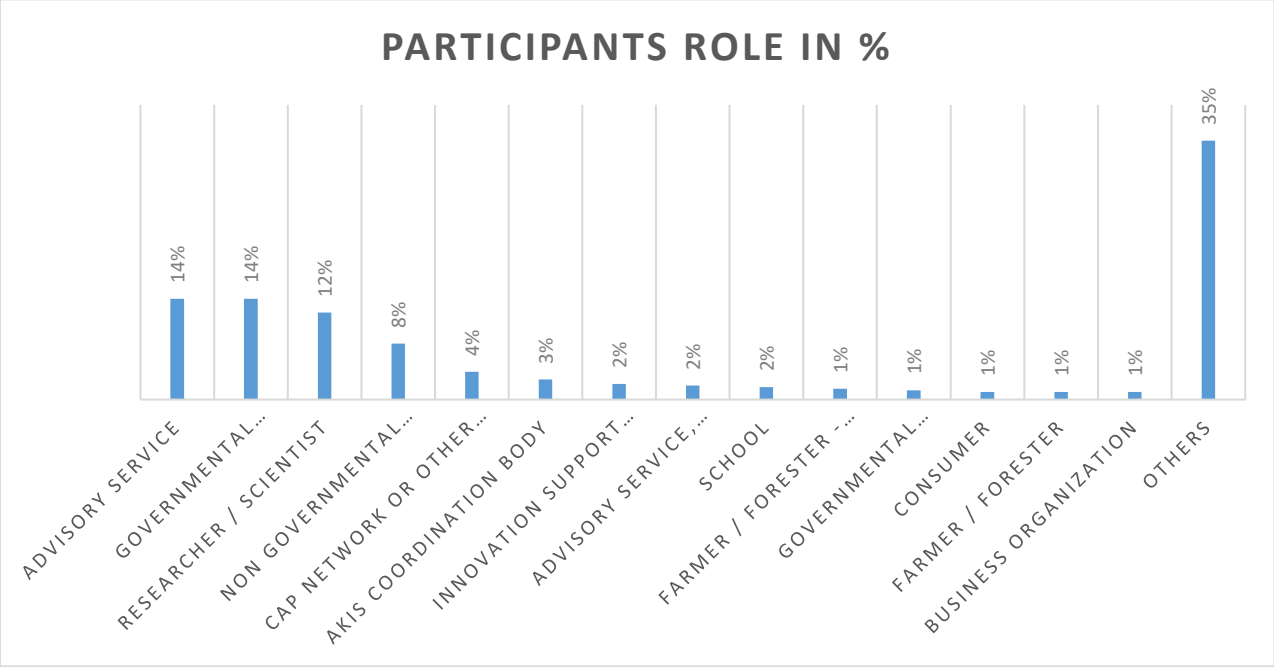

Figure 9: Role distribution (in percent) among network members per February 2024

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Network migration to AKISConnect – February and March 2024

On February 28, 2024, the possibility to register via the JotForm online registration form was closed. For all those who registered from March 1, 2024, onwards the only option is now AKISConnect (www.akisconnect.eu).

An e-mail was previously drafted (cf. Fig. 10) and sent out on March 1, 2024 to everybody already registered in the network explaining

- the reason why the network would be migrated to the AKISConnect platform,
- what would happen with his or her personal data, and
- what advantages were to be expected by joining AKISConnect.

Only those who explicitly accepted (by clicking an according link) are now part of the digital platform. Two reminders were sent to make sure that everybody who wants to migrate has the opportunity.

Everybody remains a network member and the modernAKIS partners service both lists separately.

Out of the 764 network members, a total of about 230 accepted the invitation to migrate to AKISConnect, which means a total loss of 70% of network members in AKISConnect. However, as mentioned even those not part of the digital platform still get all the regular information and have to opportunity to engage in the modernAKIS activities.

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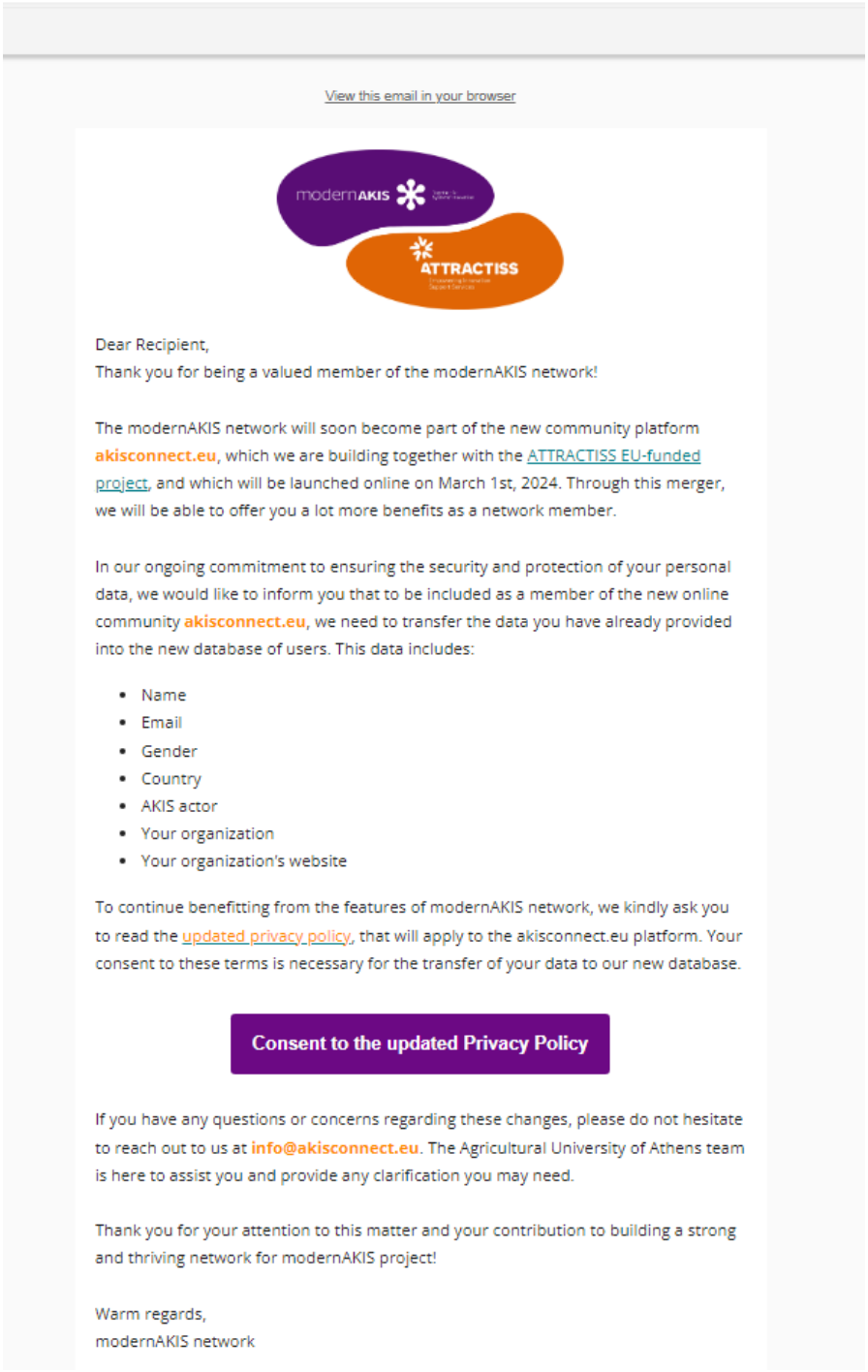
E-Mail 1 - **Subject: Please Review and Consent to Our Updated Privacy Policy**
https://mailchi.mp/0cc1f7301a03/updated-privacy-policy?e=[UNIQID]
Sent to all modernAKIS network, Feb 28, 2024, (737 recipients)



View this email in your browser

Dear Recipient,
Thank you for being a valued member of the modernAKIS network!

The modernAKIS network will soon become part of the new community platform **akisconnect.eu**, which we are building together with the ATTRACTISS EU-funded project, and which will be launched online on March 1st, 2024. Through this merger, we will be able to offer you a lot more benefits as a network member.

In our ongoing commitment to ensuring the security and protection of your personal data, we would like to inform you that to be included as a member of the new online community **akisconnect.eu**, we need to transfer the data you have already provided into the new database of users. This data includes:

- Name
- Email
- Gender
- Country
- AKIS actor
- Your organization
- Your organization's website

To continue benefitting from the features of modernAKIS network, we kindly ask you to read the updated privacy policy, that will apply to the akisconnect.eu platform. Your consent to these terms is necessary for the transfer of your data to our new database.

Consent to the updated Privacy Policy

If you have any questions or concerns regarding these changes, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at **info@akisconnect.eu**. The Agricultural University of Athens team is here to assist you and provide any clarification you may need.

Thank you for your attention to this matter and your contribution to building a strong and thriving network for modernAKIS project!

Warm regards,
modernAKIS network

Figure 10: Invitation for network members to migrate to AKISConnect.eu

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E-Mail 2 - **Subject: Reset email after import**
https://mailchi.mp/5b9ce89ac605/akisconnect-welcome-ready-to-enrich-your-profile?e=[UNIQID]
Sent to those who have accepted the migration, March 6, 2024, (173 recipients)

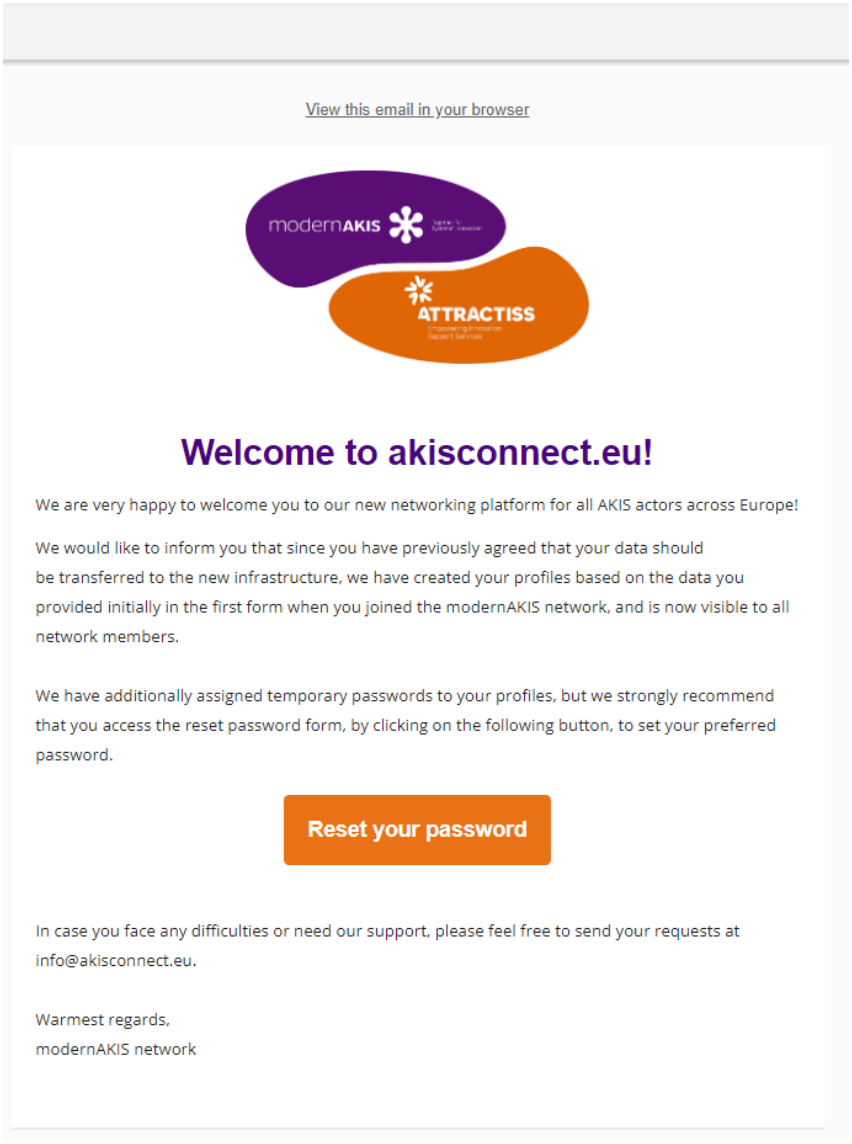

Figure 11: Invitation for network members to change their password on AKISConnect.eu

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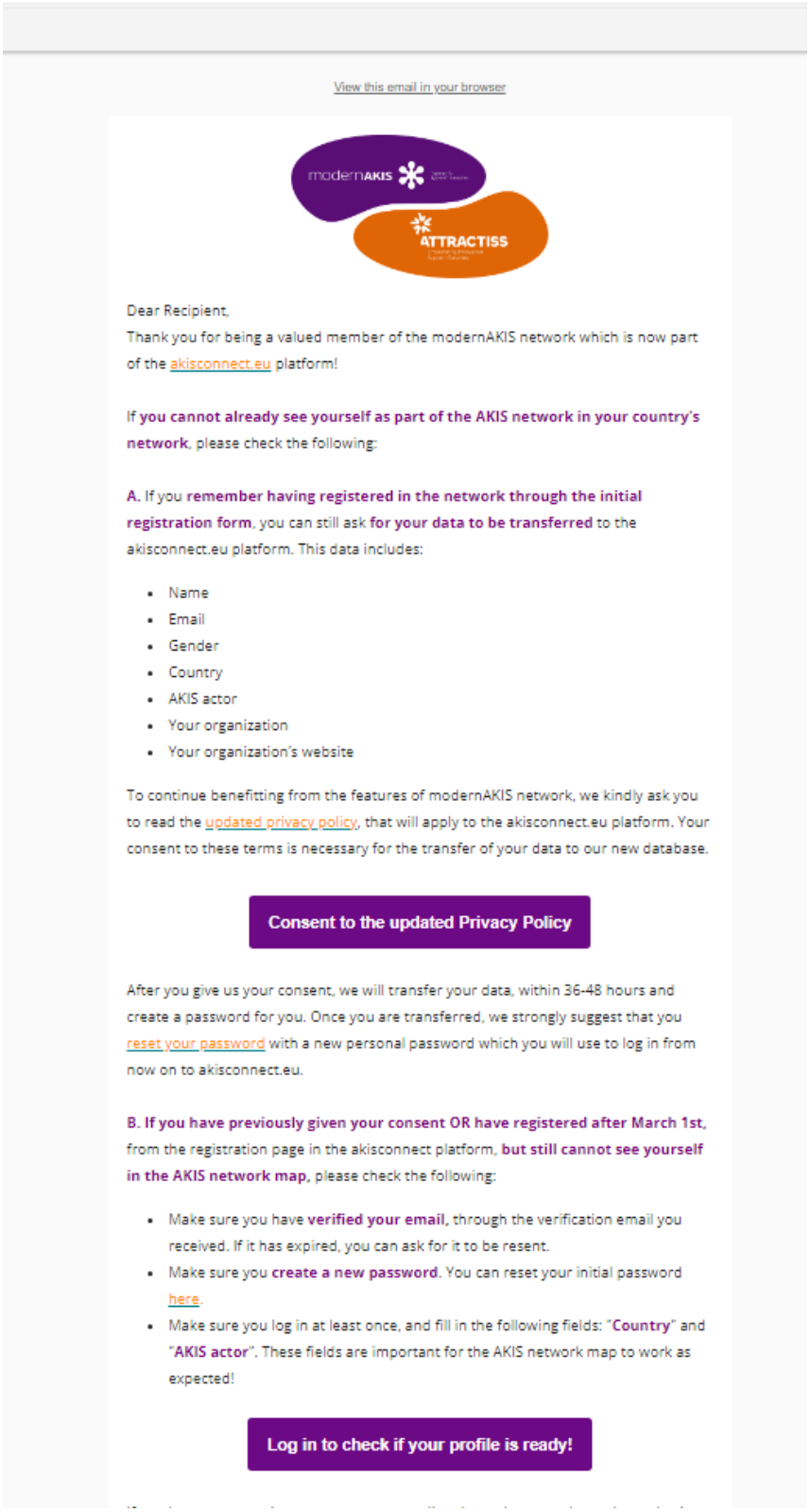
E-Mail 3 - **Subject: Have you joined akisconnect.eu already?**
https://mailchi.mp/20648646a660/updated-privacy-policy-10287410?e=[UNIQID]
Sent to all, as a reminder whether migrated or not, **March 25**, 2024 (741 recipients)



View this email in your browser

Dear Recipient,
Thank you for being a valued member of the modernAKIS network which is now part of the akisconnect.eu platform!

If **you cannot already see yourself as part of the AKIS network in your country's network**, please check the following:

A. If you **remember having registered in the network through the initial registration form**, you can still ask **for your data to be transferred** to the akisconnect.eu platform. This data includes:

- Name
- Email
- Gender
- Country
- AKIS actor
- Your organization
- Your organization's website

To continue benefitting from the features of modernAKIS network, we kindly ask you to read the updated privacy policy, that will apply to the akisconnect.eu platform. Your consent to these terms is necessary for the transfer of your data to our new database.

Consent to the updated Privacy Policy

After you give us your consent, we will transfer your data, within 36-48 hours and create a password for you. Once you are transferred, we strongly suggest that you reset your password with a new personal password which you will use to log in from now on to akisconnect.eu.

B. If you have previously given your consent OR have registered after March 1st, from the registration page in the akisconnect platform, **but still cannot see yourself in the AKIS network map,** please check the following:

- Make sure you have **verified your email**, through the verification email you received. If it has expired, you can ask for it to be resent.
- Make sure you **create a new password**. You can reset your initial password here.
- Make sure you log in at least once, and fill in the following fields: "**Country**" and "**AKIS actor**". These fields are important for the AKIS network map to work as expected!

Log in to check if your profile is ready!

Figure 12: Reminder for existing network members to migrate to AKISConnect.eu

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Ongoing network evolution

The network on AKISConnect started with 230 members on March 1, 2024. Unlike the original network, AKISConnect displays the network members on the webpage. Interested visitors can choose to select a person by country either by navigating on the overview map or by type of actor or by organization. The three selection criteria can be combined depending on the needs.

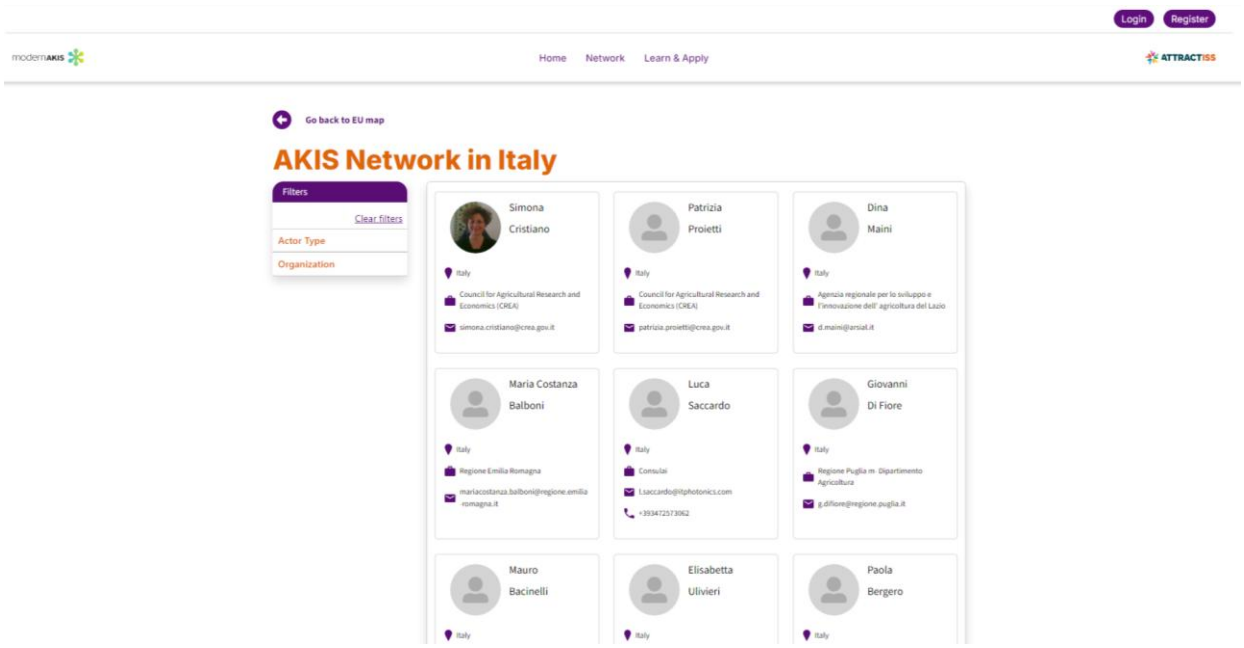

Figure 13: Presentation of network members on AKISconnect.eu (example Italy)

When an interesting contact is identified, interested parties can view the detailed profile of a network member or can get in contact with them, as the e-mail address is publicly available.

As per the end of August 2024 the network in AKISConnect has grown to 626 members. Similarly, to the period July-September 2023 a communication push yielded a high number of registrations (i.e. 381 in March), while an organic growth within the next months without a communication campaign has stabilized around 50 registrants per month. It is interesting to note that since March 2024 both projects, i.e. modernAKIS and ATTRACTISS, are operating the network. However, the average registration number hovers around 50 indifferently if only modernAKIS is driving the registrations or both projects. The only month with a significant deviation is August 2024, which is easily explicable due to the summer holiday period.

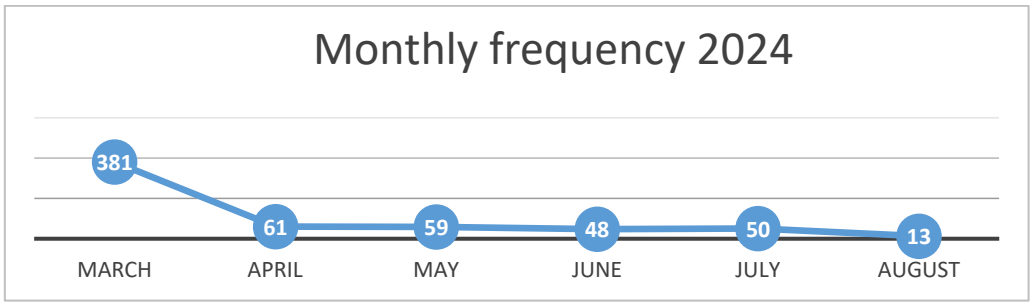

Figure 14: Monthly frequency of registrations within AKISConnect

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Overall, in the reporting period (September 2023 – August 2024) the network comprises 1.087 registrations, with the overall number of network members being 1.357 persons (since the start of the network registrations in July 2023).

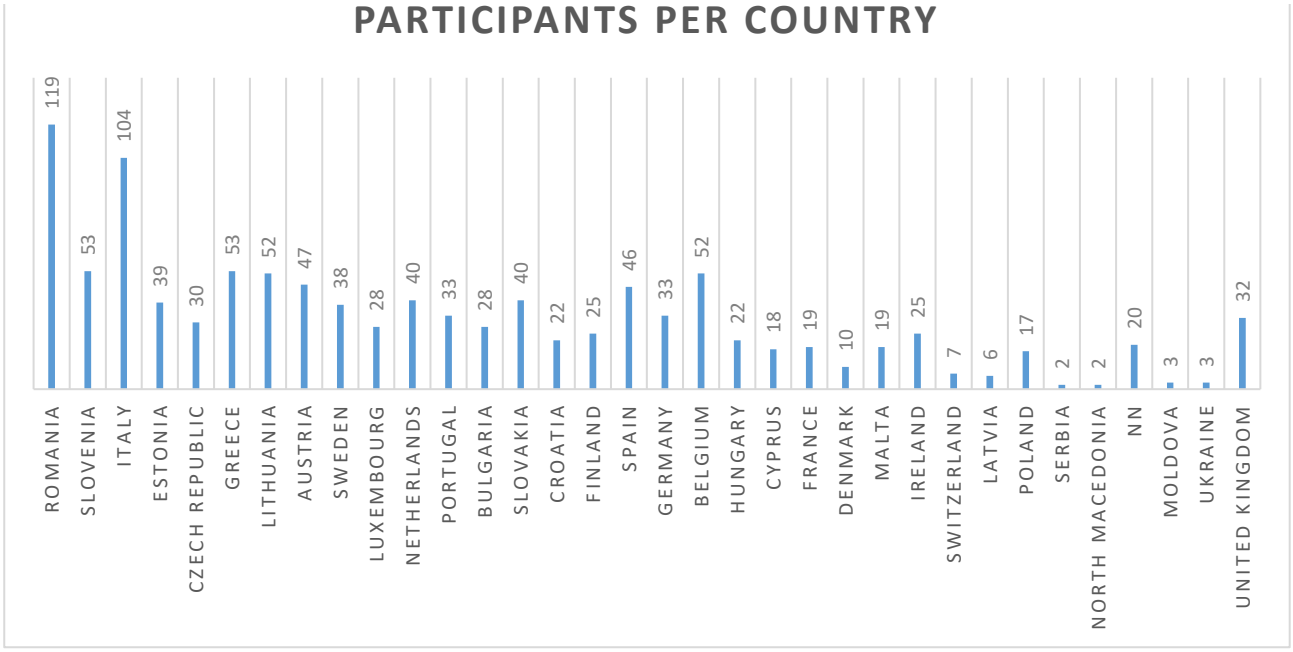

Figure 15: Distribution of network members per country (September 2023 – August 2024)

While we see a more even distribution of registration numbers across several member states, there are still a few countries lagging behind. The diversity of countries has also increased with non-EU countries starting to be present in the network.

The percentage distribution shows now more balance between Eastern and Central Europe and Western Europe. We can see that due to the increase in number of formally appointed coordination bodies the participation in different countries is slowly going up.

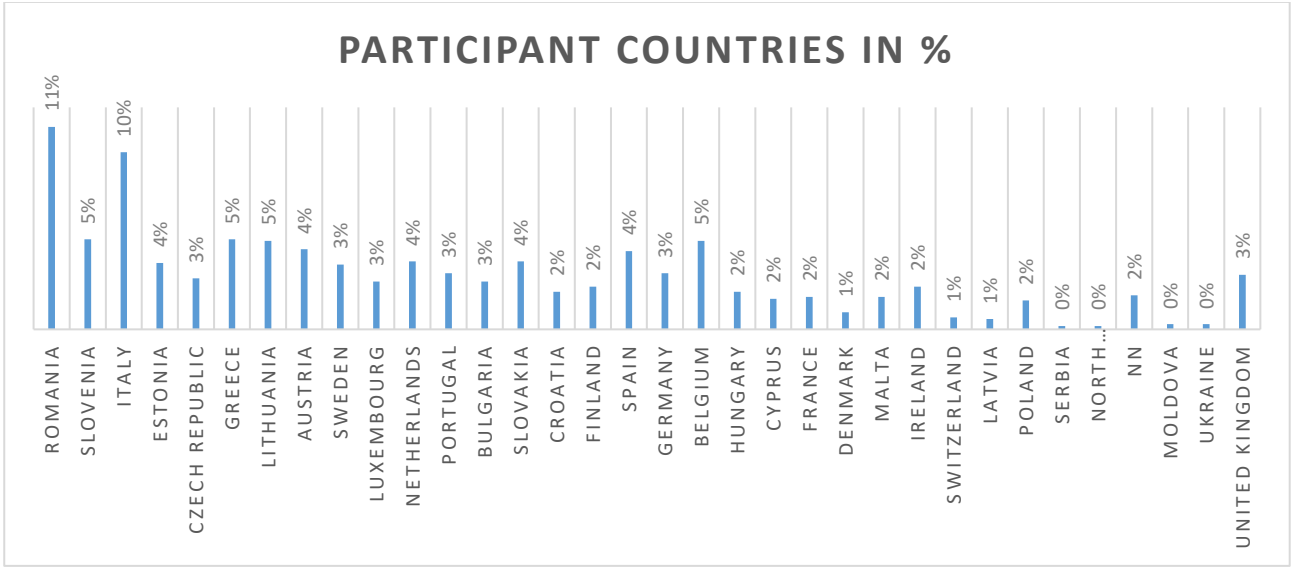

Figure 16: Distribution of network members in percent per country (September 2023 – August 2024)

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For the newly registered network members (from March until August 2024) an increasing number has multiple roles. Now the distribution between single and multiple-roles is almost balanced at 50:50. How much of it is driven by the registration of Innovation Support Services coming from ATTRACTISS cannot be said.

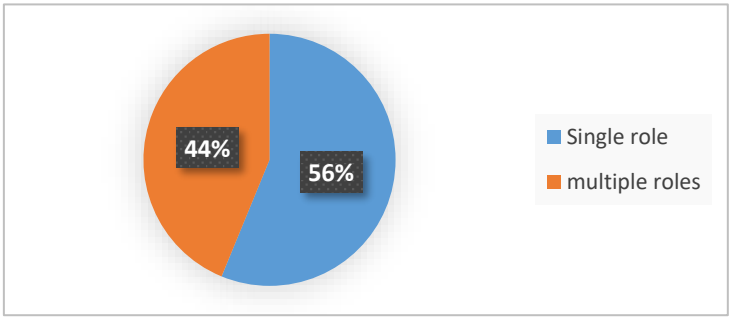

Figure 17: Multiplicity of roles in the network (March – August 2024)

When looking at the different roles represented in the network from March to August 2024, a remarkable difference to the previous period is that the percentage of advisors and innovation support brokers has increased from about 15% to 30%. This might be explained by the very specific target group addressed by the ATTRACTISS project. Other than that the distribution of actors has remained quite similar to the previous period of analysis.

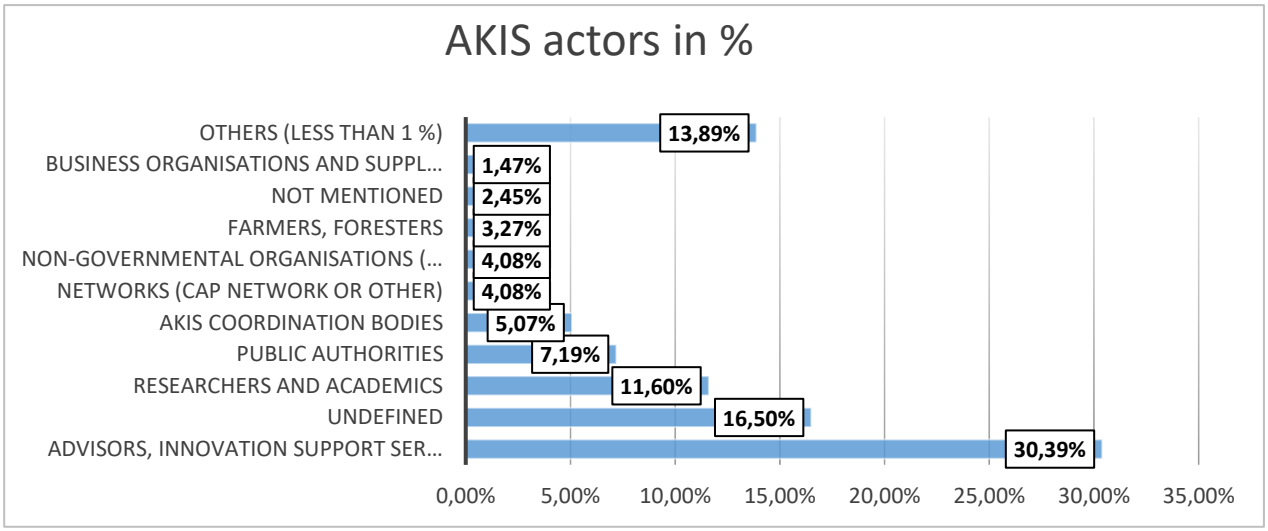

Figure 18: Distribution of roles in the network (March – August 2024)

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4. AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies

AKIS Coordination Bodies

The **AKIS Coordination Bodies** (CBs) are the ones who 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. They are responsible for guiding the implementation of the AKIS Strategies set forth in Chapter 8 of their national CAP Strategic Plan (respectively their regional CAP Strategic Plan in the case of Belgium), monitoring the performance of the AKIS and reporting the associated indicators to the European Commission.

The role of AKIS Coordination Body is new. It exists since the start of the CAP Strategic Plans 2023-2027. While the AKIS Strategies are described in Chapter 8 of the CAP SPs the role, attributions and competences of an AKIS Coordination Body are not specified.

Typically, each Member State has one AKIS Coordination Body. Exceptions may be regionalized countries (Germany, France, Italy, Spain, Belgium etc.) who choose to appoint an AKIS Coordination Bodies both at regional but also at national level. The relative opaqueness of the role, the missing experiences on the scope of duties as well as in the composition and resources allocated, make it necessary for the AKIS CBs to exchange and learn from each other beyond borders.

Operationally AKIS Coordination Bodies are mostly not one person. While one person from a Ministry is nominated as a communication point towards the European Commission, often times the AKIS Coordination Bodies are a group of people from one or more institutions who jointly work in the role described above. Each country has a slightly different set-up; however, we could identify a trend to either (a) a managerial approach in operating the AKIS CB (Model 1) or (b) a more partnership-oriented approach (Model 2-3). The set-up of the AKIS Coordination Bodies - as presented in Fig. 19 – has led modernAKIS to open up the participation model to the General Assembly (cf. next section).

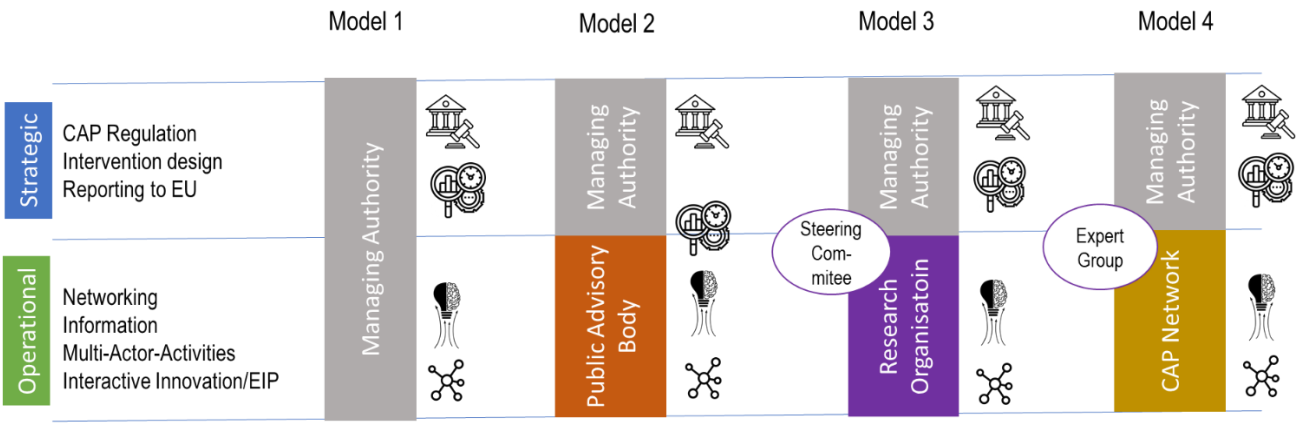

Figure 19: Identified models for AKIS Coordination Bodies

modernAKIS AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies

Given the complexities of the implementation of the AKIS Strategic Plans but also of the AKIS Coordination Body role itself, modernAKIS offers a pan-European forum for AKIS decision makers to meet and exchange. To this end, it organises two times per year a so-called AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly. One of these events takes place in person and the other one is organised online. The overarching aim of these events is to facilitate peer-to-peer and good practice exchanges, on among others:

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

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The in-person exchange is crucial for peer-to-peer learning as people connect differently when they meet and exchange in person and establish connections that go beyond the meeting. A face-to-face meeting once a year was considered reasonable given the busy agendas of the AKIS CBs as well as budgetary efficiency. However, in order to build meaningful relations with each other, it is necessary to stay in touch on a regular basis. To this end modernAKIS offers capacity building events in WP4 specifically tailored to the needs of the AKIS Coordination Bodies (ccCoP1) as well as online networking events in WP2/T2.2. From 2025 onwards, AKISConnect will facilitate discussion groups that can be restricted to specific user profiles/roles to enable private discussions and thus further enable networking, relation and trust building.

Originally the participation model to the AKIS CB General Assembly was designed to include the AKIS CB at national level and one project partner. Given that operationally the AKIS Coordination Body often include more than 1 organisation, the participation model was changed to enable up to 6 representatives from each country to participate. What remains unchanged is that the participation of the AKIS Coordination Body in the group of 6 people is mandatory. The project support for Travel and accommodation costs stays the same independent of the number of delegates from one country. It just decreases accordingly and the participants (or their home organization) are expected to cover the difference from own funds.

- Annual
- 7 in total





General Assembly	min. 54		max. 162
Participants per country	min. 2		max. 6
AKIS CBs per country	min. 1 AKIS CB	MANDATORY	min. 1 AKIS CB
Nomination of delegates for each country	AKIS CBs in cooperation with modernAKIS project partners		
Key AKIS actors	e.g. project partners, CAP network managers, policy officers in Managing Authorities, managers of advisory organizations and innovation support services, educators		
Duration	2 days (1/2 day + 1 full day)		
Activities	Capacity building and networking in the form of plenary sessions, parallel discussion groups Field visits at selected AKIS examples		

Figure 20: Participation model for the AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly

Participants	**2 PAX**	**3 PAX**	**4 PAX**	**5 PAX**	**6 PAX**
Access	Full	Full	Full	Full	Full
Travel and accommodation paid by modernAKIS up to	€ 1.200	€ 800	€ 600	€ 480	€ 400
Lunches paid by	Participants	Participants	Participants	Participants	Participants
Coffee breaks paid by	modernAKIS	modernAKIS	modernAKIS	modernAKIS	modernAKIS
Travel applications	Follow the rules of the organisation where the participant is employed				
Reimbursement	(1) Pre-financing: Booking through partner institution OR (2) Reimbursement of costs incurred				

Figure 21: Funding model for the AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly delegates from Member States

The following three sub-chapters give insights into the two physical AKIS CB General Assemblies, which took place in the time covered by this report as well as outline the preparations for the fourth AKIS CB General Assembly that will be held online in November 2024.

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Second AKIS CBs General Assembly (GA)

During the period covered by the report at hand, two AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies took place, both in person. The first one was organised in Zagreb, Croatia and the second one in Madrid, Spain. Both events were hosted by each country's Ministry of Agriculture.

Preparation

During the project kick-off meeting and during the first (online) AKIS CB General we had collected topical needs to be addressed in the first physical meeting. Based on the availability of most partners, the meeting was scheduled for November 7 and 8, 2023 in Zagreb, Croatia. The agenda was co-created together with the Executive Board. LKO and the Ministry of Agriculture in Croatia organised the logistics and all administrative details of the meeting.

An analysis and prioritization of needs expressed by AKIS CBs and key AKIS actors resulted in the overarching theme of the event: "Improving knowledge flows in AKIS". Therefore the main groups targeted by the meeting were:

- AKIS Coordination Bodies, who could expect the following benefits from participating
    - Overview and analysis results on how AKIS CBs in Member States are set-up and operate
    - Peer to peer experience exchange on working as an AKIS CB
    - Insights into strengthening knowledge flows according to CAP Strategic Plans
    - Methods, processes as well as good practices for improving knowledge flows
    - Decision on the topics and learning agenda to be addressed in 2024 by modernAKIS
    - Networking
- Policy makers responsible for cooperation and knowledge transfer interventions (CAP measures 77 and 78), who could expect the following benefits from participating
    - Overview and analysis on cooperation and knowledge transfer interventions across Member States
    - Insights into strengthening knowledge flows according to CAP Strategic Plans
    - Methods, processes as well as good practices for improving knowledge flows
    - Workshop how to involve all actors into the AKIS
    - Networking
- Organisations supporting knowledge flows in AKIS (CAP Networks, innovation support services, digital innovation hubs, clusters etc.), who could expect the following benefits from participating
    - Insights into strengthening knowledge flows according to CAP Strategic Plans
    - Methods, processes as well as good practices for improving knowledge flows
    - Workshop how to involve all actors into the AKIS
    - Methods and tools in communicating AKIS for impact
    - Networking

Independently of the topic of each event, we strive to keep two constant items on the agenda: (a) an update from the EU Commission/DG AGRI on developments relevant to the AKIS as well as to the AKIS Coordination Bodies and (b) a peer-to-peer exchange between AKIS CBs on their role, daily activities, initiatives, successes and barriers they encounter. Both of these items have proven very successful with the participants.

The agenda of the event was co-created together with the Executive Board. The first day was dedicated to embedding the participants in the concept of the Transformative AKIS Journeys, which underpins the working methodology of the project and whose conceptualization has been described in D1.1. Subsequently the University of Hohenheim presented the results of the comparative analysis of the EU Member States AKISs' undertaken in WP1/T1.3. After the experience exchange session between the AKIS Coordination Bodies, the project partners collected the capacity building needs in relation to the AKIS modules as well as the in-country workshops planned for WP3.

During the second day interactive sessions took place aiming to showcase practical examples of AKIS interventions and how they could be practically implemented in different member states to foster knowledge flows between the different actor groups within the AKIS. AKIS Coordination Bodies were included also in an awareness building workshop on how to better interact with their AKIS actors in the "Communicating for impact" workshops, while all other participants were invited to an interactive networking session on practical examples of involving all actor types into the AKIS.

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Tuesday, Nov. 7

09h00	Arriving and registration	
09h30	Welcome and getting-to-know each other	
10h30	Be the actor of your Transformative AKIS Journey	
12h30	LUNCH	
13h30	AKIS analysis from different perspectives	
14h15	AKIS CBs – first year experience & going forward	
15h45	COFEE BREAK	
16h15	AKIS – A systems approach to supporting innovation in your country	
17h45	Wrap up and closing of Day 1	
18h00	END	
19h00	DINNER + social evening program	

Wednesday, Nov. 8

08h00	Introduction to Day 2 & Interactive Exercise	
08h30	How do they flow, the knowledge flows? - Knowledge flows within and beyond the CAP – Part 1	
10h00	COFFEE BREAK	
10h30	How do they flow, the knowledge flows? - Knowledge flows within and beyond the CAP – Part 2	
12h30	LUNCH	
13h30	Communicating for Impact: Building stronger AKIS Connections	Parallel session: Workshop how to involve all actors into the AKIS
15h00	COFFEE BREAK	
15h30	Closing of AKIS CBs GA: Feedback, Outlook & next steps	
16h30	END	

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Participants

A total 97 people participated to the 2nd AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly, of which 66 are female and 32 male. 28 countries were represented, including all 27 EU Member States and the Ukraine. The latter is currently building up its AKIS in preparation of the process of becoming a member of the EU and has requested the possibility to attend the modernAKIS meetings in order to participate in the capacity building and networking process. This was accepted by the project provided that the Ukrainian delegation covers its own costs.

34 persons self-identified as working as the part of the AKIS Coordination Bodies (multiple selection of roles was possible), 19 as part of a ministry unit linked with the implementation of the AKIS, 11 as working staff of the national CAP Networks, 15 as modernAKIS project partners, 19 as advisory service representatives, 10 as researchers, 2 as innovation support services.

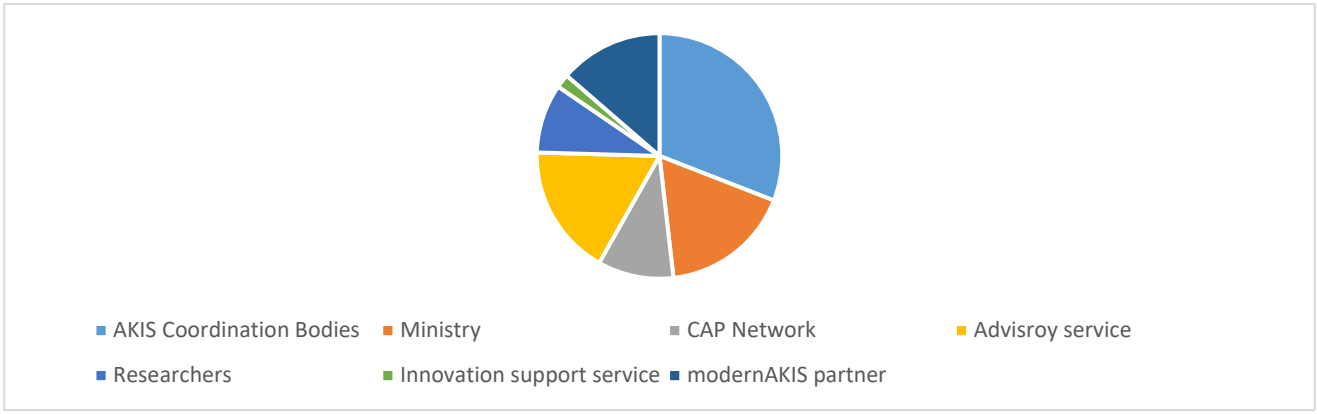

Figure 22: Distribution on different roles of participants



Figure 23: Group photograph of participants

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Results

The meeting brought together 99 key AKIS actors, including AKIS Coordination Bodies (AKIS CBs), policy makers and key actors responsible for cooperation and knowledge transfer interventions and activities supporting knowledge flows in AKIS from all 27 EU Member States and the Ukraine.

On the first day, different speakers gave presentations on the modernAKIS project, on the transformative AKIS journey, AKIS analysis from different perspectives, and AKIS as a systems approach to supporting innovation.

On the second day there were presentations on building AKIS connections, knowledge flows in and beyond the CAP, on-farm approaches to research and innovation, AgriHubi, the H2020 project NEFERTITI, and examples from Austria, France, and Ireland. After the presentations, there was time for Q&A sessions. The questions and answers are part of this document.

One focus on day one was the first year experiences of the AKIS CBs, which included a presentation on the first survey results on AKIS CBs and country examples from Estonia and Germany. On day two there was an interactive session on how to involve all actors into the AKIS, with a presentation and a country example from the Austrian CAP Network. Another interactive session was the role-play scenario on integrating the concepts of cooperation into knowledge flows.

Key aspects:

Session: Being the actor of your Transformative AKIS Journey

Objective

- Inform participants about results of Capacity Needs Assessment survey
- Prioritize the topics and project activities to deal with during the year 2024
- Discuss, provide insights and collaborate with WPs/Tasks' leaders to co-develop the agenda of at least two of the most prioritized activities, aiming to construct well-tailored TAJs.

Survey results (06-09/2023): Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA)

The CNA survey was conducted within the modernAKIS network. The following priorities emerged:

- innovation support services (36%),
- farm advisory services (38%), followed by
- operational groups (33%), and
- knowledge exchange and information.

Moreover, the design and implementation of the AKIS strategies along with the design and organization of AKIS coordination bodies are also very important.

Additional topics considered relevant by the survey respondents:

- enhancing advisors' knowledge,
- cross-border experiences and cross-visits,
- digitalization and platforms for sharing experiences,
- gender equality, and
- adopting a systemic perspective within the "AKIS System thinking".

Interactive CNA validation session during AKIS CB General Session

Particularly, the integration

- of the advisory services (23%) and
- of the innovation support services (15%), together with
- the knowledge exchange and information (15%)

are the three topics that most concern the key AKIS actors of change that participated in the General Assembly.

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Despite the novelty, the design of the role and functions of the AKIS coordination bodies was less prioritized (4%). Although, for this topic, the realization of webinars is the most prioritized activity.

Interestingly, the fifth most prioritized topic is the designing and implementing strategic approaches for strengthening the AKIS (8%). Here the key AKIS actors of change prevalently request knowledge on M&E tools and methods as well as their development.

In line with the results of the survey, less interest is shown in the interconnections between the AKIS strategies and the CAP crosscutting and specific objectives. The validation data showed the most relevant topic for 2024 to be the CCO (9%), followed by the two specific objectives on environmental care and climate change that jointly gain 7% of the priorities.

Session: AKIS Coordination Bodies: First year experience and going forwards

Some upsides mentioned were that AKIS implementation plans are more practical than the CAP SP, that the AKIS CBs are encouraged to think and approach things differently, and that the collaboration on understanding AKIS concepts is appreciated. However, there are also some downsides and challenges, for example unfinished set-up of AKIS CBs, vague role, difficult engagement of actors, and limited financial resources and understaffing. Some lessons learnt could also be identified: better communication on the role of AKIS CBs, background in social science or good mediation skills are helpful, building infrastructure, and learning how to listen.

Upsides:

- AKIS implementation plans are more practical than the CAP SP
- AKIS CBs are encouraged to think and approach things differently
- Collaboration on understanding AKIS concepts is appreciated

Downsides and challenges:

- Set-up of AKIS CBs not in all countries finished
- The AKIS concept and role of CB remains vague
- Engagement of actors (especially advisors and ISS) in AKIS networks seems difficult as the benefits are not visible yet
- Resistance towards change hinders implementation
- Holistic approach of AKIS concept is not well known in ministries
- Limited financial resources and understaffing, leading to capacity problems

Lessons learnt:

- Better communication on the role of AKIS CB
- People who feel responsible for AKIS should be part of the CB, more engagement with people involved in the EU CAP Network is recommended, following a collaborative approach
- The first year = hands-on learning period
- Background in social science or good mediation skills are helpful
- Building the infrastructure, e.g. a national knowledge platform, before implementing interventions
- Learn how to listen

Key AKIS actors' experiences in collaborating with the AKIS CB during the first year of implementation:

- Key AKIS actors are familiar with the person responsible for the AKIS coordination in their country and the collaboration between AKIS CB, CAP network and Agricultural Chamber is generally good. However, it seems

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that collaboration with the AKIS coordination body is influenced by the relationship of the individual's institution with the Ministry.

- AKIS concept and role of the AKIS CB is still vague / being designed (e.g. how many people are in charge).
- Some regionalised countries seem to have a good knowledge exchange between the AKIS coordination in the regions themselves and with the federal level, especially Germany.
- There are still many questions and uncertainties regarding AKIS coordination, what should be done and how. However, this is not only an issue for the AKIS CB, but also for the key AKIS actors. There are several institutions with many more resources, competences and contacts for AKIS coordination (e.g. chambers, national CAP networks), so their role in AKIS coordination would be significant. But as it is a Ministry role, they don't find their place in it until it is officially delegated.

Session: Presentation on AKIS: a systems approach to support innovations in your country

The outcome of this session were topical suggestions for the online modules for learning about AKIS. The main demand was to avoid theory but provide practice-oriented trainings and best practice examples.

5 fields were identified: AKIS related (good cases and concrete practices, evaluation criteria, added value, history of development), AKIS actors related (roles and tasks, mapping of actors, how to ensure well skilled and reliable advisors), CAP related suggestions, suggestions related to CoPs, and mediation skills (methods for networking, building of knowledge networks, how to motivate, initiate, and sustain behaviour change, how to overcome barriers, how to organise events).

Objectives:

- Participants are informed on the capacity building activities that will be implemented by modernAKIS
- Participants know the key challenges an innovation system faces in the agri-food sector and rural areas across Europe
- Participants share their ideas on "What topics would you like to include in the online modules?"

Topics suggested for the online modules for learning about AKIS:

Overall, it was asked to avoid theory but provide practice-oriented trainings and best practice examples;

- AKIS related:
  - Good practices for engagement of researchers, farmers and advisors
  - How to approach the competitiveness between public and private advisory services
  - Evaluation criteria for a well-functioning AKIS
  - Examples of thematic/local AKIS
  - The added value of AKIS
  - Communication of AKIS benefits and systems thinking
  - History of the development of AKIS
- AKIS actors related:
  - Roles and tasks of AKIS CBs
  - Role of key AKIS actors
  - Understanding why AKIS CBs have been implemented
  - Mapping of actors
  - How to ensure well skilled and reliable advisors in AKIS

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- CAP related suggestions:
    - AKIS friendly design of CAP interventions
    - AKIS evidence based CAP
    - How to design interventions for good participation
- Related to CoPs:
    - Identification of purpose for the scoping process
    - Organisation of national CoPs including examples
- Mediation skills:
    - Different methods for networking
    - How to build knowledge networks and a AKIS knowledge exchange portal and connect this to national research reservoirs and EU-FarmBook
    - How to build a European AKIS network that is self-sustaining beyond 2027
    - How to motivate, initiate and sustain behaviour change for sustainable development
    - Management of systems and big groups
    - How to overcome barriers related to the involvement of vested interests
    - How to organise events and seminars, etc.

Session: How do they flow the knowledge flows?

The main result of this session was that it is essential to differentiate between knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer. Some interactive instruments to foster knowledge flows were identified, for example

Objectives:

- Inform and clarify the understanding of the terms of knowledge flows / transfer and knowledge exchange.
- Exchange experiences gathered by the project.
- Capacity building through challenging participants in a role-playing scenario.

Results:

- it is essential to differentiate between knowledge exchange and knowledge transfer:

While **knowledge transfer is a one-way flow of information**, where one party transfers knowledge to the other, **knowledge exchange is a multi-directional, dynamic process**. There has been a change between the last and current legislative environment, as the Rural Development Regulation for 2014-2020 allowed for knowledge transfer, while the CAP Strategic Plan Regulation for 2023-2027 introduced knowledge exchange, actively contributing to the development of innovation processes.

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Different terminologies

	KNOWLEDGE FLOW	KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE	KNOWLEDGE SHARING	KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER
Definition	Encompasses the movement of knowledge across people, organizations, places, and time, reflecting changes and applications with a multi-dimensional perspective (Nonaka, 1994).	Involves the dynamic processes of generating, sharing, and utilizing knowledge tailored to the context and participants involved (Fazey et al., 2013).	The process of encouraging individuals to collectively appropriate knowledge through open sharing and discussion, without insisting on absolute truth (Sylvian et al., 2022).	A linear model of knowledge uptake that requires effective packaging and communication of knowledge. (Pütz & Brassel, 2021). Knowledge transfer primarily focuses on the one-way flow of information, where one party (the source) imparts knowledge to another party (the recipient).
Purpose	To visualize and manage the diverse dimensions of knowledge and enabling effective circulation across global organizations and contexts (Nissen, 2007).	Enable effective sharing, coproduction, and management of knowledge among participants, promoting collaborative learning and decision-making, innovation (Fazey et al., 2013).	The purpose of knowledge sha ring is to facilitate the exchang e of knowledge among individ uals and within organizations (Wang & Noe, 2010).	Generate, share, and effectively utilize knowledge across various contexts and participants (Szulanski & Jensen, 2004). The goal is for the recipient to acquire and apply the knowledge effectively.

modernAKIS | Presentation

modernAKIS

Figure 24: Different terminologies regarding knowledge

Interactive instruments to foster knowledge flows (examples from the General Assembly):

1. Innovative Farmers On-farm approach to research and innovation in the UK.
2. AgriHubi – experiences of networking tools in Finland.
3. On-farm demonstration and experiences in H2020 project NEFERTITI.
4. Mixed technological networks = national thematic networks in France.
5. Farmer discussion groups in Ireland.

Session: Communicating for impact: Building stronger AKIS connections with AKIS CBs

In this session, a life-sized diagram with different levels of engagement was provided. Participants located themselves in the diagram. Depending on the engagement with the project and the engagement with National AKIS actors they located themselves as „inform" (22 participants), „consult" (7 participants), „collaborate", or „collaborate/partnership". This session also included country-specific insights, listing the focus of the work of some countries in the attendance.

Objectives:

- Introduce the communication task to AKIS CBs highlighting the importance of effective communication
- Assessment of the current communication strategies and channels within AKIS used by AKIS CBs
- Creation of a national AKIS communication strategy on national level
- Provide an outline of events dedicated to communication taking place within modernAKIS

Results:
A life-sized diagram with different levels of engagement was provided. Participants located themselves in the diagram, with the following results (total number of participants in each rectangle):

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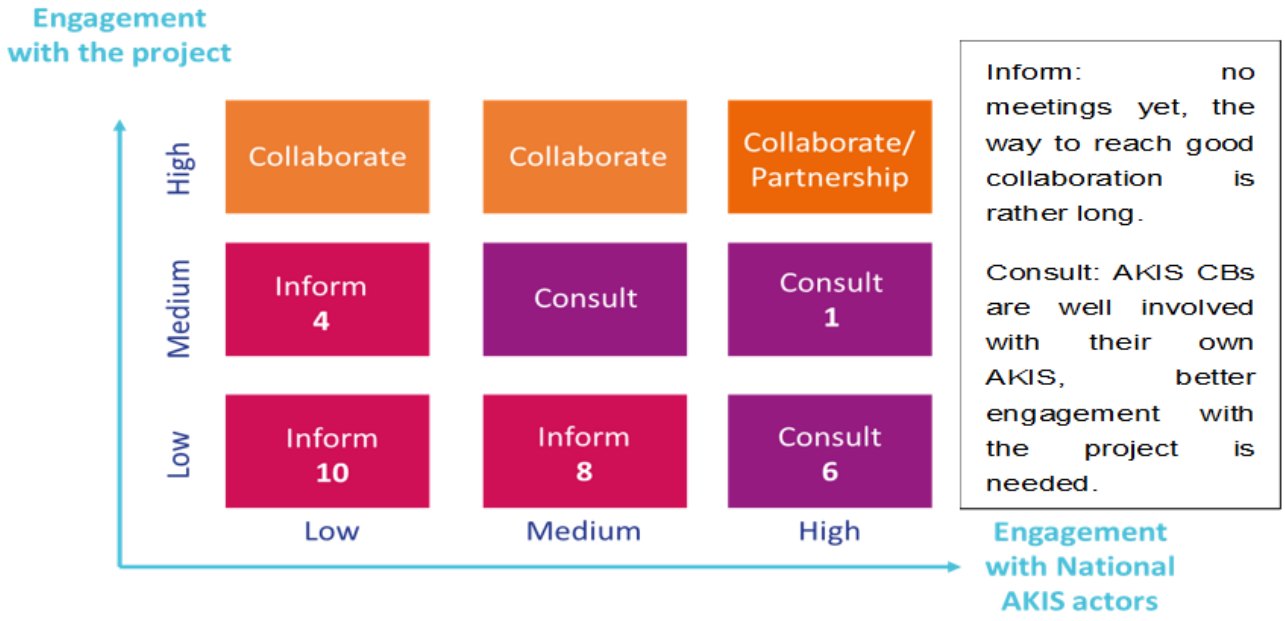

Figure 25: Engagement diagram

Country-specific insights:

- Austria: Aimed to improve information flow through seminars, newsletters, and presentations.
- Belgium: Proposed discussions with stakeholders on improving AKIS, emphasizing collaboration.
- Croatia: Emphasized connecting actors through meetings.
- Estonia: Suggested defining tools in the Estonian context and engaging more main actors by June 2024.
- Germany: Emphasized promoting the project to regions and ensuring online meetings for broader participation.
- Greece: Focused on identifying and engaging with AKIS actors through communication tools.
- Italy: Prioritized data collection, organization, and inter-agency collaboration over a five-year project.
- Lithuania: Focused on participating in conferences and discussions to gain diverse experiences.
- Luxembourg: Proposed a common platform for innovation and research, fostering collaboration.
- Romania: Planned to set up action plans, identify members, and advance the project at a national level.
- Slovenia: Aiming for engagement by nominating Coordination bodies and forming CoPs by 2024.
- Spain: Highlighted lobbying for more funds, increased productivity, and influencing public policies by 2027.
- Ukraine: Focused on developing central-level AKIS, creating a strategy, and forming national and regional hubs.

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Third AKIS CBs General Assembly (GA)

The third AKIS CB General Assembly was organized as an in person event in Madrid (Spain) on April 22 and 23, 2024. The organization was coordinated between the Ministry of Agriculture in Spain and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture.

Preparation

The Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) 2023/2024 showed the highest interest of the community in the topic of "Integration of advisors into the AKIS", which was consequently selected as the topic for the meeting in Madrid. Unlike the two previous events this time modernAKIS invited several Horizon Europe advisory network projects as well as EU-FarmBook to attend the meeting and to inform the community about the activities they are undertaking in terms of integrating the advisors into the AKIS. The projects who shared the meeting with the modernAKIS consortium were:

- i2connect – a network for advisors working in interactive innovation,
- OrganicAdviceNetwork – a project aiming to bring together advisors in the organic sector,
- ATTRACTISS – a network for innovation support services
- EU4Advice and CORENet – two networks addressing advisors for short supply chains
- AdvisoryNetPest – a network aimed at advisors who use pesticide reduction practices
- ClimateSmartAdvisors – a network of advisors supporting the application of practice for climate ambition



Figure 26: Advisory network projects actively involved in the 3rd AKIS CB General Assembly

The other projects were invited to interact with the participants during several sequences of the event. As such they were invited to bring a roll-up as well as project flyers which was displayed in the coffee break room, enabling them to network with the AKIS Coordination Bodies. Similarly each project was shortly presented (two slides) during the early phase of the event. Subsequently a podium-discussion was organized with the different projects aiming to discuss what the projects offer to the AKIS and where they need support. And last but not least each project will be represented with a one-page description in the event documentation.

Independently of the topic of each event, we strive to keep two constant items on the agenda: (a) an update from the EU Commission/DG AGRI on developments relevant to the AKIS as well as to the AKIS Coordination Bodies and (b) a peer-to-peer exchange between AKIS CBs on their role, daily activities, initiatives, successes and barriers they encounter. Both of these items have proven very successful with the participants and where present again on the agenda.

The overall objectives of the meeting were to:

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- Deepen peer-to-peer and best practice exchange on the role of advisors and innovation support services in AKIS
- Share experiences between AKIS CBs
- Explore how to better integrate advisors and advisory networks in the AKIS and how to use the results for AKIS Strategic Plans
- Analyse advisory measures in the AKIS Strategic Plans
- Networking

The agenda of the event was co-created together with the Executive Board.

The first day of the AKIS CBs GA focused on discussions surrounding the integration of advisors into AKIS and the support mechanisms provided by the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) of the European Union. The agenda was designed to foster collaboration, share practices, and enhance the effectiveness of advisory services within the agricultural sector. The primary objective on the first day was to ascertain the most effective method of integrating advisors into AKIS and capitalising on the transformative potential of the AKIS. The Swedish and Italian partners have presented an experience exchange of being an AKIS CB. Later, everything centred on interactive discussions in the form of a policy lab and the integration of advisors into AKIS.

The second day continued to build on the discussions from Day 1, focusing on the roles and competencies of advisors within AKIS. Moreover, the roles of Innovations support services throughout the innovation process have been examined, as well as methods for fostering collaboration between advisory network projects within the AKIS strategies. The focus was on the role of advisors and the skills and competencies required within the AKIS framework. The programme was devoted to the structure for the creation of the optimal advisor within the context of AKIS, as well as an examination of the functions of the innovation support services.

Monday, April 22	
08.00-09.00	**Registration and networking breakfast**
09.00-09.05	**Welcome and opening message** Isabel Bombal, General Director of Rural Development, Innovation and Agri-Food Training, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
09.05-09.10	**Introduction to the meeting and welcome** Elena-Teodora Miron, modernAKIS project coordinator
09.10-09.30	**How is the CAP EU supporting advice and advisors within the AKIS?** Inge van Oost, DG Agri, European Commission
09.30-11.00	**Capitalizing the Transformative AKIS Journeys (TAJs) in AKIS: capacity development and take-ins** CREA
11.00-11.20	**Coffee break**
11.20-11.30	**Insights into the Spanish AKIS** Representative of the Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAPA) (TBC)
11.30-12.30	**Being an AKIS CB and experience exchange** Jenny Taylor, AKIS CB and Acting Head of Unit of the Rural Development Unit of the Swedish Board of Agriculture Giorgio Trentin, AKIS CB and Director of Quality, knowledge and agri-food innovations, Veneto Region, Italy
12.30-13.30	**Networking lunch**

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13.30-14.00	**Unlocking AKIS: navigating agricultural advisor impact** CREA, UHOH, CRAO
14.00-15.00	**Integrating advisors in the AKIS – new approaches, rules and practices (Part I)** AKI, CRAO, FEUGA
15.00-16.00	Policy Lab: interactive discussion between AKIS CBs and advisors **AKI, CRAO, FEUGA**
16.00-16.20	**Coffee break**
16.20-17.50	**Integrating advisors in the AKIS – new approaches, rules and practices (Part II)** AKI, CRAO, FEUGA
17.50-18.00	**Conclusions and outlook on the next day** LFI
Tuesday, April 23	
09.15-09.20	**Welcome and introduction** LFI
09.20-11.00	**Interactive Session: build the perfect advisor in your AKIS** CDA, FEUGA and ccCoP1&2 team
11.00-11.30	**Coffee break**
11.30-12.30	**Skills and competences for advisors within the AKIS** CDA, FEUGA and ccCoP1&2 team
12.30-13.30	**Networking lunch**
13.30-14.30	**How to create synergies between advisory network projects within the AKIS strategies** modernAKIS and advisory network projects
14.30-16.30	**Functions of ISS: from mapping to their integration into AKIS** CREA, ISP, AKI, CDA
16.30-17.00	**Closing of AKIS CBs GA: feedback, outlook & next steps** LFI

Figure 27: Agenda of the 3rd AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly

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A total 99 people participated to the 2nd AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly. 28 countries were represented, including all 27 EU Member States and the Ukraine. The latter is currently building up its AKIS in preparation of the process of becoming a member of the EU and has requested the possibility to attend the modernAKIS meetings in order to participate in the capacity building and networking process. This was accepted by the project provided that the Ukrainian delegation covers its own costs.

The roles of participants covered were AKIS Coordination Bodies, governmental employees, European Commission DG representative, advisory organisations representatives, researchers and educators, innovation support services and project partners.



Figure 28: Group photograph of participants

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Results

Session: Integration of advisors into the AKIS: conceptual fundamentals (Cristiano, CREA)

Objective of session:

- Introduction of farm advisory services and their role in AKIS
- Understanding of innovation support services (ISS) and interaction between providers and beneficiaries
- Activities designed to assist farmers, foresters and other rural stakeholders in addressing farm-level challenges

Questions raised:

- What are Farm Advisory services and Innovation support services?
- What is the approach that should be adopted, and which functions will farm advisory services/innovation support services fulfil?
- Which topics should be addressed? How can ISS be integrated into AKIS?
- Who are the stakeholders in farming advisory services, and how can they be integrated into AKIS?

It was emphasised that the transfer of knowledge, support for decision-making processes, problem-solving and the facilitation of local initiatives, as well as the integration of these services into supply chains and local agrifood systems, represent fundamental aspects of farm advisory services.

ISS can be defined as services that involve the participation of one or more service providers and one or more service beneficiaries in activities aimed at addressing a demand, whether explicit or implicit, that has emerged from a problematic situation or opportunity. This demand is initially formulated by the beneficiaries, and the service providers subsequently collaborate with them to co-produce a solution that is designed to resolve the problem.

Session: How is the CAP EU supporting advice and advisors within the AKIS? (Oost, DG AGRI; EC)

Objective of session:

- The aims of the CAP were outlined, with particular emphasis placed on enhancing the competitiveness of the agricultural sector and ensuring a viable income for farmers.
- The importance of rural areas and the preservation of biodiversity in order to protect against climate change and food chain disruption, and the emphasis on knowledge and innovation as drivers are regarded as cross-cutting objectives
- Presentation of innovative approaches for advisors in CAP plans regarding the implementation of virtual vouchers for demand-driven knowledge actions
- The functions and roles of advisors in relation to operational groups are multifaceted and encompass all CAP objectives, grassroots ideas, and a profound grasp of agricultural principles

Questions raised:

- How to utilize e-learning tools, podcasts, and videos for the dissemination of knowledge?
- How simplified cost approaches, such as lump sums and vouchers, can be employed to reduce administrative burdens
- How to improve relationship between national advisory networks and EU projects.
- What competencies are required for the role of an innovation broker?
- What is the optimal structure for Member States to implement in order to facilitate the completion of an innovation ecosystem?

The objective of DG AGRI in providing financial support to EU advisory network projects is to provide assistance to national advisors and facilitate their collaboration on a European scale. There is considerable overlap between EU

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advisory network projects, which would benefit from enhanced integration with the national level and the AKIS. This will result in advisors being better integrated into the AKIS, which will yield long-term benefits for the Member States and the advisory community.

Session: Horizon Europe supported advisory networks introduction (Miron, LFI)

The aim of this session was to highlight the core tasks of the invited advisory networks and to present the needs of the respective stakeholders. The following networks were present:

AdvisoryNetPest	ATTRACTISS	ClimateSmartAdvisors	COREnet
EU4Advice	i2connect	OrganicAdviceNetwork	

- **AdvisoryNetPest:** The objective of the AdvisoryNetPEST project is to establish a network of advisory services across the EU with the aim of facilitating the sharing of knowledge and the adoption of innovative solutions with the goal of reducing the use and risks of pesticides (RURP) in all EU Member States. This will enable the agricultural sector to achieve the targets set out in the Farm to Fork Strategy.

Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of AdvisoryNetPEST is to facilitate the integration of advisors within national and European AKIS networks, thereby enhancing the exchange of knowledge on novel approaches. AdvisoryNetPEST will integrate the national networks of advisors within their local AKIS, thereby enhancing their technological competences on RURP through interaction with science and education institutions. Furthermore, it will facilitate the exploitation of new solutions with an efficient use of policy measures.

- **ATTRACTISS:** The objective of ATTRACTISS is to enhance and integrate the competencies, methodologies, instruments and governance models for Member States (MS) Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS) and, in particular, for Innovation Support Services (ISS), which play a pivotal role within AKIS. This is to facilitate the acceleration of individual grassroots innovative ideas and the generation of solutions for the transition process to more sustainable agriculture and forestry.

Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of ATTRACTISS is establishing an EU-wide network for ISSs that facilitates connection, the development of a shared understanding, vision and capacities regarding their roles and functions within the AKIS. This ultimately results in the development of an ecosystem that is conducive to multi-actor approaches (MAA) and innovative projects. The project builds upon and provides continuity to previous initiatives, with a particular focus on ISSs and the expansion of networks. The provision of support and training for key actors in MAA and ISS across MS will undergo a significant transformation, resulting in enhanced knowledge, understanding and confidence in the practical delivery and benefits of these approaches. Furthermore, institutional dialogue among ISSs and MAs will be enabled on the basis of a more nuanced understanding of the potential for organising ISS in a manner that will lead to targeted CAP interventions for the integration of ISS within the AKIS.

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- **ClimateSmartAdvisors:** The objective of ClimateSmartAdvisors is to enhance the capacity of the EU agricultural advisory community, thereby accelerating the uptake of climate-smart farming practices by the broader farming community within and across EU AKISs. In order to achieve this objective, ClimateSmartAdvisors places an emphasis on the pivotal role that advisors play in the development and dissemination of climate-smart innovations and practices. The project will organise activities with the aim of enhancing the advisors' capacity to provide climate-smart advice and promoting the advisors' role in the transition towards climate-smart farming through their involvement in innovation projects, climate-smart AKIS, and EU projects and initiatives.

Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of ClimateSmartAdvisors is to extend the current knowledge base of advisors through training and coaching methods, thereby facilitating the acquisition of knowledge and the implementation of sound advisory practices. Furthermore, the role of advisors in innovation processes is to be optimised through the acquisition of knowledge about ongoing multi-actor innovation projects. Additionally, the objective is to gain improved knowledge about farm diagnostic tools and climate smart farming practices, including integrated assessment, evaluation and recommendations. The establishment of an EU-wide network of qualified climate smart coaches and advisors is intended to facilitate the accelerated uptake of impactful advisory methods and climate smart farming practices. This network will be organised in Communities of Practice and supported through a wide range of activities, as detailed below. In addition, the project will result in the description of the climate smart AKIS at the national level in each of the partner countries, as well as the development of activation and engagement strategies for the climate smart AKIS actors.

- **COREnet:** The objective of COREnet is the improvement of short food supply chains (SFSCs).Those involved in the operation, participation and promotion of SFSCs are confronted with a fragmented knowledge landscape, coupled with a lack of clarity as to the essential skills and competencies required at each stage of the process, from farm to fork. In order to respond to this challenge, the COREnet project proposes to support the systematic development of more effective SFSC advising. This will be achieved by bringing together public, private and civic advisors through enabled peer-to-peer learning and mutual support.

Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of COREnet is to introduce advisory services for improving SFSC performance in at least one EU Member State. Furthermore, COREnet has organised two field visits (respectively in Belgium and Italy) and one European roadshow (in Italy) with the objective of meeting the Golden Cases realities and promoting knowledge sharing among stakeholders. It is anticipated that all of these initiatives will contribute to the project's impacts among EU-27 countries, reaching different actors involved in the SFSC advisory system in a positive and lasting manner.

- **EU4Advice:** The objective of EU4Advice is to establish the foundations for the creation of a network of SFSC-advisors across Europe.This network will be appropriately structured and connected to a diversity of stakeholders within the national AKIS. SFSCs offer farmers and consumers in Europe a range of options. They provide producers with the means to enhance their bargaining power and improve their position within the value chain, while offering consumers greater trust, transparency, quality, and safety in their food. The development of networking tools, content for SFSCs advisors, a tailored dissemination, communication, and exploitation strategy, and impact assessment plans will facilitate the effective transfer of knowledge among stakeholders in the 27 EU members.

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Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of the EU4advice initiative will facilitate the formation of a community of SFSC-identified and characterised advisors, enabling the introduction of these professionals into AKIS at the national level. Additionally, it will conduct an analysis of SFSC needs concerning advice and training requirements for SFSC advisors, and recommend pathways for integrating these training programmes into EU and national systems.

- **i2connect:** The objective of i2connect is to enhance the capabilities of advisors who will be responsible for supporting and facilitating interactive innovation processes. The strategy employed by the i2connect project is to utilise the existing networks of advisors and the experiences of success to create a broader network and momentum of change, thereby enabling a new culture of bottom-up led innovation support. i2connect unites 42 organisations, the majority of which are directly engaged in the stimulation of innovation in rural areas and food systems across Europe, with a particular focus on countries in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE).

Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of i2connect is to enhance and profile the role of advisors in interactive innovation processes at different scales. This will be achieved by attaining a better understanding of the AKIS at the country level, identifying providers of advisory services across Europe and creating an enabling environment within advisory services.

- **OrganicAdviceNetwork:** The overall objective of the OrganicAdviceNetwork is to create an EU-wide network of organic advisors and strengthen organic advisory services. Successful business models of structuring and financing organic advisory services will be identified through a contest, the "Organic Advice Contest". Combined with a driver and barrier analysis, the project will empower organic advisors to improve capacity of their organisations and promote the creation of organic advisory services where they do not exist yet.

Main results with relevance for EU/AKIS: The objective of OrganicAdviceNework is to establish a long-lasting European-wide network of organic advisors including online courses for new and experienced organic advisors on various agricultural topics. Additionally mapping advisory services should be established, which deliver organic advice as well as in-school education and training opportunities for organic advisors. These courses are to be used/revised by AKIS coordination bodies with the aim of better integrating advisors in the AKIS.

Session: Integrating advisors into the AKIS: approaches, rules and practices in the 27 Member States (Kranitz, AKI; Gaspard, CRAO)

Key findings of the session:

- Highest rates of AKIS interventions: Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Ireland, Greece, and Estonia
- EU share of AKIS interventions increased from €1 billion (2014-2022) to €4 billion (2023-2027)
- CAP Article 15 novelties:
  - Advisors shall be able to cover economic, environmental, and social dimensions
  - Shall deliver up-to-date technological and scientific information
  - Shall cover expertise in areas such as antimicrobial resistance, innovation, digital technologies
- Innovation-related advice is available in 17 EU member states' private advisory sectors with exceptions in Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Sweden, where innovation support is embedded in the public advisory services

Questions raised:

- Regarding the mapping of advisory services:
  - Who are the beneficiaries?

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- What costs are eligible?
- What is the selection criteria of advisors?

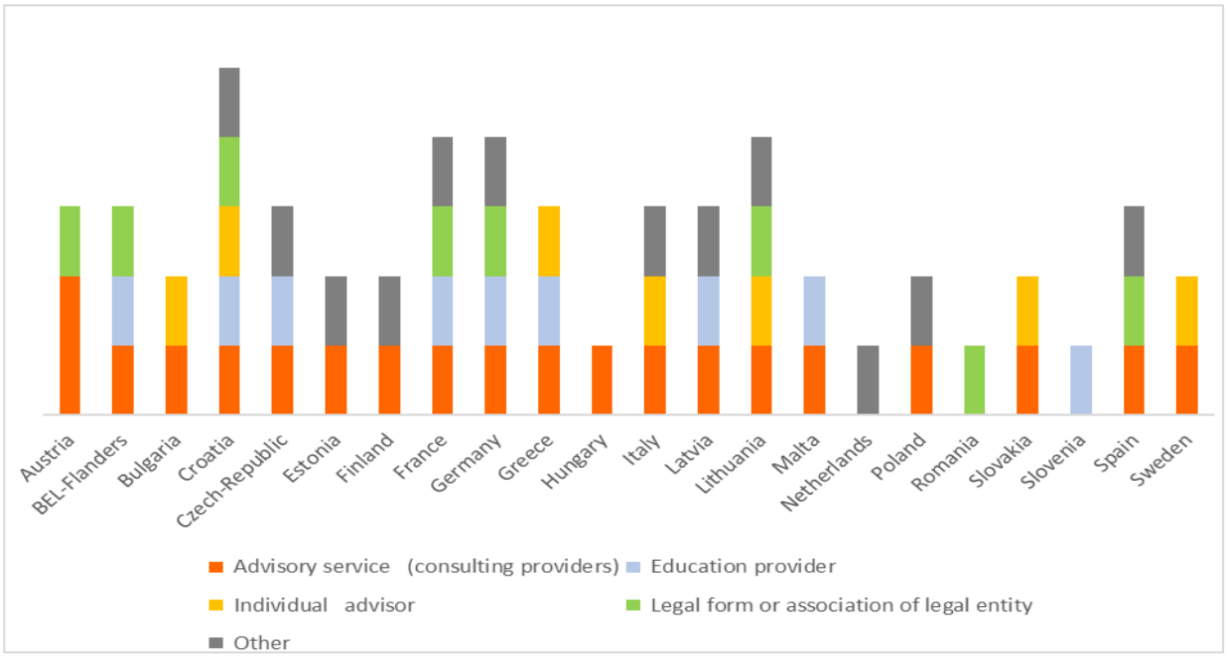

Figure 29: Beneficiaries of support regarding advisory services interventions in the CAP (Gaspard, 2024)

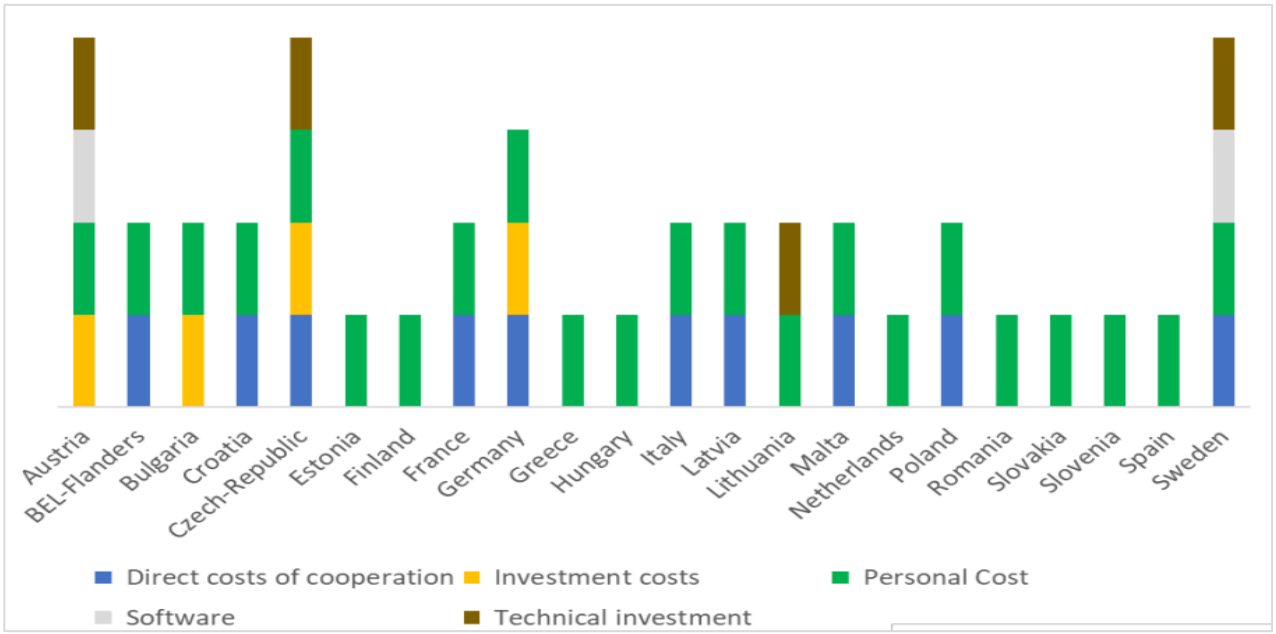

Figure 30: Eligible cost categories (Gaspard, 2024)

Session: Capitalizing the Transformative AKIS Journeys (TAJs) in AKIS: capacity development and take-ins (Cristiano, CREA)

Objective of session:

- Individual reflection on the knowledge and skills gained from modern AKIS activities.

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- The objective is to encourage participants to consider innovative and alternative applications of the knowledge and insights gained through modern AKIS activities.
- To facilitate collective reflection on contemporary AKIS insights and their practical application within AKIS.

Questions raised:

- What are the new insights into the potential applications of previously implemented learning strategies?
- How to assess the potential for the further utilisation of contemporary agricultural knowledge and information systems (AKIS) activities and learnings?

The topic of this session focused on the individual reflection on the knowledge and skills gained from modernAKIS activities and the promotion of critical thinking about innovative and alternative applications of the knowledge and insights gained from modernAKIS activities as well as learning outcomes and strategies for integrating them into AKIS practices. The implementation of change is achieved through an iterative process of critical reflection and the systematic organisation of learning outcomes. This cyclical approach should be repeated until the desired outcome is achieved.

Session: Insights in to the Spanish AKIS (Ambrós, Deputy Director of Innovation and Digitalisation, Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food)

Objective of session:

- Illustration of contributions of the Spanish agrifood sector to the EU
- Study of the structure of the agri-food sector: overview of the 17 Spanish autonomous communities responsible for agriculture and livestock farming
- Overview of the strengths and weaknesses of the Spanish agricultural and food sector

Questions raised:

- How does Spain's agricultural area compare to other EU member states?

- **Contributions:** Spain's agrifood sector contributes 11.9% of the community's gross added value (GVA) of the sector, which is higher than the EU average of 6.6%.
- Agriculture alone accounts for 2.41% of Spain's GDP, compared to 1.4% of the EU's GDP as of 2022.
- The agrifood sector is a significant player in exports, with a total value of €70.431 million, representing 18.4% of the Spanish economy's overall exports. Key export products include meats, fruits, and vegetables.
- The sector supports approximately 2.67 million jobs, highlighting its importance in providing employment within the country

- What challenges does the Spanish agricultural sector face?

- **Challenges:** Despite the considerable extent of the country's agricultural land, 84.5% of this area is not deemed conducive to agricultural activities due to constraints such as aridity, rockiness, and topography.
- There is a dearth of generational renewal within the farming community. A substantial proportion of farmers (41%) are aged 65 years or older, while only 3.9% are under 35 years old. This trend portends a declining number of young farmers, which could have an adverse impact on the future sustainability of the sector.
- There are notable differences in labour productivity across regions, which are associated with the distinctive productive specialisation of each area. Regions such as Navarra and Aragon demonstrate higher levels of productivity, while other regions, including the Community of Madrid and Asturias, exhibit comparatively lower productivity levels.

Furthermore, the Spanish AKIS diagram was presented to the modernAKIS community:

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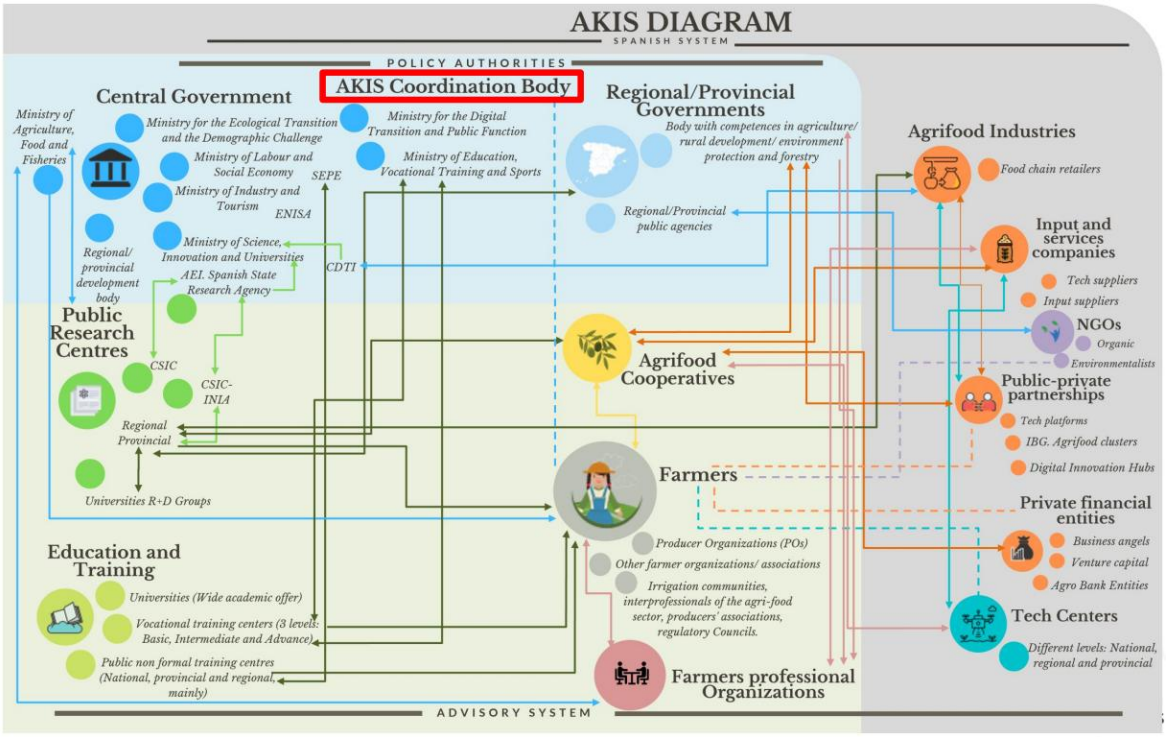

Figure 31: Spanish AKIS diagram including policy authorities and advisory system (Enfedaque Díaz, Jiménez González, & Puras Pato, 2020, p. 28)

Session: Being an AKIS CB: experience exchange

(Taylor, AKIS CB and Acting Head of Unit of the Rural Development Unit of the Sweden Board of Agriculture; Giorgio Trentin, AKIS CB and Director of Quality, Knowledge and AgriFood Innovations, Veneto Region)

Objective of session:

- Examination of the structure of the AKIS Coordination Body and the surrounding Swedish CAP network / Swedish Board of Agriculture
- Introduction to Swedish Knowledge Hubs to facilitate the integration of research and practice
- The differentiation of the system perspective and the business perspective in Swedish communities of practice.

The first session focused on an examination of the structure of the Swedish AKIS and the communities of practice that constitute it. Four knowledge hubs in Sweden serve as impartial knowledge centres, with the primary objectives of compiling and disseminating knowledge, strengthening collaboration, and improving the integration of advisors within AKIS.

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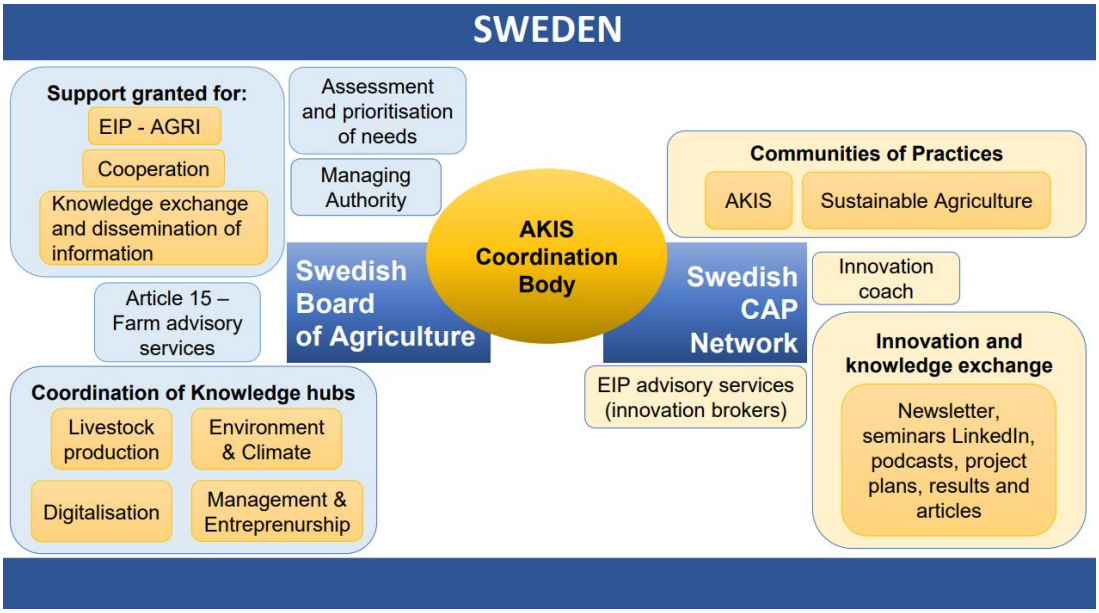

Figure 32: Structure of Swedish AKIS and knowledge hubs (Taylor, 2024, p. 2)

Objective of session:

- Gain an understanding of the AKIS CB of the Veneto region
- Examination of the relationship of AKIS CB in Veneto and interventions

The second session focused the Veneto Region in Italy and the region places considerable emphasis on the importance of interactive innovation approaches in agriculture. The operational groups are as follows: The Veneto region provides support for the formation and activities of operational groups, which are likely to be part of the European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability initiative. The coordination body facilitates the exchange of knowledge and expertise among farmers and other stakeholders in the agricultural sector through a process of peer-to-peer learning. The region is engaged in the process of developing and enhancing the competencies of agricultural advisors and the coordination body operates within a complex multi-actor and multi-layered system.

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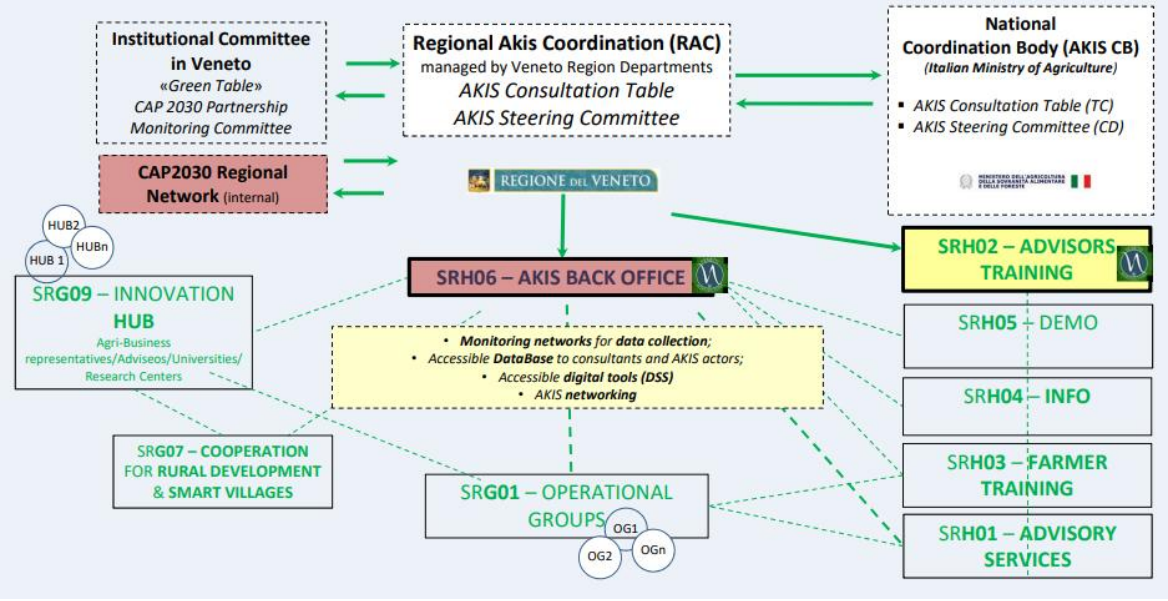

Figure 33: Proposal of AKIS CB in Veneto and relationship of interventions (Trentin, 2024, p. 5)

Session: The AKIS benchmarking tool (Fanos Birke, UHOH)

Objective of session:

- Introduction in the development of a benchmarking tool for agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS)
- Establish a common understanding about the task and agreement on the objectives for the tool

Questions raised:

- Is experience in benchmarking and evaluation available?
- What contributions can be made in terms of input and ideas?

	The benchmarking tool for AKIS	The Guideline for evaluating AKIS strategic approach
What is it	Management tool to diagnose the strength, improve the needs and to facilitate learning	Evaluation tool to assess the implementation of CAP-SPs during and ex-post to improve and facilitate learning
Who are target groups?	AKIS CB, modernAKIS partners, key actors of change	Managing authorities, AKIS CBs, and evaluators of CAP, or others evaluation stakeholders
What approach is used?	Compare AKIS between MS and understand why performance differs	Assess the results achieved against planned AKIS interventions
How will it be used?	To compare and to identify, assess and learn about how other AKISs perform	Adjust and use the guideline based on the specific context of MS

Figure 34: The benchmarking tool and the CAP-SP AKIS evaluation guideline (Birke, 2024, p. 10)

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The objective is to assist Member States in benchmarking their AKIS interventions in order to identify the most effective strategies, which can then be adapted to suit their local, regional and national contexts. This process should facilitate the development of a more effective AKIS, with improved organisational structures and enhanced functionality.

Questions & Discussions:

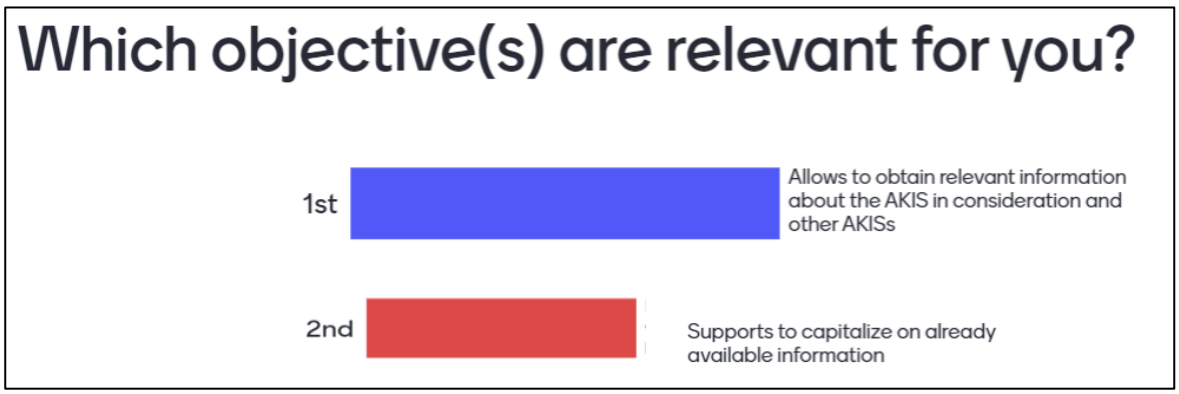

Figure 35: Mentimeter Survey #1 (Birke, 2024, p. 12)

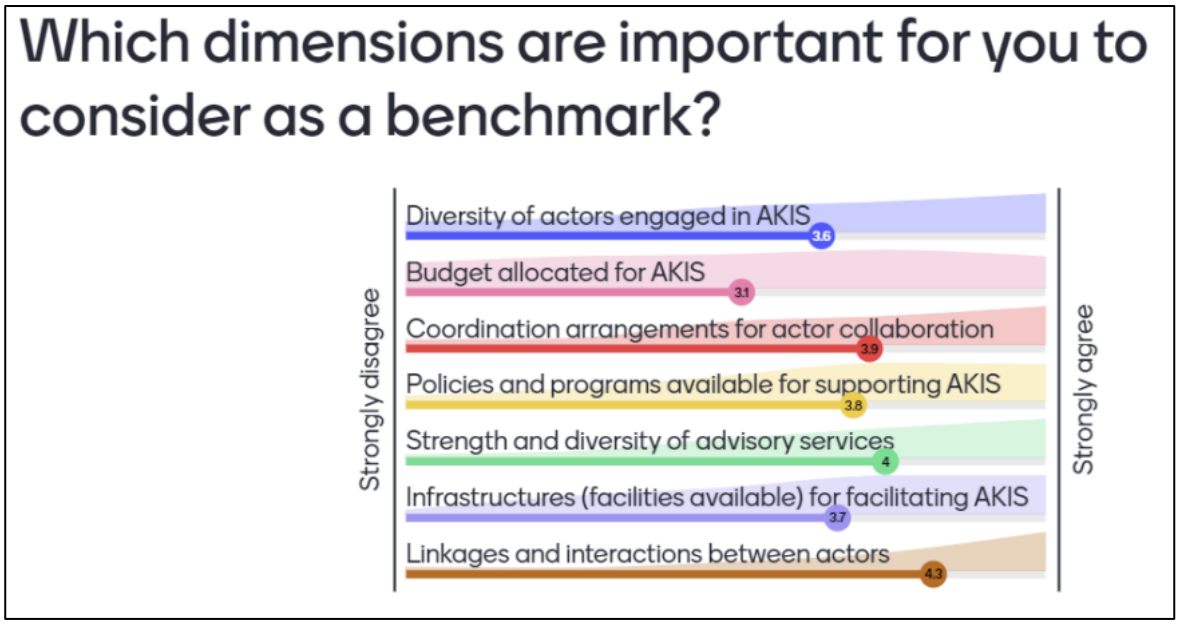

Figure 36: Mentimeter Survey #2 (Birke, 2024, p. 13)

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Figure 37: Mentimeter Survey #3 (Birke, 2024, p. 14)

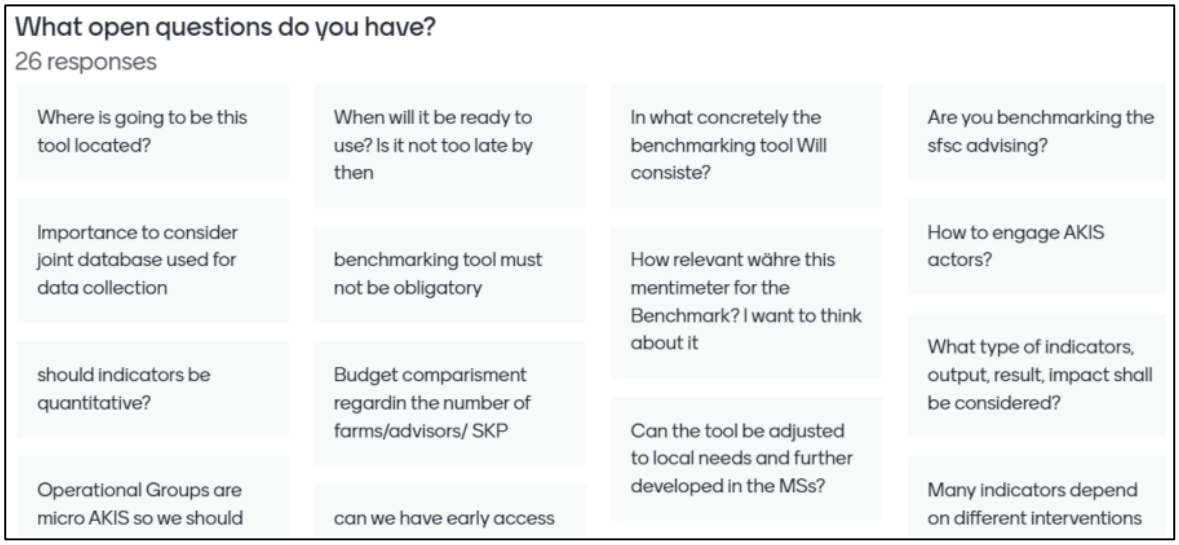

Figure 38: Mentimeter Survey #4 (Birke, 2024, p. 15)

Session: Integrating advisors into the AKIS: intractive discussios on approaches, rules and practices in the 27 Member States (Myriam Gaspard, CRAO; Livia Kranitz, AKI; Rebeca Diez, FEUGA)

Please introduce your AKIS and the role advisors play in it:

- **Jan:** in the Netherlands there are only private advisors; thus their integration in AKIS must be based on convincing them; we cannot mandate integration and participation
- **Marta:** in the Czech Republic we have no public advisors only private ones; the advisory organizations are dealing directly with the Paying Agency
- **Els:** strong advisory organizations, well integrated into the AKIS

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- Markus: Austria has advisors which are well integrated into the AKIS; advice is mostly delivered by the Chambers of Agriculture, which are a federal public bodies and are mandated by law to provide advice to farmers
- **Efi:** since the creation of the Department of Agriculture in 1986 the aim is to advise and provide training to farmers; advisory service remained public; they are established in districts; each advisor is specialized on a specific area; there is trust between advisor and farmers and advisors are very involved in helping the farmers; there is intense efforts to train advisors and update their networks; National Rural Network complements the advisory services and provides information to diverse and different organizations

Where do you see the role of the CAP Networks?

- **Jan:** without a CAP network I could not do my work as an AKIS CB; they keep the network alive; organize meetings, organize advisors, have creative ideas on how to activate the network
- **Markus:** CAP Network plays a very important role; within the CAP Network, we established an AKIS Cooperation Platform, which supports the AKIS CB; members are Chambers of Agriculture and an innovation support organization who is doing the innovation brokerage.
- **Marta:** CAP network is doing a lot of events; there is still space to improve coordination between the CAP Network and the AKIS CB
- **Els:** the CAP Network has developed and deployed a cooperation tool (online) to encourage the cooperation between all actors

How can your Member State ensure that your advisory services cover all aspects mentioned by Art. 15 (especially the social aspects)?

- **Efi:** as a public body we can cooperate with other departments in the government, who provide their expertise compensating the knowledge which we do not have; if it is an ongoing issue, then we organize advisor training, if it is an ad-hoc issue a mixed team goes and solves the problems
- **Jan:** there is little worry about specifically the social aspects as they are already covered in the advice; advisory services are looking more to provide integrated advise centered around the farmer's problem, without trying to pinpoint individual aspects
- **Marta:** what specifically about the social aspect should be considered? The advice is provided in an integrated manner and social aspects cannot be excluded from there, because they naturally flow within the discussion. Thus, it is important that advisors have both technical but also soft skills in their work.
- **Els:** When looking at economic and environmental focused advice are there possible conflicts? How to advisors deal with both of them? Flanders has just started the advisory system [for this programming period]; it will evaluate the advice and it they see that there is too little environmental advice – there is a CAP measure for training programs where training centers can apply and develop trainings for advisors with focus on the environment
- **Jan:** the conflict between environmental and economic advice is just short term; in the middle and long term there is no conflict
- **Markus:** supports Jan's perspective of no conflict in the middle and long term; in Austria advice follows also an integrated approach; quite often advisors have to consider all aspects; the call for advisory service provision in the current CAP period defined 14 areas of advice and these cover all topics addressed by Art. 15.

  Continuous training is very important in every field of advice; in Austria, there is a specific provision in the national guidelines and in the CAP Strategic Plan – every advisor must prove that he/she attended 20h of continuous education/year; a demand driven process on courses offered is coordinated by the University College for Agricultural and Environmental Education (HAUP).

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How do you make sure that in your AKIS digital innovation is spread evenly across all age groups?

- **Jan:** there are different types of digital innovation; e.g. in interaction with paying agencies, there is a helpdesk – we make sure to not leave anybody behind; with tractors there is openness and interest among the farmers of all age groups and we see a good learning mode in peer-to-peer learning.
- **Els:** in Flanders there is a training center specialized in mechanization that provides trainings in precision agriculture; there are large calls for some demonstration activities
- **Jan:** older people are sometimes worried and reluctant to share their data; concern who is looking at their data; you have to take their concerns away
- **Marta:** NGOs and Universities are very active in these topics; they are included in the projects; many activities and events are provided to advisors and farmers; CZ is digitally focused country – IT capacity and education is very well organized and on a high level
- **Efi:** we have not abandoned paper and many things are on the webpage. One instrument every generation uses is the smartphone – we try to create apps to get the information on smartphones; our timeline is deployment before the end of the year; we try to make it easier for everyone

Advisors should collaborate with research organizations in the AKIS – are there improvements being made in this direction?

- **Markus:** In Austria, we have a successful event series "Speeding Up Innovation", whose main goal is to bring together advisors and trainers/education providers with researchers. The event take place three times a year, with varying topics addressed (e.g. Digitalization/Artificial Intelligence, animal husbandry, organic agriculture, etc.) Applicable research project results are presented and extensively discussed.

How do you ensure that advisors eligible for support in your Member States are impartial?

- **Jan:** how do you regulate it? – Strongly!
  As an advisor, you have to apply for registration in person; you have to show, if your company or your shareholders have any profit from the advice you are going to give.
- **Els:** an advisor cannot work for a company offering agricultural products; conflict of interest also means that the advisor is not related to the farmer (is a third party); cannot live at the same address as the farmer; cannot be an employee or a manager of a farm
- **Marta:** impartiality is addressed in the certification process; certified parties have to ensure that each advisor under their body is impartial; if a change occurs in this status, they have to report/announce it.

Which of your countries offers a back office for advisors?

- **Efi:** we have district officers who provide the on-site advice; the central offices provide the back office for the district officers.
- **Jan:** If you have many private groups, it is hard to organize back offices, because there is a lot of competition; we see Wageningen University & Research and the CAP Network as back offices.
- **Markus:** the Austrian Chambers have many internal competences and they organize the knowledge for their advisors.
- **Els:** advisors working for practical research centers and advisors who work for farmers' associations organize the back office themselves; we offer them training.
- **Marta:** Many advisory organizations have their own back offices; national subsidies support the research organizations, who have people paid by the Ministry to offer easily usable and feasible knowledge. If no knowledge is available on the respective topic/question, there is a platform for advisors where they can ask experts.

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How is the visibility assured without a platform?

- At this stage, all countries have a digital platform.

How can CAP Networks feed into advisory services?

- No answers

Session on Functions of ISS: from mapping to their integration into AKIS (part 1): ISS functions along the innovation process (Proietti, CREA)

Objective of session:

- ***Introduction of the Spiral Model of Innovation*** *- Description of a non-linear, iterative process for innovation development and implementation.*

The "Spiral" model of innovation describes a non-linear, iterative process that is designed to capture the complex nature of innovation development and implementation. The model identifies seven key stages in the innovation process.

1. Initial Idea/Concept Formation:

- Conceptualisation of an idea in response to a problem or opportunity
- Preliminary concepts developed by farmers
- New initiatives may originate from interactions or unforeseen occurrences
- Engaging with individuals with disparate experiences or expertise often leads to innovative concepts
- External pressure can prompt individuals to explore alternative approaches

2. Inspiration:

- Inspired by perceived problems or opportunities
- Formation of a supportive network of advocates around the initiative
- Discussions and exploration of possibilities with the group
- Idea becomes a collectively embraced concept, possibly requiring adjustments before concrete planning

3. Planning:

- Network of initiators organises and negotiates space for experimentation
- Translation of the idea into a tangible plan of action
- Implementation of specific measures, task assignments, and agreements
- Assessment of additional personnel needs, including experts and policymakers
- Development of an actionable plan

4. Development:

- Experimentation to develop novel practices and gather evidence of efficacy
- Implementation of the idea as a solution to a practical problem or development of a new practice
- Experimentation conceived as a 'discovery journey'.

5. Realisation:

- Comprehensive implementation of the innovation
- Involvement of other parties in the chain, negotiations with those affected by the change
- Potential amendments to legislation and regulations
- Management of complaints from interested parties
- Actions of stakeholders, gatekeepers, and managers may facilitate or impede the process

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6. Dissemination:

- Positive sentiments from the majority indicate the novel situation is an enhancement
- Successful initiatives widely adopted and replicated
- Dissemination of successful initiatives to diverse contexts and locations for broader benefits.

7. Embedding:

- Innovation becomes standard practice within the agricultural community
- Development of support networks among farmers
- Establishment of local expertise
- Integration of the innovation into agricultural policies, regulations, and extension services.

This approach acknowledges the cyclical nature of innovation, comprising a series of stages and phases, with fluctuations in progress and outcomes. It acknowledges the contribution of a range of inputs, the importance of repetition and iteration, and the possibility of setbacks and re-evaluation. The spiral model emphasises the importance of iteration, learning and adaptation throughout the innovation process.

Session: How to create synergies between advisory network projects within the AKIS strategies (Miron, LFI)

EU4Advice

- Identify and characterize SFSC advisors across Europe Growing database of private and public SFSC (over 700 SFSC advisors)
- Connect SFSC advisors from the 27 MS in a European network
- Living lab testing beds
- Improve the understanding of the main issues and challenges of European AKIS
- Integrate SFSC advisors and contents into national AKIS
- Interact with relevant national/regional/local policy-makers
- Replicate and disseminate innovations on SFSC

COREnet

- is cooperating with i2Connect to avoid reinventing the wheel
- developing competency and skills for advisors working with Short Food Supply Chains

I2Connect

- Database of contacts working with other databases. Currently 3.500 advisor contacts in the i2Connect database. Looking to increase number. Will hand database to other project e.g. EU-FarmBook or modernAKIS
- Series of AKIS reports will be of interest to modernAKIS; these are now being updated. e.g. AKIS Structure and organizations
- Continuously collecting examples of interactive innovation - hope to share with EU- FarmBook
- Toolbox for trainers and advisors being uploaded to the i2Connect website and other projects
- Pool of people who have been trained to facilitate interactive innovation is a great resource. 75 trainers can work for other projects and projects should make use of these people.
- 60 trained students and 60 trained managers
- Advisory organizations should engage with the i2Connect
- **Request for MS to contribute to updating the i2Connect Country Report**
- Recommended to read the section regarding advisory in your i2Connect Country Report

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ATTRACTISS

- This project will build on the i2Connect training. Will use trainers and build new modules. Our focus is training for innovation support services (ISS) but we will also deliver methods and tools.

- All Member States are asked to contribute methods and tools.
- Version 1 of a handbook has been developed and will be published in May. Will be available on the AKISconnect (www.akisconnect.eu) platform. It will explain what innovation support services are and how to integrate them. In addition, it will contain a framework that will help MS to monitor and evaluate ISS in their country.
- Looking to develop a simplified way of monitoring and evaluate ISS.
- 6 cross visits will help Member States to share and understand what is happening in other countries.
- There will be 60 events including webinars to share knowledge.
- Please register on AKISconnect platform and encourage advisors to do so.

AdvisoryNetPest

- Will organize 3 workshops for AKIS CB in each Member State.
- Advisors will be able to present novel methods for reducing pesticides.

OrganicAdviceNetwork

- Creating a mapped network of advisors across EU, who will be trained on soft and technical skills.
- Strengthen services - looking for support measures for organic advisory services.
- Will run organic advice contest to spotlight successful service models.
- Planning to map in school training opportunities for organic farming across Europe.

Q&A+ Comments session

- It would be useful to receive an update from each project and roadmap of when the projects would like to engage with Member State, AKIS CB or Advisory Body
    - Will ask projects to include a one-page brief on what they plan to achieve and a link to their website.
- Inge Van Oost – don't expect AKIS CBs to approach the projects; it is more up to the projects to reach out to them.
- Jenny Taylor (AKIS CB Sweden) – please send updates that could be translated into a LinkedIn post and that could be shared with national networks

Most urgent need for support from AKIS CBs by the projects

OrganicAdviceNetwork - will develop policy recommendations at Member State level. AKIS CBs have a key role in considering these.

COREnet - Planning a series of EU roadshows where role of advice can be demonstrated. Looking for participation of AKIS CBs and help to invite relevant actors/stakeholders involved in short food supply chains.

AdvisoryNetPest- Support on implementation of recommendations.

i2Connect - Encourage AKIS actors to use the diverse tools on i2Connect webpage and the people who have been trained.

ATTRACTISS – Most urgent need is to identify some innovation support services (ISS) providers in your country and ask them to join the project network.

EU4Advice - Need help to identify short food supply chains in your Member State. Will need help with communication also.

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Session: Skills and competences for advisors within the AKIS (Sturel, CDAF)

Objective of session:

- This session introduces the competencies required of innovation advisors
- Short compendium of instruments for the innovation advisor
- Establish a common understanding about the task and agreement on the objectives for the tool

Questions raised:

- What is the role of management in the prioritisation process?
- Should an opportunity for reflection be incorporated into the yearly evaluation process?
- Is there a requirement for a shift in mind-set among farmers?
- What are good practices based on reviewed practical cases?

Based on the research, the key competencies for innovation advisors in farming practices can be grouped into five main themes:

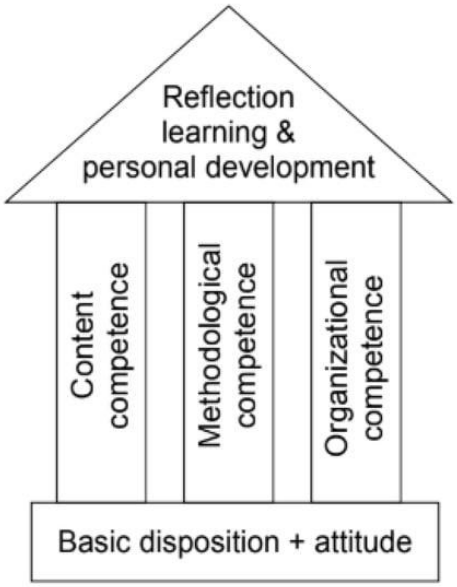

Figure 39: Qualifications of an advisor framework (Gerster-Bentaya, Hoffmann, Christinck, & Lemma, 2009)

1. Basic Disposition & Attitude:

Self-awareness, Personal drive, Sensitivity to others' needs and contexts, reliability and trustworthiness

2. Content Competence:

Understanding the social context of agriculture, Knowledge of the AKIS, Specific content knowledge related to farming practices

3. Methodological Competence:

Understanding the innovation process, Ability to energize and motivate others, Skills in co-creation and participatory approaches, Mediation and conflict resolution abilities

4. Organizational Competence: Project management skills, Ability to navigate institutional structures, Network building and maintenance

5. Reflection, Learning and Personal Development: Engaging in peer reflection, Self-reflection practices, actively addressing and expanding professional networks, Commitment to lifelong learning

These competencies empower agricultural advisors to efficaciously bolster interactive innovation in farming practices. They underscore the significance of not merely technical expertise, but also the development of soft skills such as communication, facilitation, and adaptability. The capacity to comprehend and negotiate intricate social and organisational contexts is similarly vital for innovation advisors operating within the agricultural domain.

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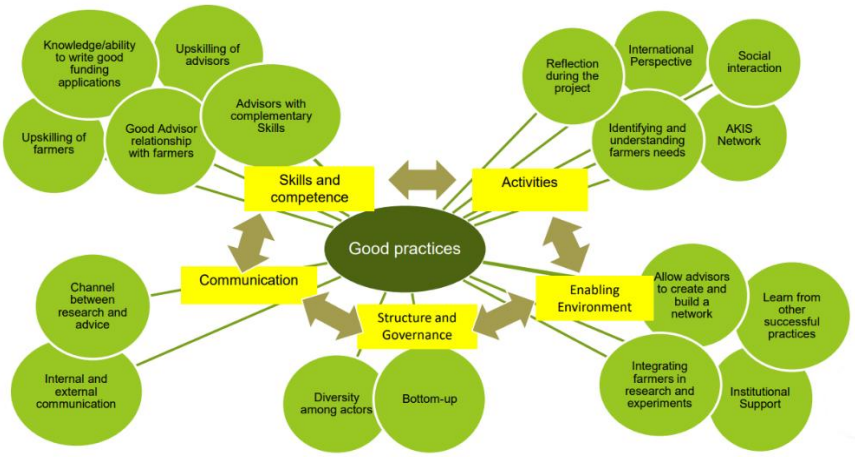

Figure 40: The implementation of effective practices is contingent upon the integration of underlying themes (Sturel, 2024, p. 21)

Session: How ATTRACTISS Training could support managing authorities to improve the skills for ISS (Aranda, ceiA3)

Objective of session:

- Provision of training to assist Managing Authorities to deliver Innovation Support Services

Questions raised:

- What is the role of AKIS and ISS in the successful implementation of the RIS3 (Regional Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation) in the agrifood sector?
- What competencies and skills will the ISS need to provide assistance to future farmers?
- From an educational standpoint, what are the most appropriate ways to address this issue?

The challenges facing the agricultural sector are numerous and complex. AKIS and ISS exemplify the innovation process in agriculture and the transition to a more sustainable agriculture and forestry sector. In the agrifood sector, we are confronted with a multitude of challenges, including climate change, water scarcity, the absence of sustainability, and the dearth of modern technologies. The most significant deficiencies in the skill sets of the workforce are in the areas of social skills and teamwork, problem-solving, quality control, and equipment maintenance.

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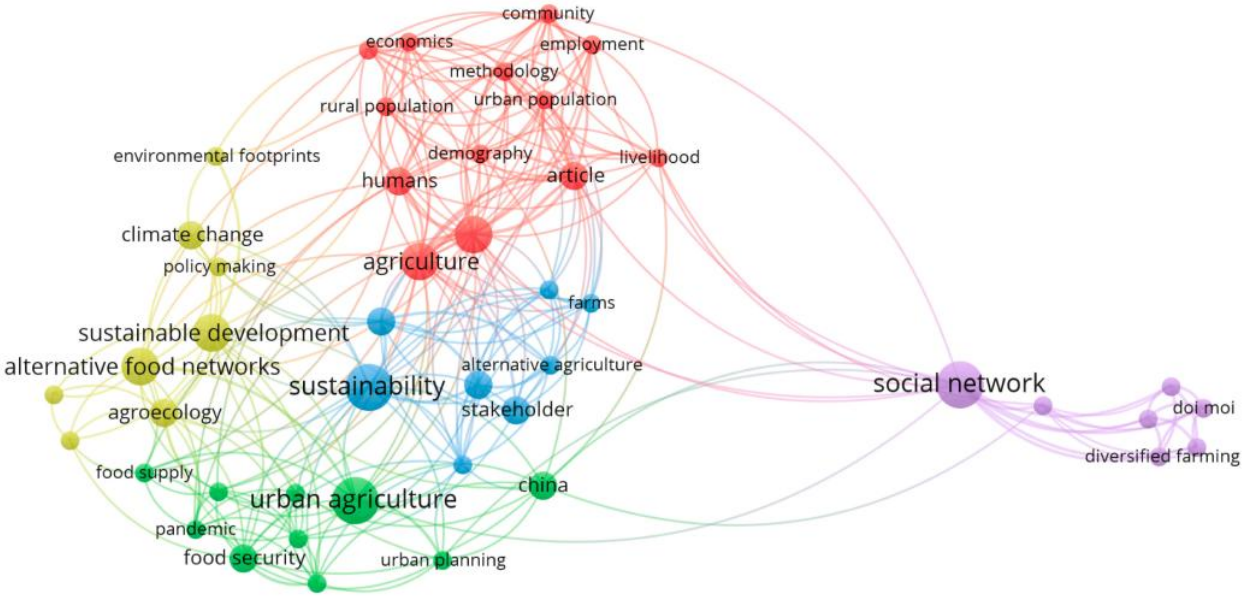

Figure 41: Transition from traditional innovation to AKIS (Allamand & Aranda, 2024, p. 6)

The training will address the knowledge, competencies, tools, methods and capacities required to be effective in the role of ISS, supporting actors to identify, develop, implement and share their agricultural innovation ideas.

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Communication with wider public

Both AKIS CB General Assemblies were announced via the project website (www.modernakis.eu) and the social media channels. All presentations as well as the documentation of the meetings are available on AKISConnect under the "Events" section:

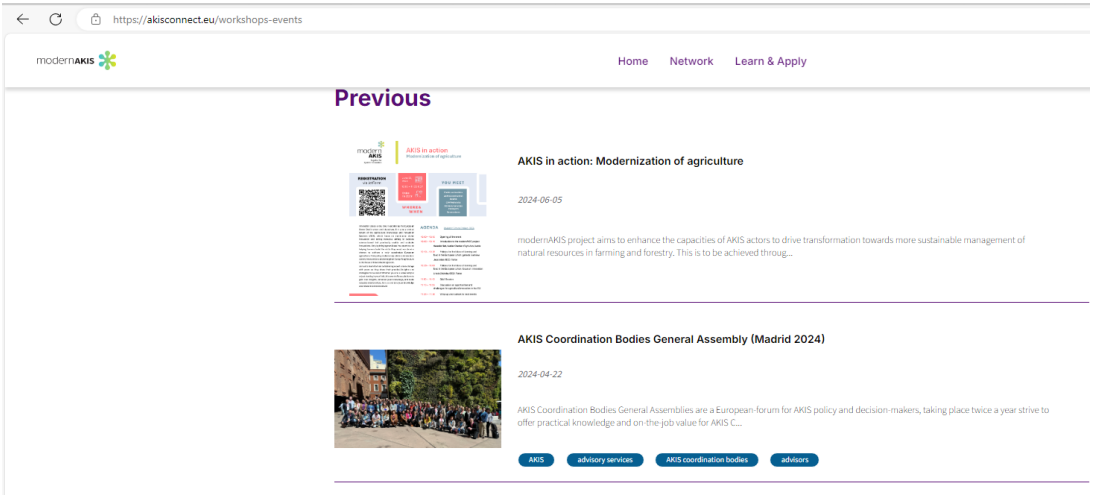

Figure 42: Event documentation on AKISConnect.eu

Both for internal and external communication, WP5 has developed different colour palettes for different target audiences to ensure a clear and consistent project image. More details on the colour palettes and internal and external communication are described in *D5.1: C, D & E plan - Design and implementation of a detailed C, D & E Plan*. Figure 43 shows the modernAKIS colour palettes with the colours for the following actors from left to right: AKIS CBs and Managing Authorities, national and European networks, research and education sector, farmers and advisors. Hence, the yellow and pink colours represent AKIS CBs and Managing Authorities. The colour of the social media and website postings reflect this colour palette.



Figure 43: modernAKIS color palette (graph taken from D 5.1)

Next AKIS Coordination Bodies networking events

The next AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly will take place in November 2024 online and will focus on continuing the topic of "Integration of advisors into the AKIS".

The bi-yearly GAs will continue to be the most important networking activity for AKIS CBs until the end of the project. In between the GAs, the community platform will play an important role to connect the AKIS CBs with each other via a special feature for them. Apart from that, AKIS CBs are part of the Communities of Practice and that way connect with key AKIS actors in their country. The majority of networking events will be open to all members, thus also for AKIS CBs (see Chapter 5.5).

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5. Networking events

As presented in D2.2 modernAKIS started organising online networking events in addition to the AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies, which are the main networking events according to the Grant Agreement DoA, WP2, T2.2 description.

The purpose of the networking events in modernAKIS is to complement the capacity building activities in WP3 and WP4 for the wider network of key AKIS actors within their Transformative AKIS Journeys and bring people together as well as offer them an opportunity to network with each other. modernAKIS networking events are designed and implemented around the following main characteristics:

- **Thematically** they are needs-based and offer practical/applicable knowledge for key AKIS actors. This means that the topic of the networking events are based on the specific year's priorities as defined by the Capacity Needs Assessment (WP1, T1.1). For example in 2023/2024 the CNA identified as the highest priority AKIS topics of interest "Advisory integration into AKIS", "Knowledge flows" and "AKIS Coordination". In terms of CAP priority topics the modernAKIS network is most interested in "Climate ambition" and "Increasing farmer income". Accordingly the topics of the first 5 networking events focused around these interests.
- **Content provision** is done either by modernAKIS consortium members or external experts. Depending on the focus topic of the specific event, we have tried to identify practical examples in members states – either organic activities or activities related to other projects (thematic networks, EIP Operational groups, other research projects, networking projects etc.) which can be transferred and used in other AKIS communities or member states.
- **Format**-wise all networking events are organised as online webinars or workshops with the opportunity to ask questions, discuss and exchange with the other participants.
- **Frequency** – originally planned quarterly, due to the high demand in 2023 and 2024 (until June) the events were organised every 2-months. This seems to be a good rhythm in terms of attendance and workload, however it puts a higher-than-expected pressure on the resources of the organising team.
- During each networking event the **modernAKIS network as well as its offers and benefits** are presented to the participants.
- During the registration process, but also during the events themselves, there is an opportunity for the ones who are registering or attending **to join the network**. To this end the registration form for each networking event provides the option to register for the network. Until March 1, 2024 when AKISConnect.eu was released this meant that the participants where registered by hand in the network database. However since March 1, the registrants have the opportunity to create their own profile on AKISConnect.eu and become part of the network. Unfortunately only a small percentage of those who join an AKIS in action event also choose to register for the network, potentially because it would require registering twice (once for the event and once for the network). To mitigate this inconvenience for the users AUA is currently developing an event registration feature directly on AKISConnect.eu, which will mean that once a person is registering for an event, they can choose to automatically transfer their data also to the network and become part of the modernAKIS network.

"AKIS in action"

To strengthen recognition all modernAKIS online networking events, are branded as "AKIS in action" events. The purpose is to signal the practical applicability as well as their tried-and-tested nature. Because AKIS is also a rather abstract concept, which a lot of people do not yet have a firm grasp on, the name is aimed to show that there is action which can be taken and which is beneficial in the context of AKIS for everyone's day to day professional life.

For each event WP2/T2.2. produces an own flyer which is widely circulated and made available via the modernAKIS website (www.modernAKIS.eu), via Social Media and via AKISConnect.eu Events. The format is similar for all events. The header always features the modernAKIS logo, the „AKIS in action" moniker and then provides insight into the focus of the specific event through the title. Below an easy to access barcode is included for registration, which is done via JotForm for now. All logistical information (time, date, place) as well as the target group are featured in a way which makes reading at a glance easy.

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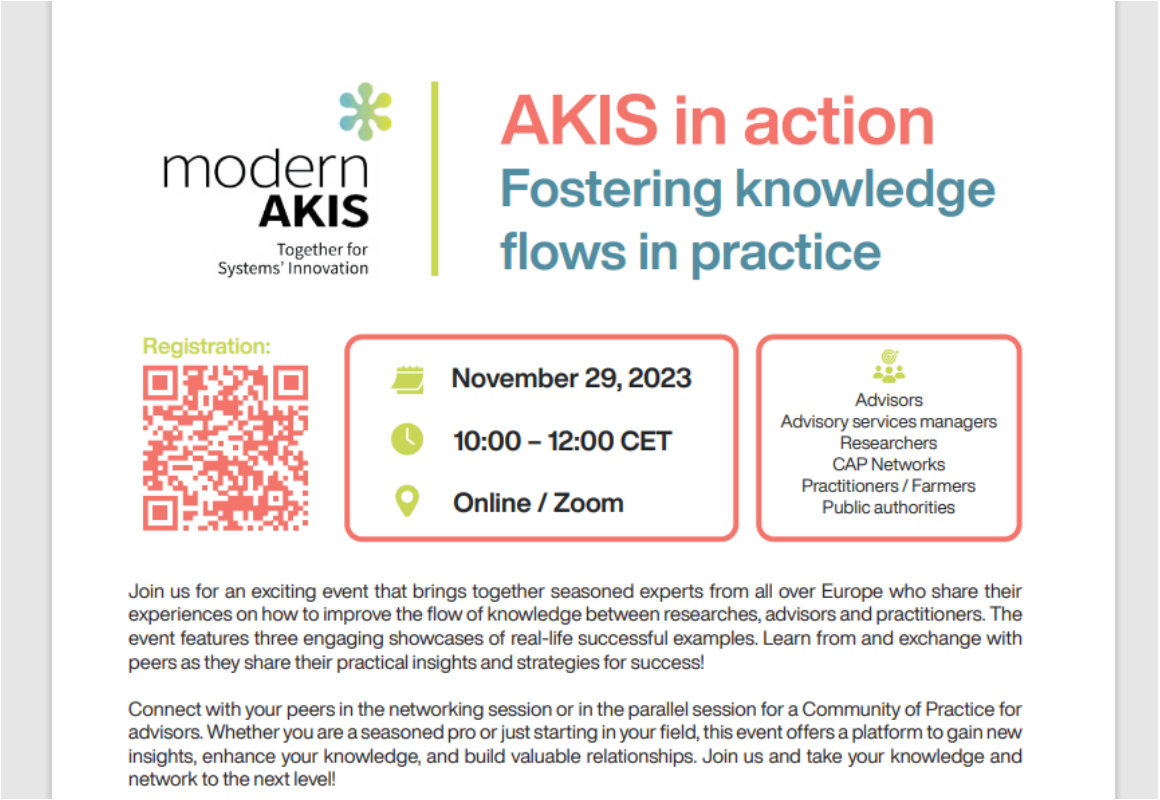

Figure 44: Header for networking events invitation flyer

Invitations always contain a short description of the event series, namely:

The "AKIS in action" networking event series aims to interconnect AKIS actors across Europe. It provides practice-ready examples of how AKIS measures, knowledge, and innovations are used to create value for different actors. Share experiences with experts and get inspired on how to improve the flow of knowledge between researchers, advisors, and practitioners.

The event features engaging showcases of real-life successful examples. Learn from and exchange with peers as they share their practical insights and strategies for success! Connect in the networking session or the parallel session for a Community of Practice for advisors. Whether you are a seasoned pro or just starting in your field, this event offers a platform to gain new insights, enhance your knowledge, and build valuable relationships. Join us and take your knowledge and network to the next level!

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Of course, each event also has an agenda which is featured below the general event description:



Figure 45: Example agenda for a network event

Last but not least invitations include a short bio of the speaker(s) with a photograph and a short paragraph outlinining what the talk will be about. This enables potentially interested participants to assess whether the title of the talk presented in the agenda and the short description aligns with their interests or expectations.



Figure 46: Speaker and talk introduction from a networking flyer

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Each event is recorded and the Q&A session is documentented. The recordings are made available on the modernAKIS YouTube channel (www.youtube.com/@heuropemodernakis) as well as via the Events page on AKISConnect.eu (Events for networking and capacity-building (akisconnect.eu).

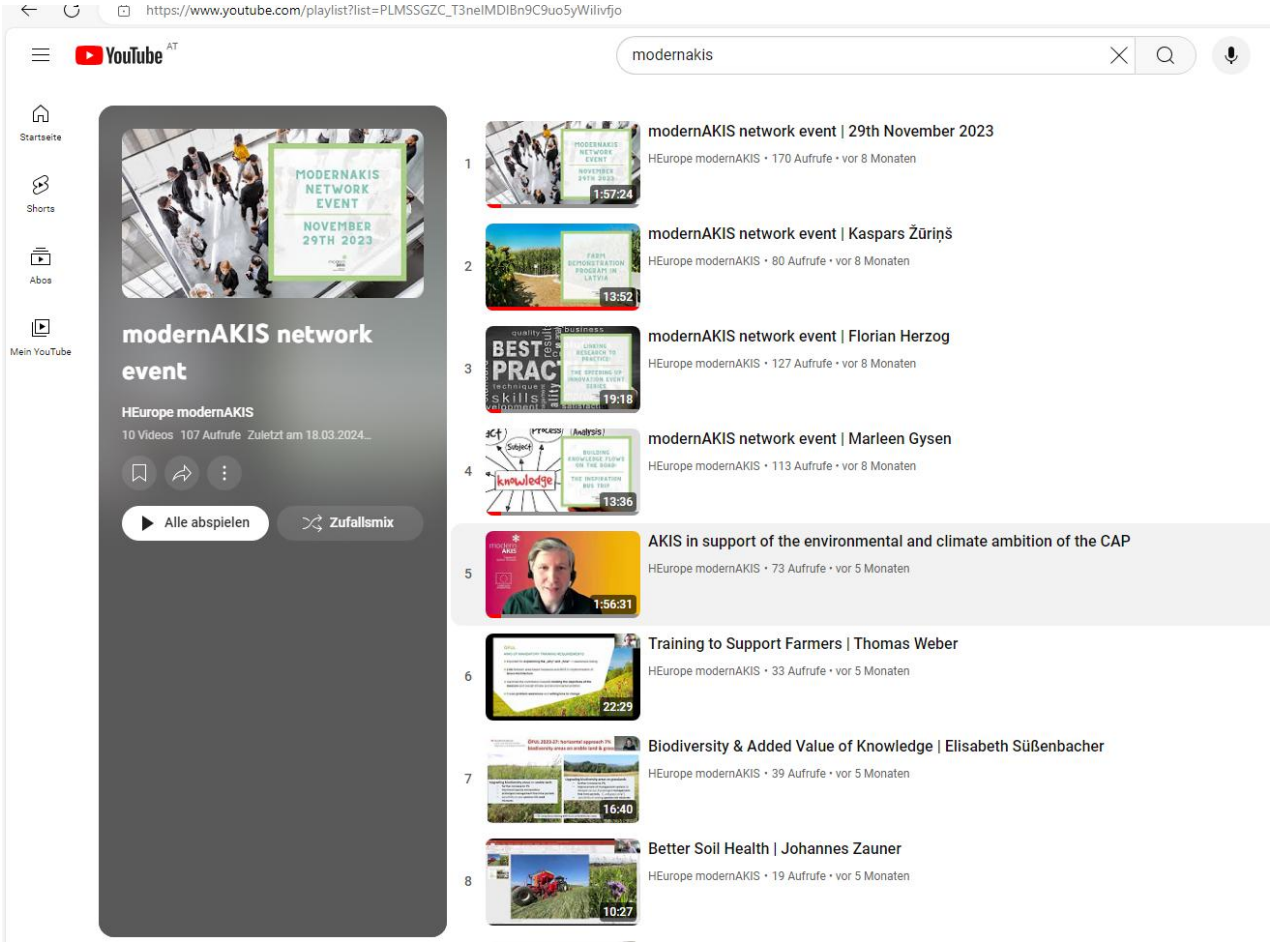

Figure 47: Networking events playlist on the modernAKIS YouTube Channel

The write-up of the Q&A session is also provided via e-mail to all participants and posted on the AKISConnect.eu platform on the respective event page.

5.1. "AKIS in action: Fostering knowledge flows"

This first networking event was a test balloon to understand if the community would be interested in joining such events, how many people could be attracted and if the proposed format was suitable for the community.

Event topic

The topic "Fostering knowledge flows" was aligned with the AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assembly, which took place earlier in the same month. The examples selected were all of instruments which have shown their value in practice.

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Presentations

a) The inspiration bus trip

One result from the H2020-project HYPErFArm, the inspiration bus trip is intended to accelerate the research and innovation work in agrivoltaics, resulting in successful farmer and citizen-oriented cost-effective agrivoltaic projects. It aims to demonstrate how key stakeholders and end-users (farmers, researchers, consultants, policy makers or supporters, technology providers) can be successfully engaged in innovative processes.

b) The Speeding Up Innovation events series

Speeding up Innovation is an event-series for AKIS (Agricultural knowledge and innovation system) -networking, jointly organized by the agricultural ministry (research department) and the chamber of agriculture (advisory branch) in Austria. The event aims to develop and accelerate the transfer of knowledge between research and practice in specific thematic areas on the basis of selected examples of research projects. Speeding up Innovation further aims to initiate a dialogue and discussion on effective knowledge transfer instruments. Another focus is on networking of representatives from national research institutions with agricultural advisory, training and education service providers.

c) Bringing new knowledge to practice: the Latvian demonstration farms

The Ministry of Agriculture in Latvia announces the procurement of agricultural and forestry demonstrations. Both public and private consultants, as well as scientific institutions, can apply. The purpose of the procurement is to ensure the installation and implementation of a demonstration that practically demonstrates or demonstrably demonstrates the advantages of a new agro-technical technique, technological process, crop or animal breed, which have been tested in research and reflect at least two variants - the existing standard technique and the new technique. Both consultants and owners are actively involved in the process. That is great opportunity for advisors to gain knowledge and to share knowledge with farmers, other advisors and researchers. The implications are Knowledge exchange and reducing fragmentation by including all AKIS actors in the initiative.

With regard to financing: the first example was EU-funded through a research project, the second one was self-funded by the hosting organizations and the third one was a funding measure within the CAP.

Each individual presentation as well as the event as whole have been uploaded www.youtube.com/@heuropemodernakis.

Attendance

A total of 532 persons registered within 10 days, which led to the decision to close the registration as we were not sure how to handle such a large number of participants if they would indeed attend. There were a total number of 225 registrations from 33 countries, while 294 registrations came from Greece. In total a number of 325 people attended the meeting, which means an attendance rate of 61%.

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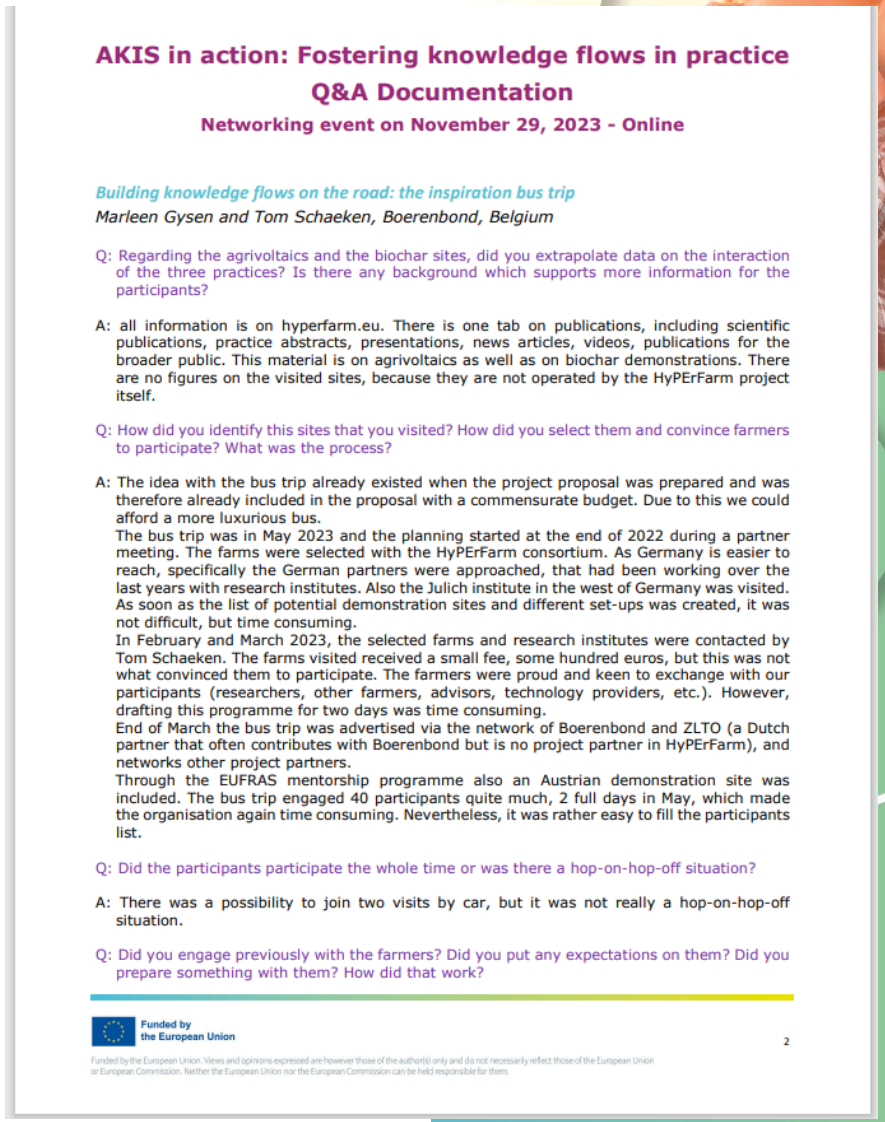
Discussion

After the presentations there was a lively discussion for 45 minutes with several questions being put forward by the audience. The questions focused both on the topical but also on the methodical part of the presentations.



AKIS in action: Fostering knowledge flows in practice
Q&A Documentation
Networking event on November 29, 2023 - Online

Building knowledge flows on the road: the inspiration bus trip
Marleen Gysen and Tom Schaeken, Boerenbond, Belgium

Q: Regarding the agrivoltaics and the biochar sites, did you extrapolate data on the interaction of the three practices? Is there any background which supports more information for the participants?

A: all information is on hyperfarm.eu. There is one tab on publications, including scientific publications, practice abstracts, presentations, news articles, videos, publications for the broader public. This material is on agrivoltaics as well as on biochar demonstrations. There are no figures on the visited sites, because they are not operated by the HyPErFarm project itself.

Q: How did you identify this sites that you visited? How did you select them and convince farmers to participate? What was the process?

A: The idea with the bus trip already existed when the project proposal was prepared and was therefore already included in the proposal with a commensurate budget. Due to this we could afford a more luxurious bus.
The bus trip was in May 2023 and the planning started at the end of 2022 during a partner meeting. The farms were selected with the HyPErFarm consortium. As Germany is easier to reach, specifically the German partners were approached, that had been working over the last years with research institutes. Also the Julich institute in the west of Germany was visited. As soon as the list of potential demonstration sites and different set-ups was created, it was not difficult, but time consuming.
In February and March 2023, the selected farms and research institutes were contacted by Tom Schaeken. The farms visited received a small fee, some hundred euros, but this was not what convinced them to participate. The farmers were proud and keen to exchange with our participants (researchers, other farmers, advisors, technology providers, etc.). However, drafting this programme for two days was time consuming.
End of March the bus trip was advertised via the network of Boerenbond and ZLTO (a Dutch partner that often contributes with Boerenbond but is no project partner in HyPErFarm), and networks other project partners.
Through the EUFRAS mentorship programme also an Austrian demonstration site was included. The bus trip engaged 40 participants quite much, 2 full days in May, which made the organisation again time consuming. Nevertheless, it was rather easy to fill the participants list.

Q: Did the participants participate the whole time or was there a hop-on-hop-off situation?

A: There was a possibility to join two visits by car, but it was not really a hop-on-hop-off situation.

Q: Did you engage previously with the farmers? Did you put any expectations on them? Did you prepare something with them? How did that work?

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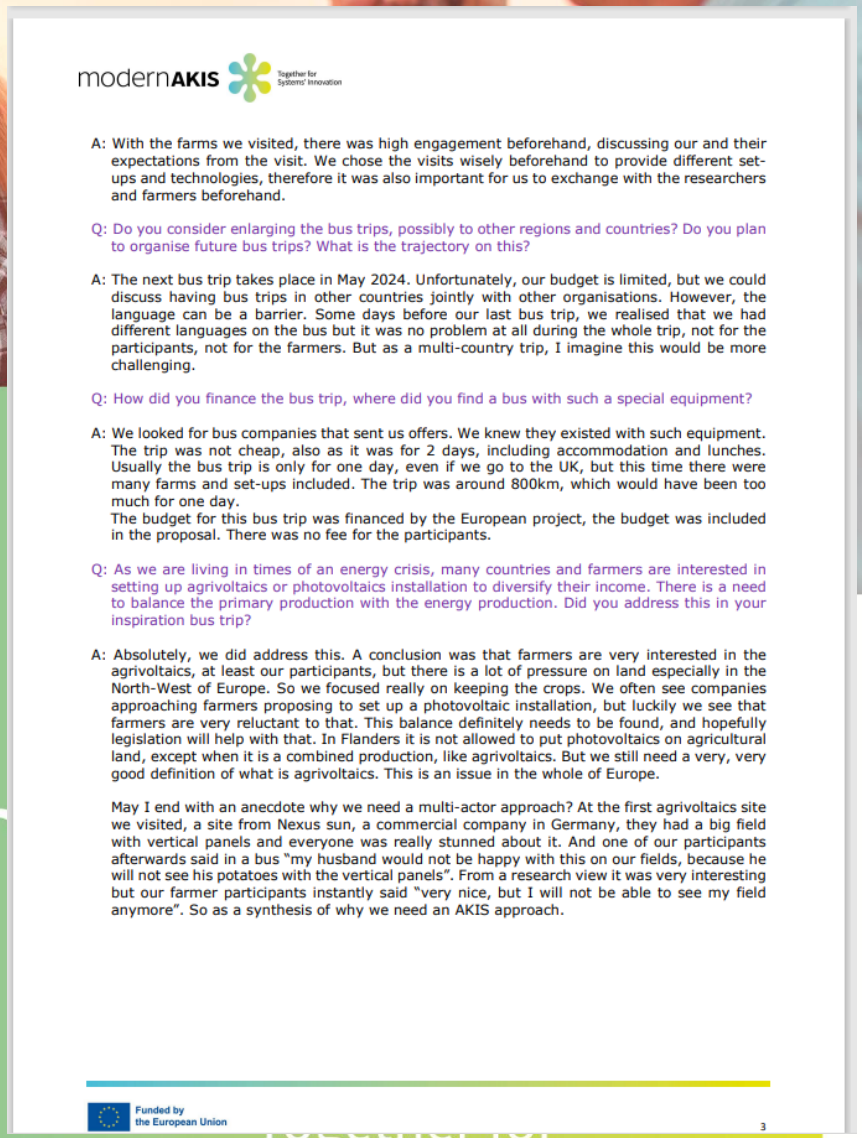

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A: With the farms we visited, there was high engagement beforehand, discussing our and their expectations from the visit. We chose the visits wisely beforehand to provide different set-ups and technologies, therefore it was also important for us to exchange with the researchers and farmers beforehand.

Q: Do you consider enlarging the bus trips, possibly to other regions and countries? Do you plan to organise future bus trips? What is the trajectory on this?

A: The next bus trip takes place in May 2024. Unfortunately, our budget is limited, but we could discuss having bus trips in other countries jointly with other organisations. However, the language can be a barrier. Some days before our last bus trip, we realised that we had different languages on the bus but it was no problem at all during the whole trip, not for the participants, not for the farmers. But as a multi-country trip, I imagine this would be more challenging.

Q: How did you finance the bus trip, where did you find a bus with such a special equipment?

A: We looked for bus companies that sent us offers. We knew they existed with such equipment. The trip was not cheap, also as it was for 2 days, including accommodation and lunches. Usually the bus trip is only for one day, even if we go to the UK, but this time there were many farms and set-ups included. The trip was around 800km, which would have been too much for one day.
The budget for this bus trip was financed by the European project, the budget was included in the proposal. There was no fee for the participants.

Q: As we are living in times of an energy crisis, many countries and farmers are interested in setting up agrivoltaics or photovoltaics installation to diversify their income. There is a need to balance the primary production with the energy production. Did you address this in your inspiration bus trip?

A: Absolutely, we did address this. A conclusion was that farmers are very interested in the agrivoltaics, at least our participants, but there is a lot of pressure on land especially in the North-West of Europe. So we focused really on keeping the crops. We often see companies approaching farmers proposing to set up a photovoltaic installation, but luckily we see that farmers are very reluctant to that. This balance definitely needs to be found, and hopefully legislation will help with that. In Flanders it is not allowed to put photovoltaics on agricultural land, except when it is a combined production, like agrivoltaics. But we still need a very, very good definition of what is agrivoltaics. This is an issue in the whole of Europe.

May I end with an anecdote why we need a multi-actor approach? At the first agrivoltaics site we visited, a site from Nexus sun, a commercial company in Germany, they had a big field with vertical panels and everyone was really stunned about it. And one of our participants afterwards said in a bus "my husband would not be happy with this on our fields, because he will not see his potatoes with the vertical panels". From a research view it was very interesting but our farmer participants instantly said "very nice, but I will not be able to see my field anymore". So as a synthesis of why we need an AKIS approach.

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Systems' Innovation

Linking research to practice: the Speeding Up Innovation event series

Florian Herzog, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Austria

Q: Before the Speeding Up Innovation events series started, did you already carry out similar events in Austria or have you taken a completely new approach with this kind of event?

A: We were already trying bits and pieces and were always trying to get more research partners involved, as we have a continuous training plan for advisors. We tried to also get slots at research conferences to communicate needs of advisors there, but we have not had any event series like "Speeding Up Innovation". It was a completely new approach, that we saw necessary also with the discussions on European level on AKIS and innovation. We were actively involved in this discussion but we needed kind of a bracket to bring this theoretical discussion on the ground and to our teachers and advisors.

Q: You said in your conclusions that you have now as a learning to work with those who want and that take ownership. What does ownership mean in this context? What is the level of commitment that you expect from the participants, also possibly in the follow up?

A: The kick-off event of "Speeding Up Innovation" was in 2021 were we introduced general AKIS concepts. There, we also asked the target group on where they see the biggest need to accelerate this transfer between research and practice. From this input, we had a list of several topics. It was important to choose the focus topics, which over the years, became more and more specific (i.e. the first events were on livestock and plant production, whereas this year [2023] this was more detailed and concretised e.g. climate change – challenges for plant production). The challenge then was to find people who organise this with us and our unit as the service station to organise the event.
We contribute the knowledge on AKIS and knowledge transfer, but all the technical expertise has to come from experts. In the beginning we observed hesitance as participants were usually confronted by topical workshops instead of different methodologies.
With ownership, I meant that we therefore work with people who are interested and we are now a good team. The first events were very successful and now interest is growing and we receive requests from different sectors as focus topic. The subject-matter experts are co-organisers and support with organising the event through topics. This is also in cooperation with the research department of the agricultural ministry that provide results from funded research projects. The cooperation is very good and we work on the goal to provide an event with relevant topics for the target group and also trainings on their daily work in advisory services.

Q: The technical topics addressed by "Speeding Up Innovation" being also possible Communities of Practice (CoP) – How big, flexible, dynamic should this CoP be, what is the optimum size, how should they be governed. Do you have any experience you can share?

A: I am happy to share all the experiences in the course of the next 6 years of the modernAKIS project. We are getting now a good overview in Europe on what groups are there. When we started with this series the main goal was to link and connect the actors so they could network with each other. Now we realise that it is more important to have a follow-up and look at the results. Results need to be further discussed and ideally also implemented. So now we are working on a concept for the next year, which I hope to present more of them.

As we are a project partner in the modernAKIS project, we need to build a CoP on national level that focuses on the AKIS functions and will also be a support service for the AKIS Coordination Body in Austria. As a first step, we plan that the outputs from the "Speeding Up Innovation" series feed into this CoP. This CoP will be rather small, including 15 key AKIS actors of different organisations.

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Q: How are you engaging the stakeholders and participants? What are the activities to get this community to come to the events?

A: It is very crucial for the success of the event that we integrate all the key stakeholders in the respective thematic area in the beginning of the planning process and implementation. For example in the "Speeding Up Innovation" event on organic agriculture, we evaluated the most important actor groups we need to involve.
The organisation was shared between the ministry, our organisation, FIBL, BOKU University with an organic institute and a big organic farmer association. With them, we built a core organisational team where we always had backstopping to plan and exchange ideas on key notes and thematic workshops. We also discussed with them the list of research projects we wanted to give the floor to.
The workshops were also hosted by the different partners of the coordination team, but with the same methodologies and formats.
We also cannot pay the organisations, this is again the ownership I addressed. These organisations participate, because they see the need to bring forward their sector and AKIS in their sector.

Q: How do you finance the "Speeding Up Innovation" events? What is the cost in terms of money but also in terms of human resources needed for the preparation?

A: We are not looking too much to the financial side, because this is not a mission or task we have. It is because we think this is an added-value in the events and we and our participants want to make them happen. A total budget of around €2.000 per event comes from the national funds for the continuous training plan, where we pay room costs and honorary for speakers. The event is one day with around 70-100 participants. The whole organisation team bring in their own resources. The time effort depends on your role. For example we have a technical expert who is also the moderator in the discussions. These persons do not have too much effort. In our organisation I would say the effort is about 150 hours manpower for everything (moderator + organisation) and the other organisations contribute to it.

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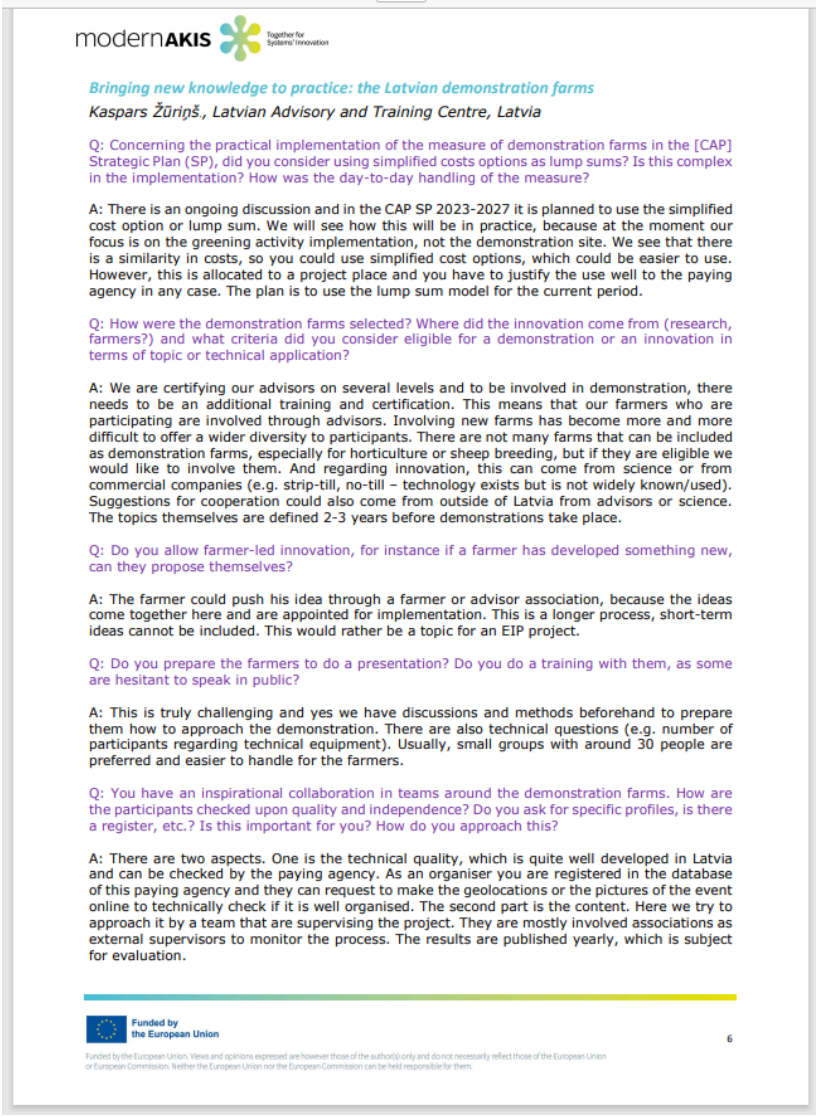

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Bringing new knowledge to practice: the Latvian demonstration farms

Kaspars Žūriņš, Latvian Advisory and Training Centre, Latvia

Q: Concerning the practical implementation of the measure of demonstration farms in the [CAP] Strategic Plan (SP), did you consider using simplified costs options as lump sums? Is this complex in the implementation? How was the day-to-day handling of the measure?

A: There is an ongoing discussion and in the CAP SP 2023-2027 it is planned to use the simplified cost option or lump sum. We will see how this will be in practice, because at the moment our focus is on the greening activity implementation, not the demonstration site. We see that there is a similarity in costs, so you could use simplified cost options, which could be easier to use. However, this is allocated to a project place and you have to justify the use well to the paying agency in any case. The plan is to use the lump sum model for the current period.

Q: How were the demonstration farms selected? Where did the innovation come from (research, farmers?) and what criteria did you consider eligible for a demonstration or an innovation in terms of topic or technical application?

A: We are certifying our advisors on several levels and to be involved in demonstration, there needs to be an additional training and certification. This means that our farmers who are participating are involved through advisors. Involving new farms has become more and more difficult to offer a wider diversity to participants. There are not many farms that can be included as demonstration farms, especially for horticulture or sheep breeding, but if they are eligible we would like to involve them. And regarding innovation, this can come from science or from commercial companies (e.g. strip-till, no-till – technology exists but is not widely known/used). Suggestions for cooperation could also come from outside of Latvia from advisors or science. The topics themselves are defined 2-3 years before demonstrations take place.

Q: Do you allow farmer-led innovation, for instance if a farmer has developed something new, can they propose themselves?

A: The farmer could push his idea through a farmer or advisor association, because the ideas come together here and are appointed for implementation. This is a longer process, short-term ideas cannot be included. This would rather be a topic for an EIP project.

Q: Do you prepare the farmers to do a presentation? Do you do a training with them, as some are hesitant to speak in public?

A: This is truly challenging and yes we have discussions and methods beforehand to prepare them how to approach the demonstration. There are also technical questions (e.g. number of participants regarding technical equipment). Usually, small groups with around 30 people are preferred and easier to handle for the farmers.

Q: You have an inspirational collaboration in teams around the demonstration farms. How are the participants checked upon quality and independence? Do you ask for specific profiles, is there a register, etc.? Is this important for you? How do you approach this?

A: There are two aspects. One is the technical quality, which is quite well developed in Latvia and can be checked by the paying agency. As an organiser you are registered in the database of this paying agency and they can request to make the geolocations or the pictures of the event online to technically check if it is well organised. The second part is the content. Here we try to approach it by a team that are supervising the project. They are mostly involved associations as external supervisors to monitor the process. The results are published yearly, which is subject for evaluation.

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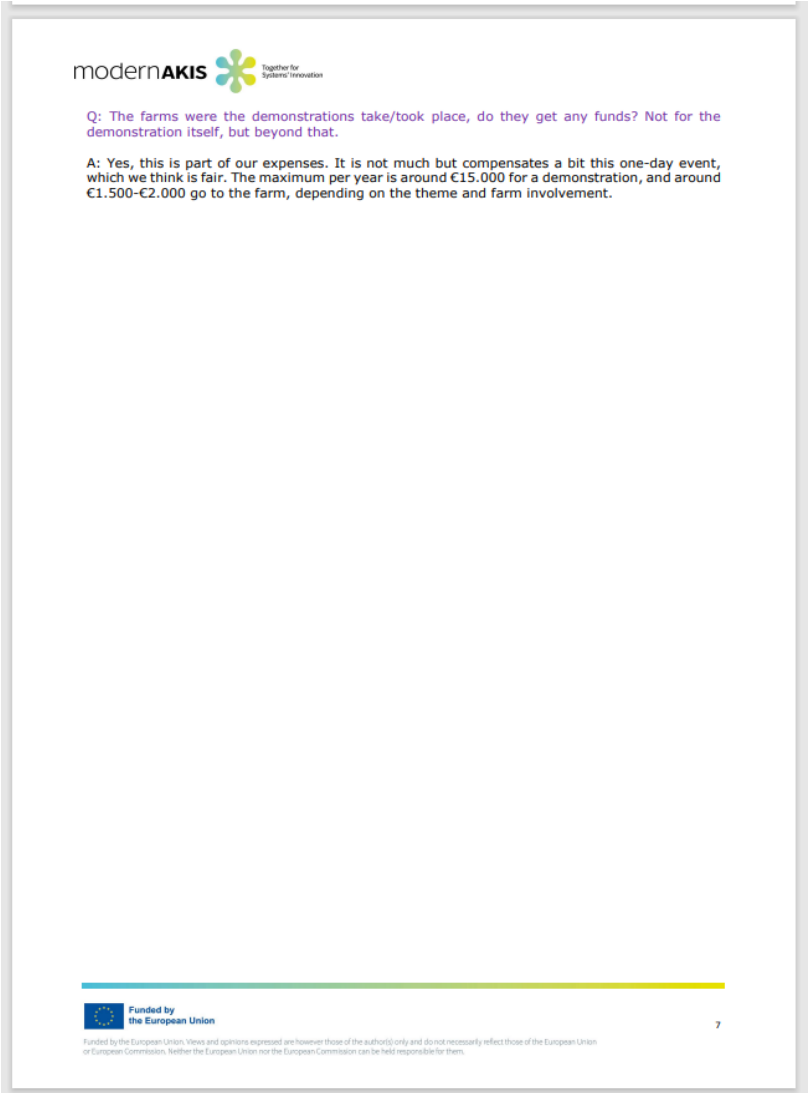

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Q: The farms were the demonstrations take/took place, do they get any funds? Not for the demonstration itself, but beyond that.

A: Yes, this is part of our expenses. It is not much but compensates a bit this one-day event, which we think is fair. The maximum per year is around €15.000 for a demonstration, and around €1.500-€2.000 go to the farm, depending on the theme and farm involvement.

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5.2. *"AKIS in action: AKIS in support of the environmental and climate ambition of the CAP"*

The second online networking event was delivered on March 4, 2024. Upon analysing the feedback from the first event, it was understood that the length and format of the event were perceived by the participants to be well suited and attractive. However participants were interested in hearing also from practitioners (e.g. farmers, farmer cooperatives etc.) for at least some of the presentations.

Aiming to incorporate the feedback received during this event we focused on two topics and invited several actors to speak to the same topic. This means that for the same topic we had one person speaking from the perspective of a Managing Authority which is designing and funding a CAP intervention on a specific topic, a trainer/advisor (respectively a representative of the training/advisory organization) who then delivers the training and/or advice as well as the farmer who is the beneficiary of the training/advice, who is then able to explain how she/he perceived the training/advice, what the benefits were and which impact this has on his/her daily work on the farm. The aim of this approach was to show the direct connection of some AKIS interventions at farm-level.

Event topic

The topic we selected was "AKIS in support of the environmental and climate ambition of the CAP", one of the priority topics from the CNA 2023. The event focused on the Irish Signpost programme and the Austrian ÖPUL trainings for biodiversity in agriculture. The main objectives of the event were to:

- Share and discuss successful practices on climate change mitigation action in farming and advisory, including training as an instrument to increase payments of agri-environment climate measures (AECM) of the CAP and supply farmers with updated knowledge (ÖPUL Trainings, Austria)
- Reduce gaseous emissions, improve water quality, enhance biodiversity, and foster sustainable farming enterprises (Signpost Programme, Ireland)
- Interview practitioners about the need for innovation and training to tackle climate change and results obtained in practice.

Presentations

The Signpost Programme

a) Guidance & leading climate action among Irish farmers The Signpost Programme, a pivotal initiative in Irish agriculture aimed at mitigating climate change through a fusion of scientific insights and industry collaboration, seeks to diminish greenhouse gas emissions, bolster biodiversity, and enhance efficiency. Spearheaded by Signpost Farmers, who exemplify financially viable and environmentally conscious practices; fostering tangible transformation.

b) Making CAP policies conducive to fostering biodiversity, sustainable agriculture, and habitat preservation Delve into the concept of "sustainable intensification" revealing young farmers' strong interest in habitat protection and their willingness to adopt environmentally friendly practices including the challenges posed by increased demand for land, fertilizers, and feed. (Farmer presentation)

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c) The ÖPUL Trainings

(1) Biodiversity & the added value of knowledge through training Biodiversity in Austrian landscapes has declined due to urbanization, intensive farming, and neglect of marginal lands. The Austrian Rural Development Program aims to counteract these trends with measures like the Agricultural Environmental Program (ÖPUL), nature conservation projects, and support for endangered breeds and rare crops. Efforts will continue focusing on conservation, education, and farmer involvement in biodiversity monitoring. (Managing authority presentation)

(2) Purpose of the mandatory trainings is to equip farmers with the necessary skills to effectively implement the management protocols specific to each measure. By incorporating the latest advancements in knowledge, drawing on applied research and expert advice, these trainings aim to maximize the contribution towards meeting the objectives of the measure. (Training & advisory organisation)

(3) The primary emphasis in cultivation lies in enhancing soil quality through increased humus content to promote yield stability. The strategic incorporation of cover crops and minimizing mechanical soil disturbance can expedite the transition to conservation agriculture, culminating in a no-till system. (Farmer presentation)

Each individual presentation as well as the event as whole have been uploaded www.youtube.com/@heuropemodernakis.

Attendance

A total of 208 persons registered from a total of 29 countries. . In total a number of 189 people attended the meeting, which means an attendance rate of 90,86%.

Documentation

Welcome and introduction to modernAKIS

Florian Herzog, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Austria

Q: How can the EU and modernAKIS ensure that technological solutions are implemented systemically to avoid creating additional problems, particularly in relation to climate change and biodiversity loss?

A: In modernAKIS, we embrace systems thinking and the systemic view, and develop solutions that fit the framework. Ecological thinking, systemic thinking and sustainability are at the heart of modernAKIS and are therefore promoted in this project.

Q: How does the EU plan to address the shifting agricultural expertise and practices northwards due to climate change, ensuring that local laws, regulations, and cultural considerations are respected to prevent the loss of human expertise?

A: Support the development of the modernAKIS network and transfer knowledge to where it is needed. Through our network, knowledge and expertise should be readily available.

Q: Is the training of AECMs funded by the relevant farmer training CAP intervention (Art. 78)?

A: Yes it is funded within the CAP. We have set up a funding system which is provider funding. So it's not the farmers who get the funding when they go on the courses, it's the training providers.

Q: What is the criteria that providers have to meet in order to be able to offer advice?

A: Depending on the distinction between training and advice. Mandatory knowledge sharing is training. Advice is provided by the Austrian Chamber. ÖPUL training has to be justified and currently 15 providers are available. There is more than one provider for each measure.

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Training to help farmers in AECM implementation with updated knowledge

Thomas Weber, Austrian Chamber of Agriculture, Austria

Q: As you have been using this approach for a long time under the CAP (RD), have you evaluated the effectiveness of this specific approach? By what quantitative/qualitative indicators?

A: There have indeed been several evaluations of the AE programme in AT (e.g. farmland bird index, soil erosion, locusts, extensive grassland, etc.). But no - at least as far as I am aware - there has never been an exclusive assessment of the impact/effectiveness of mandatory training requirements. A good idea, which I will certainly pass on to our department. What I can say is that over the last three CAP periods the number of AECMs with training requirements has increased. Slightly, but it has increased.

Q: How independent is the advice given by the Chamber of Agriculture or Chamber of Agriculture when they are the only ones allowed to give advice and training? Training that is from the perspective of current political views, whereas farm planning is often six to maybe even ten years ahead, and certain investments even longer. Are there no independent advisory services that could at least support the Chamber of Agriculture or give farmers a choice?

A: There are 15 approved training providers in AT, and the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture (or rather, it's an institute for further education) is the only one approved for all six AECMs.

Training to help farmers in AECM implementation with updated knowledge

Elisabeth Süßenbacher, Austrian Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Regions and Water Management, Austria

Q: How are advisors in Austria trained to efficiently connect farmers with innovative solutions, allowing farmers to focus on farming rather than attending multiple training sessions, and ensuring a comprehensive understanding of available implementations that fit individual farms and farmers' needs?

A: In Austria, advisors are trained in the AE programme and its measures and requirements as part of the multiplier training at the beginning of each new CAP period. In addition, there are specialised consultants in the field of biodiversity whose services are "purchased", and of course there are also purchased services in other environmental fields (soil, water, and climate).

Q: There are very interesting projects going on in Austria to improve individual farms. What I miss is the training of the advisors themselves, so that the farmers can get on with farming. In the Netherlands, a farmer depends on a wide availability of possibilities, where a good adviser already understands which implementations are available that fit the farm and the farmer. An adviser is the link between the many solutions available and knows his customers (the farmers). So training the adviser means that the farmer does not have to be endlessly busy with numerous training sessions. How are advisors trained to connect with all farmers?

A: The adviser trainers from the Austrian Chamber of Agriculture and the Rural Institute for Advanced Training have had many meetings and discussions with the Ministry to gain knowledge of the measures. In the Chamber of Agriculture, we have a quality management system, the ISO certified quality management system implemented and we have the mandatory recommendation requirements that our advisors have at least 30 hours of training, continuous training every year and at product level, like e.g. biodiversity advice.

Insights into the Signpost programme - Reduction of gaseous emissions, improving water quality, enhancing biodiversity

Tom O'Dwyer, Head of Signpost programme, Ireland

Q: Do you have specific environmental training or AgNav solutions for participants in the short food supply chain?

A: AgNav generates a greenhouse gas emissions figure to the farm gate. So it's the emissions associated with the production of your product up to the point where it leaves the farm.

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5.3. "AKIS in action: Improving farmers' position in the value chain"

Because AKIS is known in the context of the CAP and here mostly in relation to CAP interventions, the aim of this event was twofold:

a) to show an example which uses the AKIS concept and works within the AKIS to achieve commercial success
b) to show an AKIS related example which is concerned with improving the farmer income from grassland milk.

The selected topic "Improving farmers' position in the value chain" was one of the priorities defined by the community through the CNA 2023. In addition, in the previous two networking events, we observed that the networking activities were cut short due to the large number of participants as well as the many questions which were put forwards by the attendees after the presentations. Thus during this event we experimented with a format with only a presentation, with a subsequent Q&A session and then with the opportunity to have some networking in break-out rooms with different focal points.

Event topic and presentation

The event topic selected was the example from ProWeideland (Germany), a commercial label for milk producing farmers, which was developed using the AKIS system as well as the multi-actor approach.

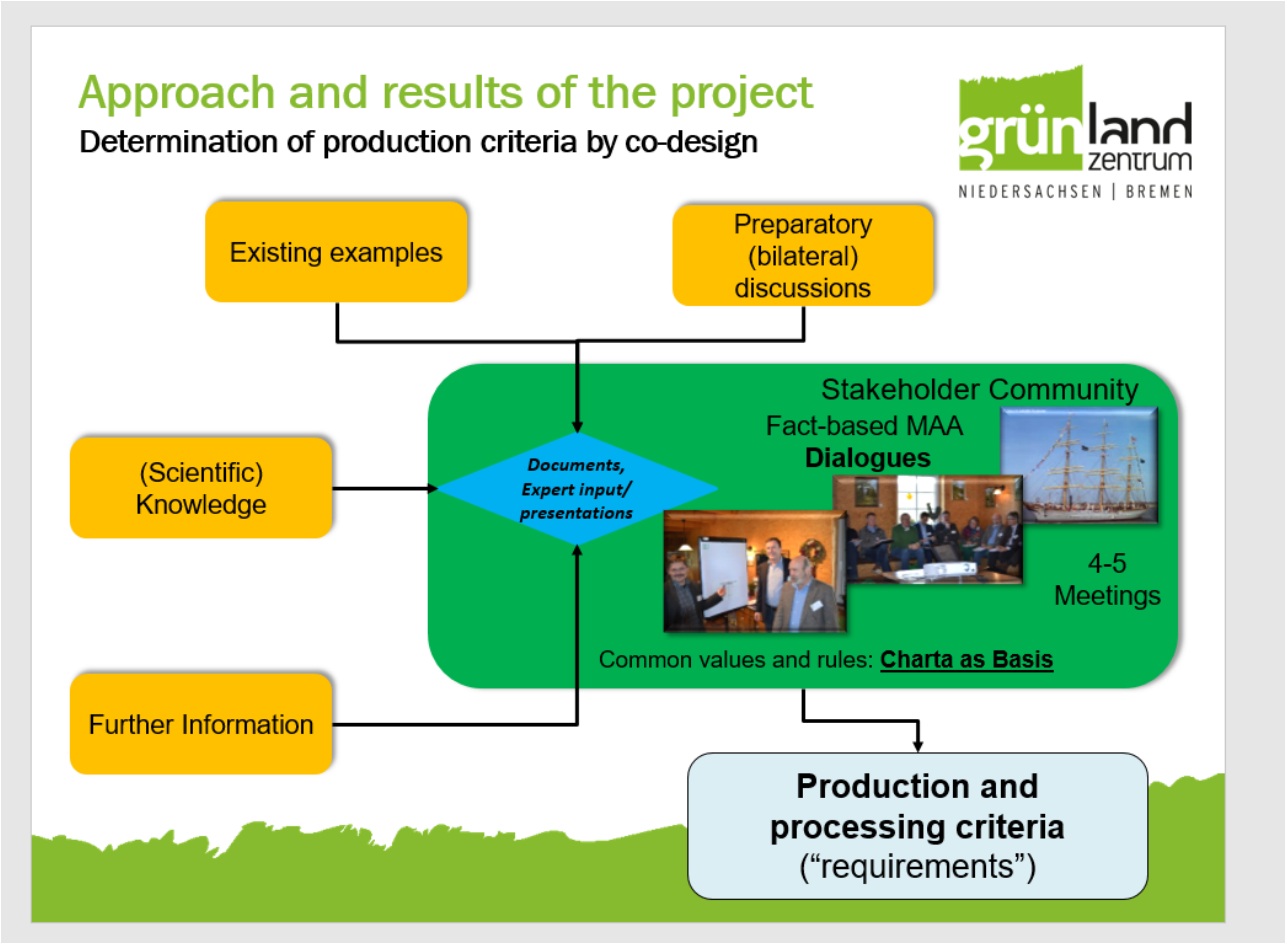

Figure 48: AKIS/Systemic view used for the production of requirements for labels

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Funded by the Ministry of Agriculture in Lower Saxony (Germany) a project has been conducted in the period between 2014-2020, to found a label for meadow-based products. In the absence of criteria for the production of meadow-based products a stakeholder panel has been set-up which served as co-design platform for defining production criteria. The label was introduced into the (retail-) market in 2017 and is now market leader for pasture products in Germany. It ensures that surcharges (premia) are paid to those farmers who produce pasture products according to the criteria defined by ProWeideland. Currently about 2000 farmers are contracted under ProWeideland.

The presentation of the ProWeideland approach was delivered by Dr. Arno Krause.

Attendance

A total of 275 persons registered for the online event, of whom about 179 attended, resulting in an attendance rate of 65.1%. Registrations came from 32 countries, including all Member States of the European Union.

Documentaton

Q: Does your multi-stakeholder community include also consumer representatives? We are creating a network, a regional coordination body for AKIS and we are thinking of involving also the consumers because it's the voice of the market.

Dr. Arno Krause: They are on board without signing the Charta. One way is to involve organizations that represent society, but we involve consumers on two levels.

One level is the University Göttingen, with the Department of Marketing. Because we wanted to know what consumers expect from meadow milk. University Göttingen, as a partner executed all the polls that we needed like the consumer's appreciation for grazing or what is important in terms of criteria for example. For example, GMO-free forage is not a scientific criterion, because if you feed GMO forage or not, does not make any difference in the milk, but the consumers just want it. I would explain this as the objectivity of subjectivity. So, the consumers just wanted GMO-free milk in Germany. The University of Göttingen did all these polls to understand what society wants.

The Verbraucherzentrale (the consumer advice center) made sure that the consumer expectations were integrated. We connected our program closely to the consumers and I think it's very important to do that. However, you have to differentiate between consumers and society. We call it the consumer citizen gap. There is asynchronous behaviour to what people tell you in the polls and what they buy at the end of the day. This should be kept in mind. Those who are asked in the afternoon if they want to preserve the planet by buying meadow milk will say: "Yes, of course. I will tonight buy a lot of meadow milk and I will pay twice the price!" However, in the evening when people buy the products, the behaviour is different.

Q: Regarding the percentage of the reduction in grazing, is it due to fewer farms dealing with animal production or to the smaller number of animals per farm?

Dr. Arno Krause: The reduction in number of farms. If you want, I can send you the publications. We did some recent publications also in grazing for agroecology. Some of the publications will be presented during the next conference European Grazing Federation. If you contact me, I will find out the correct publication for you.

Q: Can winter milk also be meadow milk, i.e. can you make forage / silage on non-meadow?

Dr. Arno Krause:. We understand grazing as a system. And we do not focus on the product. So if somebody applies grazing, he commits himself or herself to a production style. And this is the main approach for us. It is the justification for us to say, even in winter when the cows have to be in the stable. We can still market this as meadow milk because what counts is not the moment when the milk is produced from the forage. It´s the production type that we want to focus on.

If we would change this approach, we would have to change our controls as well. We would need to control what the cows eat in the moment they produce milk. Additionally, we would differentiate between the different Member States.

In some Member States, the season for grazing is 80 days, for example in the north of Sweden. In Ireland, it can be 300 days. If a farmer commits himself or herself to participate in the program, he or she can market the milk for the entire

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year as meadow milk. We do not focus on the chemical composition. There are differences in the infrared spectroscopy and others, but these are negligible. For food, it doesn´t make a difference. For example, we analysed the difference between omega-3-acids in meadow milk and conventional milk. If you have for example 60% of food from grass without maize, thus a very high proportion of grass like for example in Ireland, you can only slightly measure the increase the omega 3 acids. To reach the level of a Salomon filet of 200 g, you have to drink 40 litres of milk. That is why we focus on the production system.

Q: Have you measured the impact of climate change in grass milk versus traditional dairy?

Dr. Arno Krause: No, we haven´t measured that. The question for us was: What are the advantages if someone applies grazing? What criteria do we have to define that we contribute to GHG sequestration? That's why we expect in our criteria, that farmers have at least 2000 sqm of permanent pasture at their disposal for the meadow milk program. We have publications that show that permanent pasture can sequestrate up to 2 tons of CO2 per hectare per year. Depending on the amount of fertilizer, depending on the access to water, and also on the soil.

For example, mineral soil can sequestrate more CO2 than carbon-rich soil. And the other point: we know that the content of grass in milk production defines the circularity of methane between the atmosphere and the ground. This is a closed circle of GHG, quite different from other circles of GHG. Methane has a life endurance of approximately 12.4 years. If you feed grass then methane comes down from the atmosphere, goes into the grass, is eaten by the cows, goes back to the atmosphere, and after 12 years goes again. The amount of grass and the amount of non-digestible forage that you put into the cow determines the carbon footprint. There a scientific publications on that. That´s why we said: "Use as much as possible grass for the forage, this minimizes methane, use permanent pasture."

Q: Maybe a good message to try and promote this idea of a carbon-neutral system in grazing. This is not the case with cattle in feedlots and or indoors all the time. We see economists and other people publishing that people should eat less meat and keep less cattle… There is a misunderstanding about how the methane circle works. As farmers and advisors, it is our job, to help consumers at least to understand, that it is not simplistic.

Dr. Arno Krause: That´s exactly the case. The problem is that this entire topic is quite complicated. It´s much easier to send messages such as "Don´t kill animals for food." It´s complicated to tell this but we are in the process of communicating. I am quite happy to work on the meadow milk program because it is even more complex for dairy companies or other providers to explain their sustainability programs. We have a dairy company DMK in Germany. They have a sustainability program, it is called Milkmaster. All the different aspects are included in the program. We just tell the story "Keep the cows in the pasture" - easy. Because this is highly perceived as positive and we do not care, the majority of the people have no clue about the entire topic behind that. It is easy to tell this story. Knowing this and knowing the complexity of the whole topic, we know that we are on the right track. It's an easy entry point for starting communication with the society.

Q: Do you have any financial calculations to justify the higher price for pasture milk? Is there a floor price for milk, you say beneath that, it is just not fair in terms of sustainability and profit. Do you recommend it to buyers? Do you do something in that direction?

Dr. Arno Krause: Yes, we had economic calculations that we relied on. However, you cannot use economic calculation for grazing, for putting grazing into value. Grazing in context A is not the same as in context B. The production cost of grass milk in Ireland is 22 Cents per liter. The production cost in Germany is 35/36 Cents per liter. For some people in Germany, grazing would require 15 Cents more because the local conditions are quite difficult. If you do not have the pasture in your direct vicinity, if you don´t have the know-how and the attitude to grazing, if you don´t have the right cow for example, and if you have labour that you have to pay, then 15 Cent per liter would not be enough to provide

an adequate incentive to maintain grazing. However, another farmer in Germany has 60 cows and he wouldn´t need any cent at all. He makes a profit from grazing because he has the know-how (know-how is most important, but also the local conditions). Using models is pointless in this context. The heterogeneity between the farms is too big. If you know what retailers can get from good stories and if you would make an educated guess then 5 Cents is the right means to provide a good incentive for the farms. However it's not the money at all, it's rather more the appreciation that the farmer is doing something good. That's why we also say 2.5 Cents is very good. And no model can tell you that 5 Cents, 6 Cents, 15 Cents, or 2.5 Cents is the right incentive. That's not possible. We have to do both, on the one hand, provide money from the value-added chain, and the more money you get the better. Because milk is not highly valued. In Germany, the price for one liter of milk is about one Euro or even less. The price of a bottle of water sometimes is 1.20 Euro. That is why I think - get as much as you can from the value-added chain.

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Q: Did you potentially educate buyers or is there a floor price, below which you would say it is just not fair?

Dr. Arno Krause: Yes, of course, there is a floor price for milk. That you could calculate. But there is an authority safeguarding the competition and open conditions, the German federal cartel office. Our goal was to determine the price retailers have to pay as a premium to farmers for a liter of meadow milk. We wrote the German federal cartel office in Bonn and we visited them to explain our project. Nonetheless, they do not allow price determination for anything. In the meantime, the law changed and we have a new law in place in Germany, triggered by the European Commission stating that you can expect money for sustainability issues, but the authority didn´t care. We even went to Brussels. We went to the DGs COMP, DG ENVI, and DG AGRI. We had them all in one meeting and explained our project. So far it was not possible to determine a fixed price for meadow milk. They said, "You could and probably we could put you to court or not."- We are so small, that if we were judged by the court and received a fine, we would ruin ourselves. That´s why we said, we recommend dairy companies. They negotiate the prices with the retailers and we monitor in the community meeting what each farmer gets. We confront them with the figures and we stimulate them to increase the price for the farmers but we cannot determine the price.

Q: Is there some competition between the ProWeideland label and the organic farming label? When the ProWeideland label is expanding, does the organic farming label decrease?

Dr. Arno Krause: In the beginning, there was a big fear from organic farming organizations that we would compete with them. This fear has been alleviated. We collaborate with organic farming organizations. The cake is big enough. Our share derives from a decrease in conventional milk. We are in a competitive setting, however there is a good coexistence. As long as we are not really competing and taking away each other's shares, we are fine with it.

Q: Regarding C02 emissions, have you thought to include a carbon footprint label in your labelling?

Dr. Arno Krause: The criteria that we have a focus on all different aspects, of animal welfare, the competitive situation for the farmers, the environment, and also on GHG. As long as there are no legal obligations, we would leave it as it is. Because if we increase the criteria more and more, we will decrease the number of farmers participating in our program. The premium of 2.5 Cent per liter is not so high. With an increase of criteria without simultaneously an increase of the premium, we would lose farmers. Those farms that we lose, go to the stables and will not come back again. There is a clear vector, directed towards one side: if a farm once decides to put the cows into the stable, they never go back to the meadow system again.

We have this on our radar but we will wait till there are clear expectations and signals that the society or the retailers will pay for it.

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5.4. "AKIS in action: Modernization in agriculture"

The fourth networking event focused on a higher-policy level again. In terms of the format we kept the format of the third networking event with one presentation and Q&A session. However the breakout rooms for networking were not a full success during the third event, thus they were cancelled for this event.

Event topic and presentation

Innovation plays a key role in achieving the European Green Deal's vision and objectives. It is also a central tenant of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS), which focus on multi-actor driven innovation and strong networks aiming to produce science-based but practically usable and scalable innovations. Only by bringing new ideas into practice and helping farmers build the skills they need, we stand a chance to achieve a truly sustainable European agriculture. How policy makers may address innovation centric interventions and strengthen Europe's agriculture was the topic of this networking event.

The presentation delivered during the event focused on an evaluation conducted by the OECD on behalf of the European Commission. The section of the evaluation pertaining to innovation policies across the EU Member States in the context of the Common Agricultural Policy was described. The focus was especially around the evaluation results:

The European Union's long-term strategy for research and innovation seeks to achieve sustainable agriculture, but resources devoted to agricultural knowledge and innovation systems (AKIS) are limited compared to the total support provided to the sector. Urszula Ziebinska presented the latest findings from the OECD's "Policies for the Future of Farming and Food in the European Union" report and identifed how putting innovation at the centre of EU agricultural policy strategy has the strong potential to make enhanced productivity and environmental sustainability mutually compatible.

Attendance

A total of 252 persons registered for the online event, of whom about 140 attended, resulting in an attendance rate of 55.5%. Registrations came from 32 countries, including all Member States of the European Union. Registrations are distributed quite evenly across the different states, with Italy being the notable positive exception with 76 registrations.

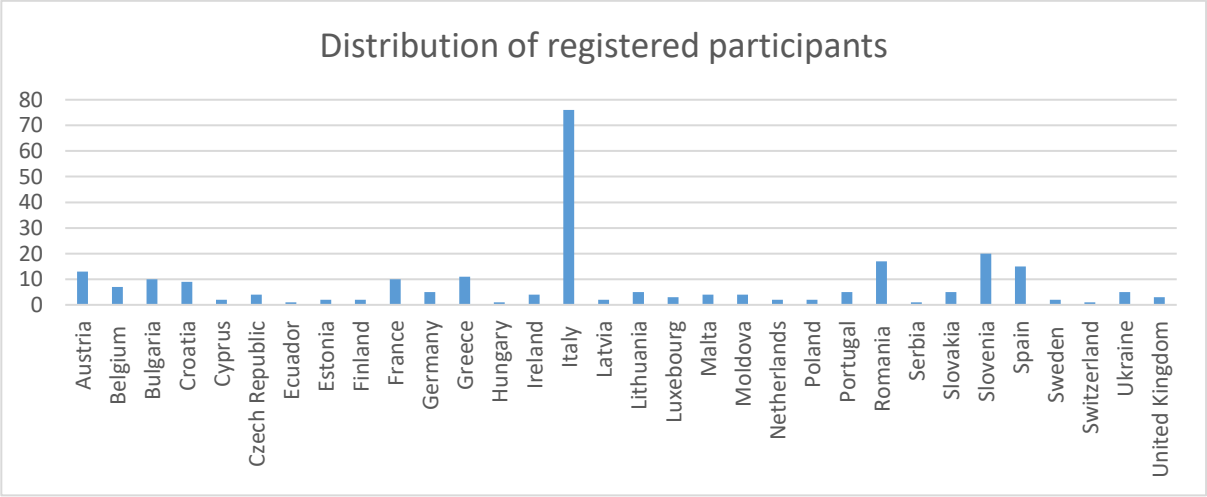

Figure 49: Distribution of registered participants per country

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Country	No. registrations	Country	No. registrations
Austria	13	Lithuania	5
Belgium	7	Luxebourg	3
Bulgaria	10	Malta	4
Croatia	9	Moldova	4
Cyprus	2	Netherlands	2
Czech Republic	4	Poland	2
Ecuador	1	Portugal	5
Estonia	2	Romania	17
Finland	2	Serbia	1
France	10	Slovakia	5
Germany	5	Slovenia	20
Greece	11	Spain	15
Hungary	1	Sweden	2
Ireland	4	Switzerland	1
Italy	76	Ukraine	5
Latvia	2	United Kingdom	3

Figure 50: Number of registered participants/country

Documentation – Q&A Session

Q: What can the EU learn from other OECD Countries? Are there any best practice examples for innovation policy instruments, you can share with us?

Urszula Ziebninska: There is a huge diversity of agricultural innovation systems instruments across all countries of the world. We didn´t have the chance to analyse all of them but there are certain similarities and certain differences. The first thing to notice is that the AKIS needs to be adapted to its setting context. Each country is different in its size, its capacity to innovate, and its mix of commodities produced. The European AKIS has – especially with Horizon Europe-good instruments to foster collaboration. The knowledge that is created in one country can be spilled over afterward to other ones. Not all countries need to do the same thing because there is already the framework, the structure of collaboration. The resources are pooled all over Europe to fight global challenges. At the same time, there is a possibility to specialize. Smaller countries can align and collaborate with other countries which have the same interest. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. Solutions need to be adapted. There are instruments in place that can help in these processes.

Q: According to your findings the farming sector has a higher mismatch in education than other sectors. Why is this the case? How is this mismatch in education measured?

Urszula Ziebninska: We didn´t analyse all sectors in detail. The analysis tried to compare the expectations for a given job and the available educational level of people exercising this job. It appears like a high share of farmers are under or overeducated. We analysed it on the global level for the OECD but every country can have different reasons and particularities behind that. But the image is clear, a little less than 70% of the European farmers have only practical experience. This leaves a space for improving education and in particular putting more stress and attention to advisory services, which can help fill in the gap and provide advice in the areas that are changing over time and that require to be up-to-date with all developments. Advisory services provide knowledge transfer from the place where it is developed to the place where it is needed.

Q: Based on your reviews and your international perspective, is the AKIS approach well-fitting the purpose of a significant sustainability transition of the agricultural systems in the EU or maybe at global level as well?

Urszula Ziebninska: AKIS is crucial for the transition to a more sustainable agriculture but it is not sufficient on its own. A sustainability transition requires a set of economic incentives as well as a favourable regulatory environment that

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creates the right incentives to set the right conditions and make innovation attractive to farmers and researchers. For instance the Netherlands has a well-developed AKIS but it puts the priority more on economic productivity and less on sustainability. By definition, AKIS is a network of actors, including farmers, advisors, and so on. All of them promote knowledge and innovation. The interconnection and the collaborative nature of AKIS can help and ensure that innovative solutions both meet farmers´ needs and serve sustainable productivity. Therefore it is important to make sure, that AKIS progressing in the right direction.

Jesus Antón: Just a few additional points on experiences from other countries, in terms of innovation initiatives in the agricultural sector that could be useful. In other countries, I think in particular the US or AUS, there is much more

emphasis on the private sector. The private sector has a very strong leadership, this is due to many reasons, including some initiatives and regulatory frameworks. This does not mean that this approach is better than the European, but some lessons that can be learned from it. In AUS they have commodity boards that are particularly focused on innovation, this is a way of interacting between private and public money to find solutions that are identified by the own sector. The priorities are led by the sector themselves. Some countries in the EU- the Netherlands- have similar approaches. Another factor is the general innovation environment that is influenced by the regulatory framework. For example, the US has a less tightly regulatory net than the EU. The EU has a stronger focus on the precautionary principle – there can be of course good reasons for it- in research and technology, and this creates uncertainties when investing in innovation.

Q: Before joining the EU Malta had a free farmer's advisory service. After joining the EU, the agency focused mainly on administrative tasks. What do you think of this development?

Jesus Antón: We found that also in other accession countries. We recently conducted an accession review of Croatia. However, there is a tendency that public advisory services are to some extent reduced or they take over other administrative tasks that are required. This is a development we have to think about. The EU framework puts a lot of emphasis on compliance and administrative aspects of it. The private sector picks up on this and fills the gap in advisory services that arise. However, the private sector and public sector may have other objectives. There is a need to strengthen the advisory services.

Q: Are there inspiring best-practice examples of advisory services within the EU?

Urszula Ziebninska: Being well developed does not necessarily mean responding to the challenge and answering the questions. The agricultural services can be very active and performing but when they are more on the economic side of the equation there is a need to bring sustainability to the equation. There is a need to create strong well-functioning advisory services but at the same time, they need to answer multiple needs, questions, and expectations.

Q: To what extent are the research and innovation indicators under the OECD framework usable to provide evidence on the AKIS and the AKIS strategies in the European Member states? How long can we use this set of indicators? We at the modernAKIS project are working on a comprehensive framework for the AKIS and the AKIS strategies and we are therefore checking what is already in also on an international level.

Urszula Ziebninska: I will answer this question by explaining on collecting and analysing policy data. There are two most meaningful complementary databases in this context, the agricultural policy monitoring and the research and development statistics database, both available on the website of the OECD. The agricultural policy monitoring database covers market and budgetary transfers going into the agricultural sector, expenditures on research and development, and agricultural education and extension services constitute only a small part of that. The research and development statistics focus on general research and development with agriculture being one of the several socioeconomic objectives. The databases try to cover all OECD member states as well as key partner countries by applying the same standardised methodology. There are some limitations on the datasets that rely on the data that is coming from the member states. Indicators like public expenditures on R&D are available for most of the countries. However, getting more detailed data and information is challenging like the involvement of the business sector and the activities taking place. When it comes to AKIS, is a very complex concept and requires monitoring and evaluation. Thus it requires a multi-dimensional approach of quantitative and qualitative information, this is a common cross-

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country challenge. I will illustrate it with an example, increasing the share of organic farming to 25% within the EU is the well-known goal of the EU. If we want to rate now the share of investment of R&D in organic farming, that´s not a simple question to answer, that kind of data comes from individual case studies, it's not systematic data collection. Similarly monitoring the uptake of innovative practices and solutions on the farm level is a challenge in data collection. Effective monitoring requires indicators that recognise the diverse aspects of AKIS, including the impact of knowledge and the adoption of innovation. Data and evidence collected cannot be separated from policy, they must be integrated in a way that benefits both, the policy monitoring and individual farmers and AKIS actors to make better decisions.

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5.5. Lessons-learned and next events

Lessons learned

After several events which have been organized in modernAKIS and after analysing the feedback from the participants, the first set of conclusions we have drawn are as follows:

- The format of the events (about 90 minutes, before noon, online) is well appreciated by the community and should be continued as such;
- There is a very large variety of topics in which the community is interested in, which cannot be all offered by modernAKIS due to a limit of resources; however at the moment we have not yet identified a good mechanism to pass these wishes on to other projects or networks who might be interested in delivering events;
- There is a keen interest in modernAKIS events, with attendance of 100-300 people for each event. There is also a high level of engagement with questions from the public. We take this as a good sign.
- Where the events fall short, for yet, is in the peer-to-peer networking. We have been searching quite intensely for solutions to offer a good networking experience in an online setting however convincing solutions have yet to emerge. The aim is to replicate the free movement of actors and the relative chaos but also the freedom which participants in a physical/face-to-face event experience in coffee breaks and free sessions, where they choose randomly or by personal selection criteria with whom to engage. Several "games" and methods have been identified also after feedback from one of our reviewers, which we will test and evaluate during the next networking events.
- The high interest of participation as well as the wide diversity of topic requests need to be balanced with available resources in the organization team as well as to be aligned with the topics of the capacity building activities in WP3 and WP4. This is a delicate balance which requires continuous adjustment.

Next events

For the second half of 2024 there are four more networking events planned:

- In September : "AKIS in action – Digital repositories supporting knowledge flows "
- In October: "AKIS in action – Empowering knowledge sharing and innovation through peer learning"
- In November: "AKIS in action – Advisors in support of the CAP climate change ambition"
- In November "AKIS in action – Women-led innovation contributing to a stronger AKIS"

For the last event we are testing out a new organisation model, a joint delivery with the Horizon Europe project FLIARA. The aim is to attract more members to the network but also to share the burden of organisational work for the events.

5.6. Additional networking activities

Beyond the AKIS Coordination Bodies General Assemblies as well as the online networking events modernAKIS pursues several additional networking activities, namely:

modernAKIS newsletter

The modernAKIS newsletter is a joint publication with ATTRACTISS, EU-FarmBook and PREMIERE as other AKIS-centring projects. The first newsletter was sent out the beginning of April 2023, the second newsletter the beginning of July 2023, and the third newsletter in March 2024. The newsletter serves to better connect the involved projects and is a way to keep network members up to date on ongoing activities and achievements. Network members need to sign up for the newsletter additionally to the network registration.

International AKIS conferences

There are two international AKIS conferences planned through the project duration, one in month 36, August 2025 and one in month 82, June 2028. These are face-to-face events with the aim of sharing the most relevant project results with a wider public. The one in month 36 will furthermore serve to obtaining feedback from participants, particularly on communication and dissemination of projects results in the respective country and getting input from key AKIS actors on specific project issues. The conference in month 82 will also serve to communicate project results. Moreover, it will be an important part of defining exploitation strategies to ensure that the project results will be taken up after the end

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of the project and guarantee a positive impact in the long-term. The international AKIS conferences are part of Task 5.3 and are included here for completeness.

Networking events with other projects

There are several AKIS-related projects and projects related to vertical agricultural fields, which are thematically relevant for modernAKIS and partly address the same stakeholders, e.g. ATTRACTISS, EU-FarmBook, PREMIERE, ClimateSmartAdvisors as well as the Horizon 2020 project i2connect.

An example of a networking event with other projects is the ATTRACTISS and modernAKIS consortium meeting. In order to foster synergies between ATTRACTISS and modernAKIS the coordinators of both projects decided to combine their consortium meetings, using the opportunity to discuss the common community platform as well as the network.

Networking events with institutions, organisations, networks and other relevant projects are part of the widening the network activities and are outlined in more detail in *D 2.13: Report on networking activities for widening the network* and the regular updates of the deliverable.

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