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Acronyms

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
cbCoP	country-based Community of Practice
ccCoP	cross-country Community of Practice
CNA	Capacity Needs Assessment
EIPs	European Innovation Partnerships
MS	Member State
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MAA	Multi-Actor Approach
OG	Operational Groups
RDP	Rural Development Program
RMA	Reflexive Monitoring in Action
SP	Strategic Plan
TAJ	Transformational AKIS Journey



2. Executive Summary

The modernization of Agricultural Knowledge and Information Systems (AKIS) is essential for improving the efficiency and implementation of agricultural practices across the European Union. This report, Deliverable 4.7, outlines the activities conducted to enhance AKIS actors' involvement, particularly through the development and implementation of cross-country Communities of Practice (ccCoPs). These activities aim to strengthen the capacities of the AKIS actors needed for a better implementation of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in their Strategic Plans (SP) by fostering knowledge exchange, innovation and multi-actor collaboration. This involves establishing interactive knowledge-sharing mechanisms through ccCoPs, enhancing the integration of advisors, researchers, trainers, knowledge transfer agents, professional associations, policymakers and other actors of change within AKIS.

To achieve these objectives, WP4 has adopted a structured, multi-level approach that focuses on capacity development through participatory learning, engaging diverse stakeholders in co-creation and collaborative decision-making and utilizing various methodologies to enhance knowledge dissemination and practical engagement.

ccCoPs play a central role in this framework, serving as international collaborative platforms that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, experiences and best practices across national borders. These communities are designed to integrate stakeholders from different agricultural and policy backgrounds, fostering a deeper understanding of CAP implementation and innovation in various contexts. By bringing together diverse actors, ccCoPs enable participants to identify common challenges, explore shared solutions and develop strategies that can be adapted and applied across different regions. They promote a culture of collective learning and decision-making, ensuring that agricultural policies and knowledge dissemination strategies are not confined to national silos but are instead enriched by international insights.

Several in-person and online events have been conducted across different ccCoPs, each addressing crucial aspects of AKIS development. While significant progress has been made in establishing functional ccCoPs, challenges remain in ensuring broad participation, overcoming digital barriers, and securing long-term funding. Future efforts will focus on strengthening cross-country collaboration and knowledge-sharing networks developing systematic follow-up to measure impact.

The work conducted under WP4 is crucial for fostering a more integrated and innovative AKIS context. By enhancing the capacities of key actors and strengthening collaboration, the project aims to create a sustainable, knowledge-driven agricultural system that aligns with CAP objectives. Continued engagement, targeted training, and adaptive policy frameworks will be essential in achieving these goals over the course of the project.

3. Introduction

3.1. Context and objectives

Work Package 4 (WP4) plays a crucial role in the development of the project, as it focuses on empowering AKIS actors by building and enhancing the capacities most needed and relevant for improved implementation of the AKIS Strategic Plans (SP) within the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The aim is to create a more connected, integrated and efficient Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System (AKIS). A central element of this approach is the incorporation of a multi-actor perspective, ensuring that diverse stakeholders collaborate effectively and contribute their expertise and insights to the process.

The tasks encompassed in WP4 are designed to support all AKIS actors involved, guiding them on the path to developing the necessary capacities that are intended to complement their roles as actors of change and as active members of the AKIS in each Member State (MS). The multi-actor perspective ensures that Coordination Bodies (CBs), researchers, advisors, policymakers and other relevant key actors together fostering co-creation and mutual learning.

To achieve these objectives, WP4 relies on a threefold vision to implement its strategy effectively:

WP4 Strategy



Figure 1 WP4 strategy

The WP4 strategy is represented through a central cycle that integrates one main circular process based on stakeholders' interactive activities supported by two concurrent processes nurturing and complementing all interactions planned.

At the core of WP4 lies its central strategy, which encompasses a significant portion of the efforts of all partners involved. This strategy is implemented through Task 4.3, along with Tasks 4.1 and 4.2, which form the foundation for developing the **Cross-Country Communities of Practice (ccCoPs)**. These communities of practice represent a dynamic platform where capacity-building efforts converge, enabling seamless integration of tasks and objectives.

Therefore, ccCoPs are the instrument through which T4.3 can support the better integration of AKIS actors and enhance their knowledge on CAP topics related to AKIS in order to contribute to the CAP Strategic Plans

(SP) of Member States. Particularly, this task is responsible for developing an innovative governance framework for collective learning and joint decision-making in designing impactful Strategic Plans. Knowledge transfer is thus the main driver for the involvement of actors, as defined in Deliverable 1.1. However, establishing a functional AKIS requires a shift in the institutionalised behaviour of the agents taking part in the Transformative AKIS Journey (TAJ). As explained in D1.1 (p.7):

"The reinforcement of the AKISs and their better functioning across EU imply a transformative change based on a shift in mind-sets towards a system thinking and collective action. This would be likely to allow shifting existing AKISs (and their component structures, institutions and actor positions) onto alternative development pathways [...] This process of strengthening the AKIS will function as a discovery journey, namely a Transformative AKIS Journey (TAJ)".

Engaging actors from existing AKIS necessitates three participatory system approaches across the EU: (1) Transformative change, (2) a Multi-Actor Approach, and (3) Reflexive Monitoring & Evaluation (M&E). Transformative change is a mind-setting, systems-thinking approach for the agricultural and rural systems innovation, allowing existing AKIS and their components to lean onto alternative development pathways (Pelling, O'Brien, & Matyas, 2015). A Multi-Actor Approach is a strategy that makes use of complementary types of knowledge while focusing on objective problems or opportunities (Support Facility for Innovation and Knowledge Exchange, 2017) linking research and practice by following a set of principles described further down in this section. Reflexive Monitoring is a process at the core of the AKIS legitimacy and integration, iteratively questioning their implementation strategy by contrasting viewpoints, deliberatively, during the reflection on the results of past actions; its importance is explained in detail in D1.1 as well.

Accompanying this central cycle, two strategic actions closely follow. The first part of this strategic actions focuses on developing the capacities and skills of the Coordination Bodies to effectively accompany them by performing a monitoring and evaluation (M&E) follow-up of their strategic plans. These evaluations will assess the functioning, strategies and objectives of the AKIS in their respective countries. This process will be implemented through a series of events starting in the first half of 2025 and continuing until the project's conclusion in 2029. The aim is to meet EU requirements for evaluation, strengthen the ability to establish and govern M&E systems, identify key indicators and benchmarks for evaluations and improve the ability of the Coordination Bodies (CBs) to tailor demands for evaluation services and effectively apply the insights and lessons learned. It also emphasizes the sharing of practices, challenges and learnings among participants to foster collaboration and mutual improvement.

The second part of the strategy actions supports the broader WP4 objectives by identifying and implementing accessible tools and technologies to accelerate the digital transformation of the AKIS measures within the Common Agricultural Policy implementation. This strategy forms the core of Task 4.5 and is closely linked with Task 1.2, creating a mutually reinforcing relationship. Planning for this process will begin in the first half of 2025 and will align with WP4 activities throughout the duration of the project.

From WP4 perspective, Capacity Development (CD) is one of the legs of the TAJs, so must be consistent with its concept, intervening at individual level with the aim to influence the organizational and system dimensions of AKIS, emphasising collaborative learning, critical reflection, bi-directional dialogue and engagement at multiple levels and with multiple types of knowledge (more on this on chapter 2.2).

Through ccCoP individual actions within T4.3, the different interaction should drive progress in both the integration of systems, processes and stakeholders, as well as the key AKIS CAP priority topics. An initial list of potential topics was drafted for D1.1, with those specifically relevant to WP4 outlined below:

- Topical issues relating to the contribution of the AKIS to the CAP objectives and SP.
- Ensuring impartial advisory services.
- Building a common vision for the local / regional AKIS.
- Implementing the AKIS plan and making it achieve its desired functionality, fostering adequate policy and administrative practices.

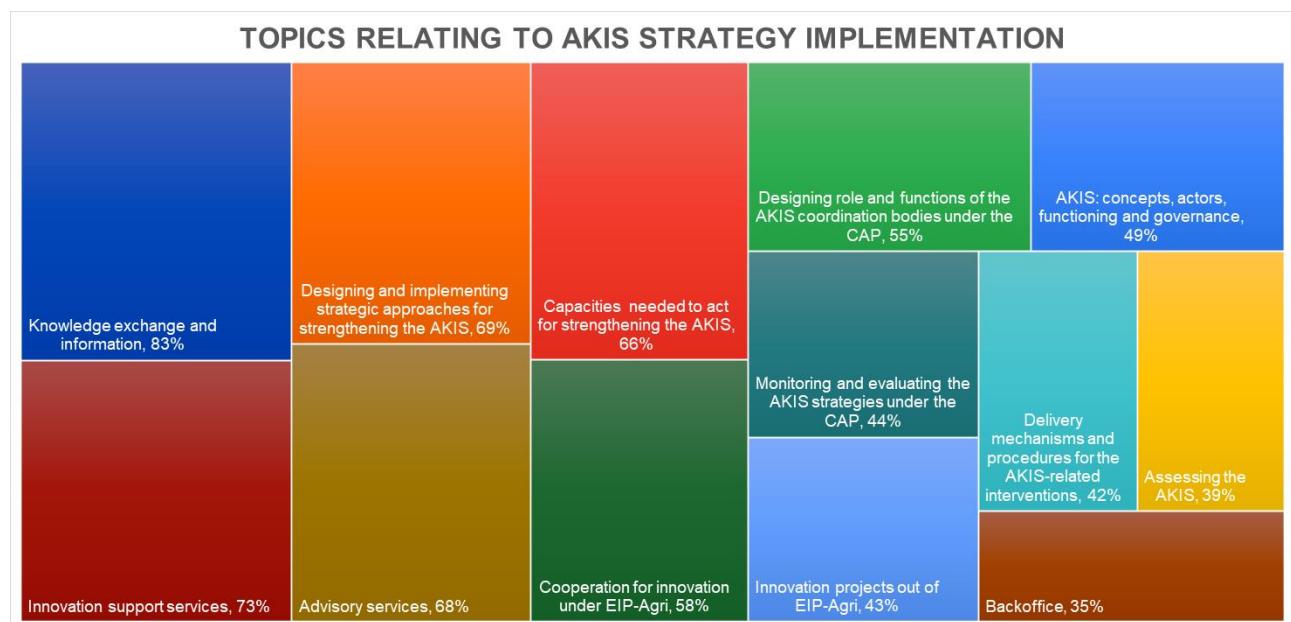


- Develop methods and tools for network development and coordination.
- Knowledge exchange driven structures in agri-food systems.
- AKIS governance design, network implementation and Monitoring & Evaluation.
- Digital advisory tools and services.

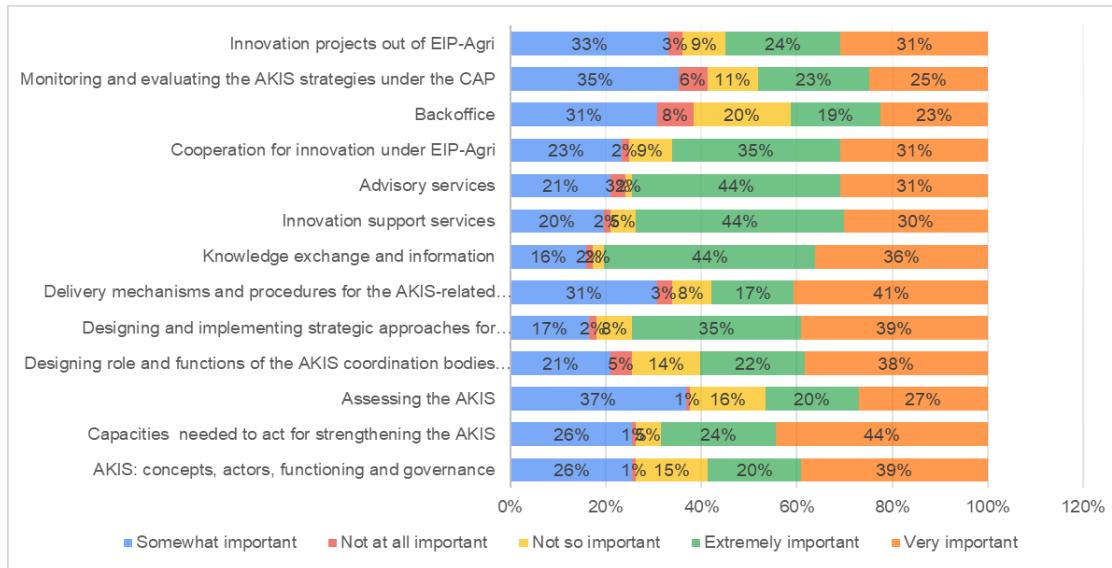
The topical priorities were later identified through the yearly Capacity Needs Assessment (CNA) of the AKIS coordination bodies and other actors registered to modernAKIS network, following a two-steps procedure: (1) fulfilment an online questionnaire; (2) validation of the results of the first phase of CNA by the AKIS coordination bodies (on-line general assembly of November 2024). The results, showed in figure 2, are available profiles and countries. Consequently, the learning agenda for 2025 onwards was configured following two categories: topics relating to AKIS strategy implementation, and interplays of AKIS strategy with cross-cutting and specific objectives. The top three of each category make the initial priorities for the ccCoP interactions, with a following row considered for the remaining of the project.

All in all, as showed in figure 2, the topics that were finally prioritized during the GA of the AKIS coordination bodies reflect a certain static trend compared to the previous year. The most important topics on which the key actors of change need to be supported by CD activities are “Knowledge exchange and information” (83%) and “Innovation support services” (73%). This reflects, very possibly, some difficulties in fully understanding the delivery, the wide range of actions and the potential target groups of these two types of CAP intervention. As well, interventions relating to the innovation support services are new to the AKIS coordination bodies and need to be more widely exploited. On this regard, the ccCops of WP4 might certainly serve policy labs where actual practices, doubts and experiences can be discussed and addressed.

Additionally, from the point of view of the contribution of the AKIS strategies to the achievement of the cross-cutting and specific objectives of the CAP, the results of the CNA2024 are more definite and they let emerge that the priority topics regard how to contribute, through the AKIS strategies, to the melioration of the position of the framers along the supply chains (93%) and how to support the modernization of the sector (88%).



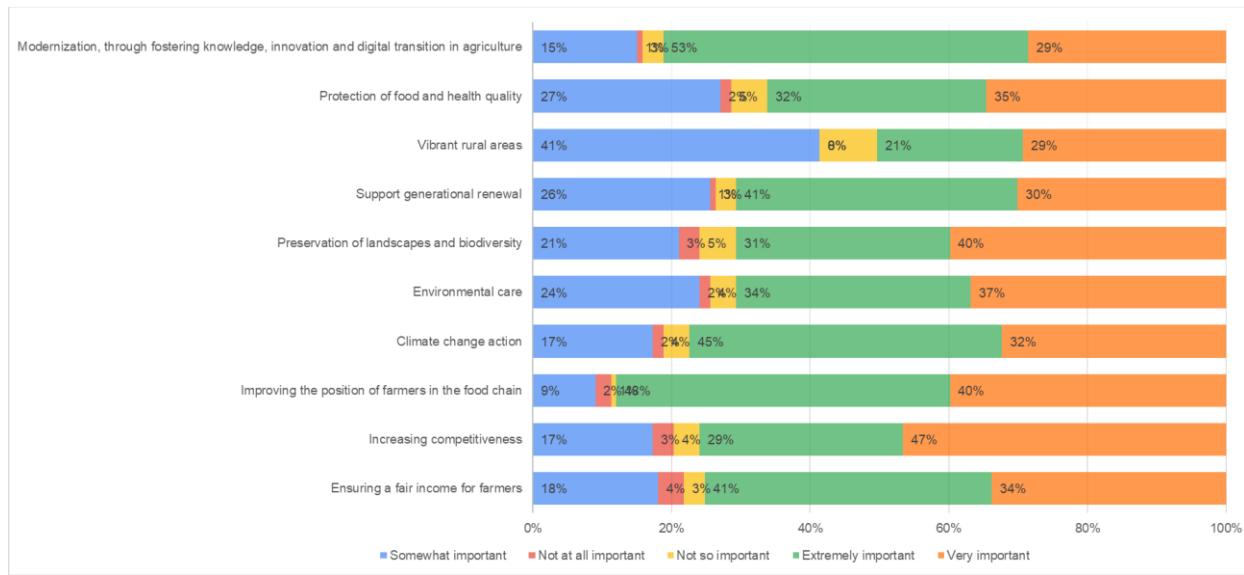
Topics relating to AKIS strategy implementation



modernAKIS | Presentation

(n. 133 answers; % total)

Interplays of AKIS strategy with CCO & SOs of the CAP



modernAKIS | Presentation

(n. 133 answers; % total)

Figure 2 First results from the Capacity Needs Assessment 2024.

3.2. Theoretical framework

This section presents the theoretical framework that supports WP4, providing a detailed analysis of key concepts such as the multi-actor approach, capacity development, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and the role of surrogate instructors. These concepts serve as fundamental pillars throughout the document, offering



a structured and coherent foundation that guides the implementation of actions and strategies in each task, especially in those related with the development of ccCoPs aligning them with the TAJs (D1.1) and the objectives of the project. By establishing a solid theoretical basis, this framework ensures consistency and rigor in the execution of WP4.

The foundations of the ccCoP interactions are in the Multi-Actor Approach (MAA), briefly introduced in the previous chapter. First triggered with agri-food project calls and later adopted by the European Commission as a broad requirement, this framework has been proven valuable in multiple disciplines and governance structures, from thematic networks to operative groups and AKIS. In short, it fosters a bottom-up approach to engage different types of knowledge from local to EU-level. Consistently, the actors involved in MAA have assimilated the mindset associated with the principles first devised by EIP-AGRI: a linear co-creation process based on close and trustworthy channels, fulfilling market needs with solutions fit for local use, that embraces tacit, practical knowledge and generates a sense of co-ownership so as to make uptake quicker and widespread (Bernárdez, Domingues, Rodriguez-Aubo, Filipowska, & Cotelo, 2022).

A state of interactive innovation is the desired outcome of the MAA strategy: a bottom-up governance that empowers actors and provides facilitators in subsequent, progressive phases, so that the conditions are in place for local innovation ecosystems to sustain co-creation cycles without external research initiative (ibid.). During the MAA implementation, two dimensions can be separated to assess, evaluate and balance the playing field: a technical dimension, with research leaders and a geographical dimension comprised of local partners and, in this case, the AKIS actors. The part responsible for creating such conditions is the Interactive Innovation and Knowledge Transfer, with FEUGA, lead for Task 4.3, in this role.

When a functional AKIS is fully implemented, the local actor assumes a central role in determining how and when to engage within the system. This process involves careful reflection on resource allocation and decision-making, with seamless access to relevant information and external facilitators. These facilitators include not only other AKIS but also networks that support transversal efforts, which promote peer-to-peer learning. Under these conditions, the system evolves into a state of Interactive Innovation. This transformation occurs once the innovation ecosystem is effectively balanced, and there is successful outreach from the local level to the EU level. Furthermore, this stage involves the development of solutions that go beyond those initially anticipated at the outset of the project, fostering dynamic, collaborative innovation processes.

More recently, Monitoring & Evaluation of the H2020 project TransformAr¹ -with support from the MIP4Adapt² and Sustainable Development Solutions Network³ working groups- has shed light on two additional conditions for Interactive Innovation: (1) a well-mapped knowledge pool, with Capacity Development for a systemic approach and adequate scenarios for the co-creation; and (2) a shared agenda so that even mini-coalitions of pioneers can develop and upkeep solutions with lower risk of other actors dropping from the common pathway.

With regards to Capacity Development (CD), this is a process directed to individuals, groups and organisations, so that they can organise, develop and enhance their systems, resources and knowledge over time (DG NEAR, 2017). Their capacity is not linked to performance but rather reflected in their collective ability to perform functions, solve problems and achieve the objectives of better integration into a solid AKIS and SP contribution.

¹ <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101036683/en>.

² <https://climate-adapt.eea.europa.eu/en/mission/the-mission/about-mip4adapt>

³ <https://www.unsdsn.org/>

Likewise, the CD itself is tied to general criteria for MAA in ModernAKIS, as described in the Figure 3 below from Deliverable 1.1.

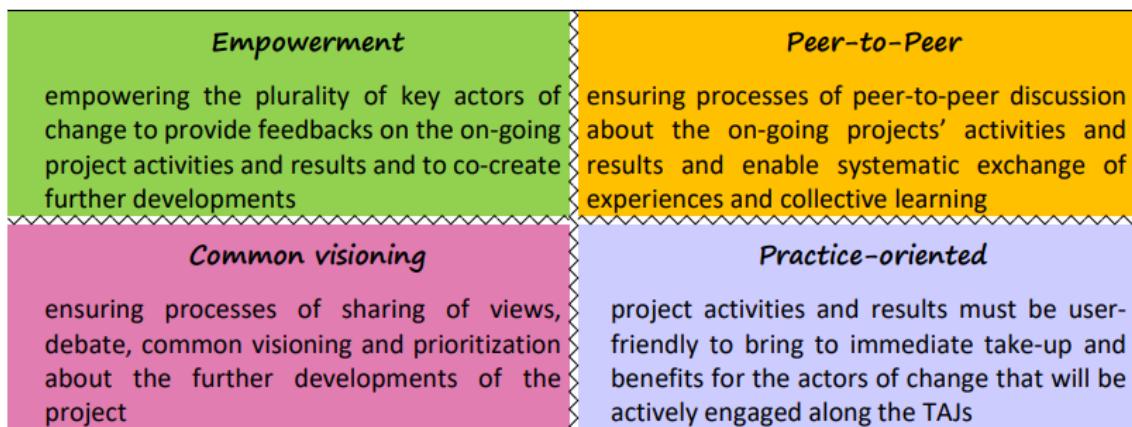


Figure 3 MAA mindset associated with Capacity Development in ModernAKIS D1.1.

It must be noted that the CD in Task 4.3 must achieve a double purpose: increased integration of actors into AKIS and CAP topics knowledge for SP design. On top of that, it has to be integrated within the ccCoP workflow for the creation of dynamic sessions detailed in Section 3 of this document; that is, adjusting to the topic selection but also to the networking and evaluation steps that follow up, and always with the perspective of the ccCoP working groups in mind.

Lastly, if there is to be an innovative governance that proves transformative, contributing to the necessary behavioural change and the systemic shift in existing AKIS, then it also has to incorporate reflexive Monitoring & Evaluation, as discussed in the first chapter. Reflexive monitoring focuses on action (van Mierlo, et al., 2010). and it is integral to the whole CD process, feeding back the learnings into the next phase of capacity enhancement and evaluation.

In combination with the ccCoPs as an instrument, the CD can materialise via **Surrogate Instructors**: this theoretical construct suggests that AKIS actors engage in specialized activities, after which they take ownership of, share, and further develop the knowledge generated. They then return to contribute to future sessions and specific projects, thereby fostering a network of active change agents, tentatively referred to as the "Board." This network operates across multiple levels, from local to EU-wide. For further details, please refer to Section 5.

3.3. ccCoPs: Functions and Target profiles

This section will explore in detail the formation, definition and composition of ccCoPs as a fundamental means of implementing capacity development actions with a multi-actor approach within an international AKIS actor group. It will also include an analysis of the current state of these groups.

ccCoPs serve as collaborative spaces for fostering cooperation, knowledge exchange and skill development among participants from all 27 Member States (MS). By promoting systematic collaboration and enhancing the connectivity and integration of AKIS actors, ccCoPs contribute to a more cohesive and efficient system.

"Communities of Practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly"

(Wenger, 2011)



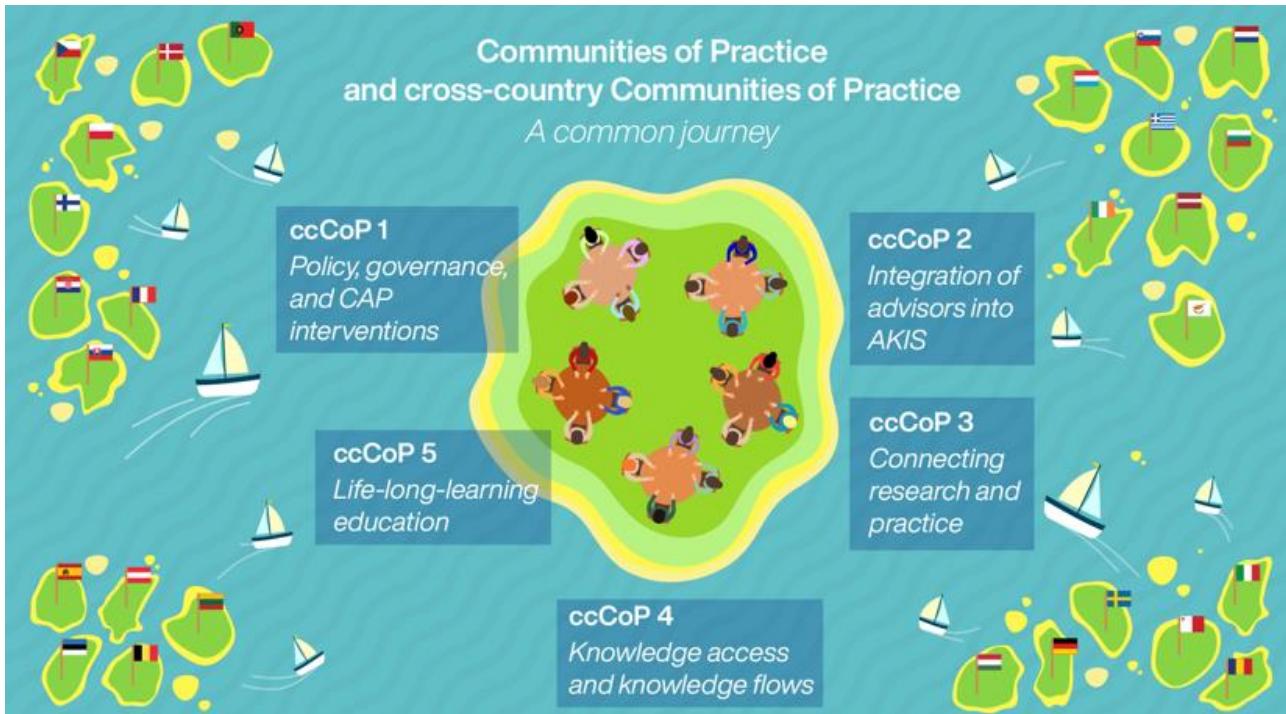


Figure 4 ccCoPs representation.

As shown in the illustration, the ccCoPs are located on the “central island”, where representatives from each of the “surrounding islands”, symbolizing the different participating countries, convene. These countries send their AKIS actors to engage in the ccCoPs. The development of these country-based Communities of Practice (cbCoPs) is essential for the growth and evolution of the ccCoPs. From each national cbCoP (D2.1, WP2), one or two members maximum (54 members in total maximum for each ccCoP) will be elected internally to represent their group in each of the ccCoPs. These representatives will participate in the annual events organized by the ccCoP they join, with a minimum of one meeting per year. Some of these meetings may be face-to-face, depending on the specific ccCoP.

Within their own thematic frameworks, different topics will be addressed, which will be defined annually through a continuous identification of stakeholder needs over the course of the project taking into account the CNA project results from WP1.

Although some target groups have been identified for each ccCoP composition, all ccCoPs are open to different types of actors, considering that those who participate will have to be involved to some extent in the thematic framework of the ccCoP they are joining.

- **ccCoP 1 - Policy, governance, and CAP interventions: AKIS Strategic Plans continuous improvement and AKIS governance modernization.**

Total number of events: 7 online, 7 in person (always together with General Assembly)

Target group: Coordination Bodies and governance actors.

- **ccCoP 2 - Integration of advisors into AKIS: integration of advisors into AKIS and in particular the integration of innovation support.**

Total number of events: 9 online, 5 in person

Target group: Advisors, farm management services, agro-advisory associations, cooperatives, ISS providers etc.



- **ccCoP3 - Connecting research and practice: informing research on needs from practice and finding ways to reward scientific for results usable in practice.**

Total number of events: 7 online

Target group: Universities and research centres, Academia, Vocational education, Training, etc.

- **ccCoP4 - Knowledge access and knowledge flows: improving knowledge flows by making information and knowledge more readily available and accessible.**

Total number of events: 7 online, 7 in person

Target group: Coordination Bodies and innovation and transfer agents. Also, farmers and researcher agent could participate.

- **ccCoP5 - Life-long-learning education: exchanging best practices on life-long-learning education and the engagement with the different stakeholders.**

Total number of events: 7 online

Target group: Innovation and transfer agents, trainers, education personnel in the agro-sector.

The process of selecting representatives from each Member State (MS) to participate in the ccCoPs began in M9 of the project, led by WP2 under T2.3. This is not a quick process, as it first requires the leaders of the cbCoPs to formalize their groups at the national level. Only then can they identify and select the most suitable profiles from among their members to participate in each ccCoP.

The due date for the complete establishment of the cbCoPs is M36 under Milestone 8 (M8: *National AKIS CoPs set up and operating*), the ccCoPs are expected to be set up and operational in same month under Milestone 9 (M9: *cross-country AKIS Communities of Practice set-up and operational*).

The formation of ccCoPs depends on the cbCoPs reaching a sufficient level of maturity and achieving the necessary quorum to carry out the selection of profiles for the ccCoPs. Other important factors include ensuring a diversity of AKIS profiles within the cbCoPs, as well as having members with experience or interest in the thematic frameworks relevant to each ccCoP.

To support this process, several coaching sessions were held for the actors responsible for managing the cbCoPs (national CoP managers). These sessions aimed to guide and assist them in establishing the groups, as well as to inform them of the necessary actions for selecting the ccCoP profiles as detailed in Deliverable D2.7 (WP2).

ccCoP group set-up status	Countries	Status at M28 (% of ccCoPs)
Full ccCoPs groups set-up	Croatia, Cyprus, Estonia, Finland, Lithuania, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands	40,7%
4 ccCoPs groups set-up	Belgium, Hungary	7,4%
3 ccCoPs groups set-up	Latvia, Luxembourg	7,4%
2 ccCoPs groups set-up	Germany	3,7%
1 ccCoP group set-up*	Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Slovakia, Slovenia	40,7%

*ccCoP1 is full set-up in all countries as it is formed by CBs already identified in D1.1.

Figure 5 ccCoP groups set-up level at M28.



As shown in Figure 5, each participating country is at a different stage in the selection of its representatives for the ccCoPs. By M28, the 40,7% of the participating countries (11 countries) have fully selected their representatives for all ccCoPs, while an equal number of countries have only established one ccCoP with its representatives selected (ccCoP1).

To address the disparity in representation across countries and ensure broad and representative participation in the ccCoP events held so far, a targeted communication campaign has been implemented for each ccCoP event. This campaign informs cbCoP managers from countries without representation about the upcoming ccCoP event, including a summary of its content, agenda, speakers and objectives. The aim is to encourage cbCoPs to nominate valuable profiles to participate in the event, even if they are not official members of the cbCoP. This approach ensures the highest possible participation from all countries, even those that have not yet finalized their representative selection.

By M36, when all representatives have been selected and the ccCoPs are fully operational, monitoring and supporting the members of each ccCoP will become more streamlined. Additionally, tracking the evolution of their skills will become more accurate and realistic. The goal is for these groups to maintain consistent membership as possible from the beginning of the ccCoP events to the end of the project.

Despite this initial challenge, the ccCoP events conducted so far have achieved broad representation from many of the countries involved in the project, as described in the following sections. A detailed description of the ccCoP events developed up to M30 can be found in Deliverable 4.10.



4. Methodological Approach for the Management and Development of ccCoPs

This section outlines the methodology developed within WP4 for managing and advancing ccCoPs, with a particular focus on the formation of working groups and the actions undertaken by WP4 and its partners. Before each event, the team refines the specific topic to be addressed and structures the session accordingly. Depending on the topic, they explore and identify the most suitable methodologies to ensure effectiveness.

These methodologies play a key role in strengthening the targeted capacities, thereby enhancing the impact of the activities conducted. Throughout the project, we will continue expanding the range of methodologies included in this deliverable, ultimately creating a dynamic “menu” from which capacity development events can select the most suitable option for its case.

From the start of WP4 in M9, efforts were directed towards collaborating with the various partners involved in organizing and managing ccCoP events. The objective was to establish a consistent thematic focus across all ccCoP events and to ensure the highest quality in both the content and methodologies applied to each event. These working teams were composed of key project partners, selected from the outset based on their expertise in topics relevant to each ccCoP.

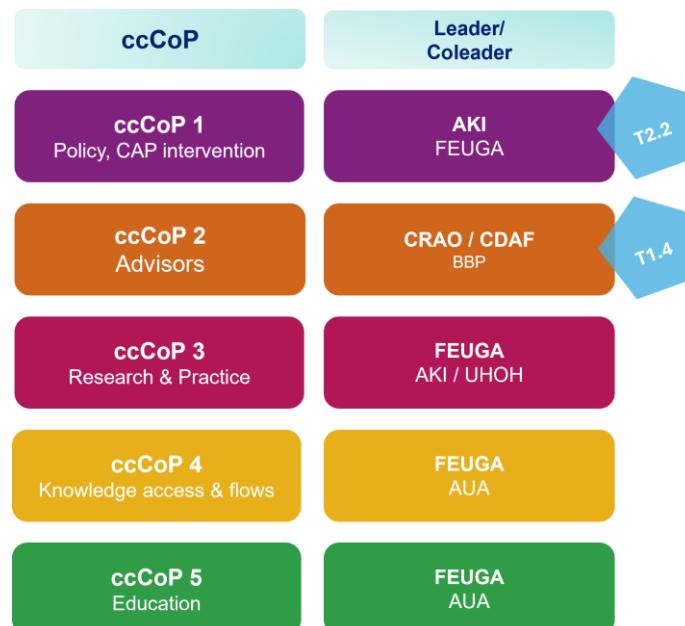


Figure 6 Illustration 4 ccCoP working team: Leader, co-leader and other WP tasks involved

- **ccCoPs Coordinator (WP4 leader):**

FEUGA is tasked with overseeing the Community of Practice (ccCoP) initiative within the project's WP4. Their responsibilities include:

- Setting up a methodology: Establishing the approach or framework for how each ccCoPs will develop the interactive part of the event.
- Overall functioning of the ccCoPs: Ensuring that the ccCoPs are operating effectively and efficiently towards their goals.
- Support for the creation of materials.
- Communications node with cbCoP (WP2) and ccCoP members.

- **ccCoP Leader:**

This partner leads the implementation of the ccCoP initiative. Their duties include:

- Expertise in the topic area: The ccCoP Leader serves as the subject matter expert within the ccCoP, providing guidance, insights, and knowledge related to the topic around which the ccCoP is centred.
- Content Management and Quality Assurance: Responsible for overseeing the content generated within the ccCoP. Leveraging their expertise, they guide and review contributions, creating a thematic framework that connects the content of ccCoP events and facilitates tracking of its evolution.
- Facilitation of knowledge sharing and collaboration: Utilizes their deep understanding of the topic to facilitate meaningful discussions, knowledge sharing, and collaboration among ccCoP members, fostering a rich and productive learning environment.

- **ccCoP Co-leader:**

- The main task of this partners is to support the leader both in the organization of the ccCoP and in the management of the content.
- Thematic support: Partners within the project who possess concrete expertise or are actively engaged in specific topics relevant to the development of a concerned ccCoP, particularly within WP1 as well as external agents could collaborate in specific cases when particular support is needed.

In summary, these roles collectively contribute to the establishment and operation of the ccCoP initiatives within the project, with each role focusing on different aspects such as coordination, leadership, support and thematic expertise contribution.

From the perspective of the events conducted, as previously mentioned, many countries are still in the process of forming and selecting actors for their ccCoP groups. This process is essential to achieving the full setup of these groups, which is targeted for Milestone 9 *“cross-country AKIS Communities of Practice set-up and operational”* planned for M36.

To guarantee effective representation at each ccCoP event, the themes and topics for the events were communicated in advance to the leaders of each cbCoP. This approach enabled them to identify and select the most suitable actors from their national groups or networks to represent their country in the corresponding ccCoP events. This preparatory step ensured alignment between the event objectives and the expertise of the representatives.

In 2023, a total of 5,3% of the ccCoP events outlined in the Grant Agreement (GA) were successfully implemented. The details of these events, including their scope and outcomes, will be discussed in the subsequent sections.

By 2024, leveraging the experience gained from previous events and improving coordination and planning processes, the percentage of ccCoP events conducted rose to 10,7% of the total planned in the GA. This increase reflects the growing familiarity of the working teams with the event requirements and the overall maturation of the organizational processes.

Cumulatively, from the initiation of WP4 (M9) to M30, 16% of the total ccCoP events stipulated in the GA have been completed. This progress highlights the gradual but steady advancement towards achieving the project's milestones demonstrating the commitment and collaboration of all involved parties.

ccCoPs 2024 events

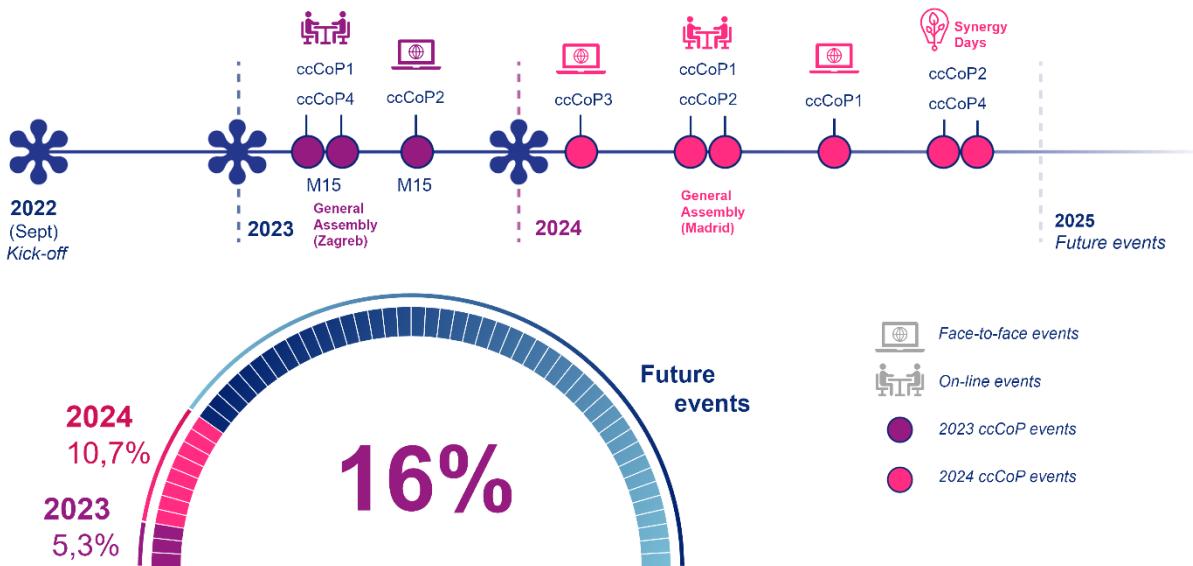


Figure 7 ccCoP Events held since WP4 launch (M9)

4.1. "Methodology Menu" for ccCoP events

The methodologies applied in each ccCoP event, whether conducted in-person or online, will be systematically integrated into this "Methodology Menu". This collection serves as a repository of tools and multi-actor approaches designed to strengthen the engagement and collaboration among AKIS actors. By fostering dynamic interaction, these methodologies aim to facilitate effective knowledge exchange, drive innovation and support the development of new capacities within AKIS networks. Through this structured resource, ccCoPs in WP4 seeks to create a comprehensive resource that empowers stakeholders and promotes the continuous evolution of collaborative practices.

The array of methodologies crafted by FEUGA to design and implement the ccCoP dynamic sessions is divided into quadrants for greater clarity. This division allows partners to adjust the sessions to the desired outcome (knowledge or mind shift) and the necessary degree of interaction between participants. Moreover, it offers the opportunity to create areas or families of methodologies that fit together and can be implemented sequentially for greater effect. Another benefit of defining areas of Capacity Development is that the working groups can evaluate methodologies already implemented, replicate them or look for alternatives.

Three of these methods represent the core of the Capacity Development so far and are therefore explained in detail further down. Other methodologies summarised below have been tested in similar contexts of the project while the rest are yet to be implemented to cover upcoming aspects of CD.

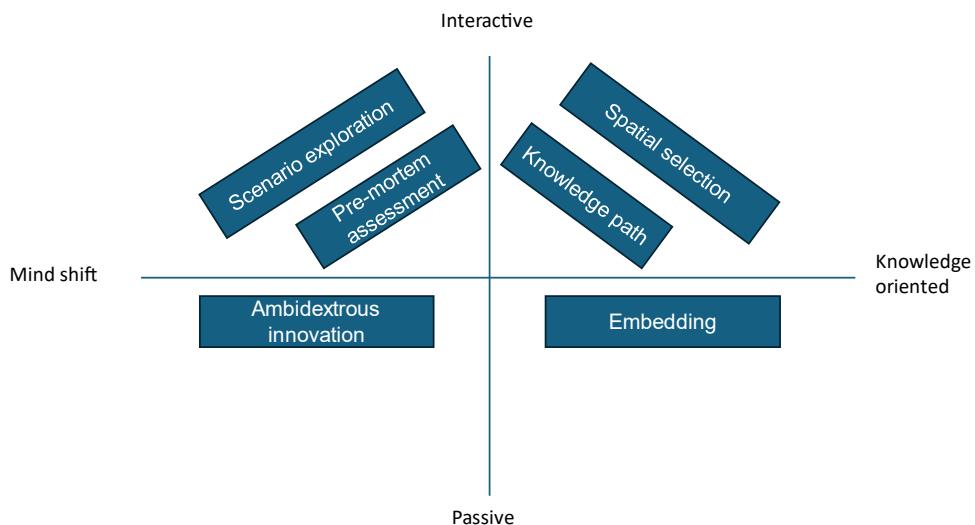


Figure 8 ModernAKIS Methodology Menu.

- **Scenario exploration.** This concept was developed by the Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission, and points to the need to confront at least two alternative projections to develop a long-term perspective that takes into consideration transformative solutions.
 - o The **Scenario Exploration System** tool is the most prominent example of this approach and is available under Creative Commons licence. Within this family, FEUGA has implemented a **Country Roleplay** game, described below; and also made plans for a **Policy Lab Cards** game, inspired by the Futures Garden of the EU Policy Lab and the UK Civil Service Policy Lab, with the goal of unlocking new avenues to contribute to the Strategic Plans by playing with speculative scenarios and random conditions assigned to mixed teams. A Policy Lab interactive discussion was already held between AKIS Coordination Bodies and advisors to introduce these actors to the relevant topics and processes of policymaking.
- **Ambidextrous innovation.** Based on the concept developed by Duwe (2022), a session in these coordinates is designed to keep participants engaged and reduce the trade-offs of the AKIS transformation; in other words, it reframes the debate between incremental and radical innovation by accounting for short-term needs while allocating enough resources for the structures supporting the necessary shift in the agricultural systems.
 - o In this group there is the option to pursue a **Strategic Reframing** approach, such as the Oxford model described by Ramírez and Wilkinson (2016), to acknowledge the perception of the participants, create transitional spaces free of siloes and institutionalised behaviour, and iteratively find a common agenda more appealing to all actors.
 - o It is proposed to practice **Crew Resource Management** so that the ccCoP participants can self-assess their own procedures, improving their capacity to work together and improvise in non-scripted interactions (McChrystal, 2015), especially when dealing with uncertainty and systemic change solutions.

- **Pre-mortem analysis.** This concept provokingly sets the mind of the attendees on a grim prospect, assessing why a solution may not be viable. By focusing on what can go wrong, this methodology goes beyond a risk assessment: it challenges the assumptions of all the actors, making them face anticipated decisions and creating teams that will be otherwise remain as siloes.
 - Under this premise, other concepts that may yield useful results to questioning the status quo are the **Reverse Innovation**, the focus on low-end breakthroughs suited for local AKIS, instead of costly, iterative solutions (Immelt, Govindarajan and Trimble, 2013); or **Creative Destruction**, a notion popularised by Joseph Schumpeter that can create a sense of urgency, and thus help taking risks, by assuming that all business models are ultimately doomed, and no actor can effectively stop innovations that harm their dominant position.
- **Spatial selection.** Made a compelling case on the importance of the spatial structures around any collaborative effort. By correctly identifying the actors in close proximity, the relations tend to be positive and productive, regardless of other elements associated with the game theory framework such as reputation. This is crucially important when combined with other methodologies that reinforce continuity and long-term transformation in the innovation ecosystem.
 - ModernAKIS has already proved the usefulness of this methodology with the **Lego Serious Play®** dynamic, which allowed the Spanish CoP to assess their perception of all the AKIS actors.

This concept is supported by the focus on practical learning via peer-to-peer programmes, as described in Deliverable 1.1. The Surrogate Instructors and AKIS Board concept for Capacity Development (more on this on Section 5) is also a reflection of this approach, which requires adequate mapping of the facilitators available from local to EU-level. Also on this line, a **Speed Dating** session can be engaging and support ccCoPs in reassessing priorities and resource availability, creating unexpected relationships.
- **Embedding.** Supporting the network and the relationships within it becomes even more critical when dealing with multiple disciplines. Creating a mutual understanding and defeating institutionalised behaviour requires the actors bond and share experiences for as long as possible. One way of realising this is by exchanging a local actor for another in an organisation with a different task or expertise, forging new links and taking new knowledge to the former role (McChrystal, 2015).
 - In Task 4.3, this takes the form of sessions in which AKIS actors agree to the role of **Liaisons** to other organisations, either momentarily or for agreed periods of time, working at the same time with their embedded peers and the organisations involved, back and forth.
 - Another option to consider is that of a **Mentoring** exchange, in which an AKIS actor has to replicate the process of solution implementation in a different organisation, thus identifying cultural differences from which both parties can learn and benefit over time.
- **Knowledge path.** This group has been fairly explored within Task 4.3. As detailed further down, it entails focusing on the process rather than the outcome. Participants would reflect on how knowledge is generated and transferred, providing a systemic perspective on the AKIS innovation structures.
 - Aside from the knowledge flow session, a **World Café** dynamic was crafted for advisors and CB. Through specific questions for each of the four rounds planned, the attendees had to advance the discussion by rotating tables presided by a moderator, hence complementing the other teams' rationale.



- Additionally, the **Sticking Barriers** methodology has been explored within ModernAKIS to present the actors with predefined barriers and challenge their perception of how solutions are created and sustained in the AKIS ecosystem. More information on this methodology at the end of the section.

4.2. *Gamification*

Gamification has emerged as a highly effective methodology for fostering engagement and collaboration in the ccCoP events held to date. By integrating game-like elements into structured activities, it transforms complex contexts and multifaceted scenarios into interactive experiences. Participants are immersed in practical exercises where they represent diverse stakeholders, enabling them to identify and appreciate the perspectives and needs of others. This dynamic approach requires players to cooperate, negotiate and reach consensus to advance in the game, making the process both engaging and productive.

One of the key strengths of gamification lies in its ability to break down barriers to communication by creating a safe and stimulating environment for open dialogue. This is particularly impactful within the framework of AKIS and the modernAKIS project as these contexts often involve actors from various backgrounds and countries, each bringing unique perspectives, priorities and insights. Gamification not only motivates these stakeholders to participate actively but also ensures that the discussions are meaningful and solution oriented. The shared goal of progressing in the game mirrors the collaborative efforts needed to address real-world scenarios, fostering a sense of mutual understanding.

The methodology has already yielded tangible results, with the development of three interactive games designed to enhance the learning and collaboration experience. These games are accessible (materials, instructions, game explanation and video-examples) to all registered users on akisconnect.eu under the new section [AKIS in Play!](#) as part of the exploitable results of the project, offering an opportunity for continued engagement and knowledge exchange beyond the events. By incorporating gamification into such initiatives, the project has successfully encouraged cross-border cooperation, enriched stakeholder interactions and provided a practical, enjoyable way to tackle complex issues collaboratively.

AKIS Country Game – modernAKIS Role Play Game

The modernAKIS Role-Play Game is a dynamic and engaging tool designed to enhance understanding of how knowledge flows and transfers among diverse actors in the AKIS. Through collaborative discussions, players assume the roles of key agricultural stakeholders, such as farmers, researchers, policymakers and advisors, within fictitious (but data-based) country settings. The game challenges participants to map the AKIS network, recognize its complexities, and work together to develop innovative proposals tailored to their country's unique needs and challenges.





Figure 9 AKIS Country Game – modernAKIS Role Play Game

[akisconnect | Connecting all EU AKIS actors](http://akisconnect.eu)

The Knowledge Path

The Knowledge Path game is an engaging and highly comprehensive tool designed to challenge participants in addressing the various stages of the knowledge transfer process. These stages include knowledge generation, knowledge transfer, knowledge implementation and knowledge evaluation. The game structures its challenges around fictional scenarios set within the AKIS context, where diverse actors must collaborate to collectively develop solutions. The objective is to meet the game's challenges in a way that ensures all AKIS participants are satisfied with the outcomes, fostering a sense of collective achievement and shared responsibility.

This tool employs role-playing to enhance its educational and experiential value. Participants are encouraged to step into roles different from their own within the AKIS context, providing them with a unique perspective on the challenges and dynamics faced by other stakeholders. This role reversal stimulates the integration of varied ideas and perspectives, fostering creativity and innovation. Furthermore, the process encourages open debate and the development of consensus, culminating in solutions that are inclusive and agreed upon by all involved.

In addition to promoting collaboration and mutual understanding, the game offers participants a deeper appreciation of how knowledge flows within the AKIS framework. It sheds light on the shared challenges that arise across different stages and emphasizes the vital role of cooperation among actors. The game serves as a dynamic and illustrative tool that mirrors real-world processes in knowledge systems, helping stakeholders recognize the value of integrated approaches and the collective effort required to drive innovation and progress within the AKIS knowledge flows system.

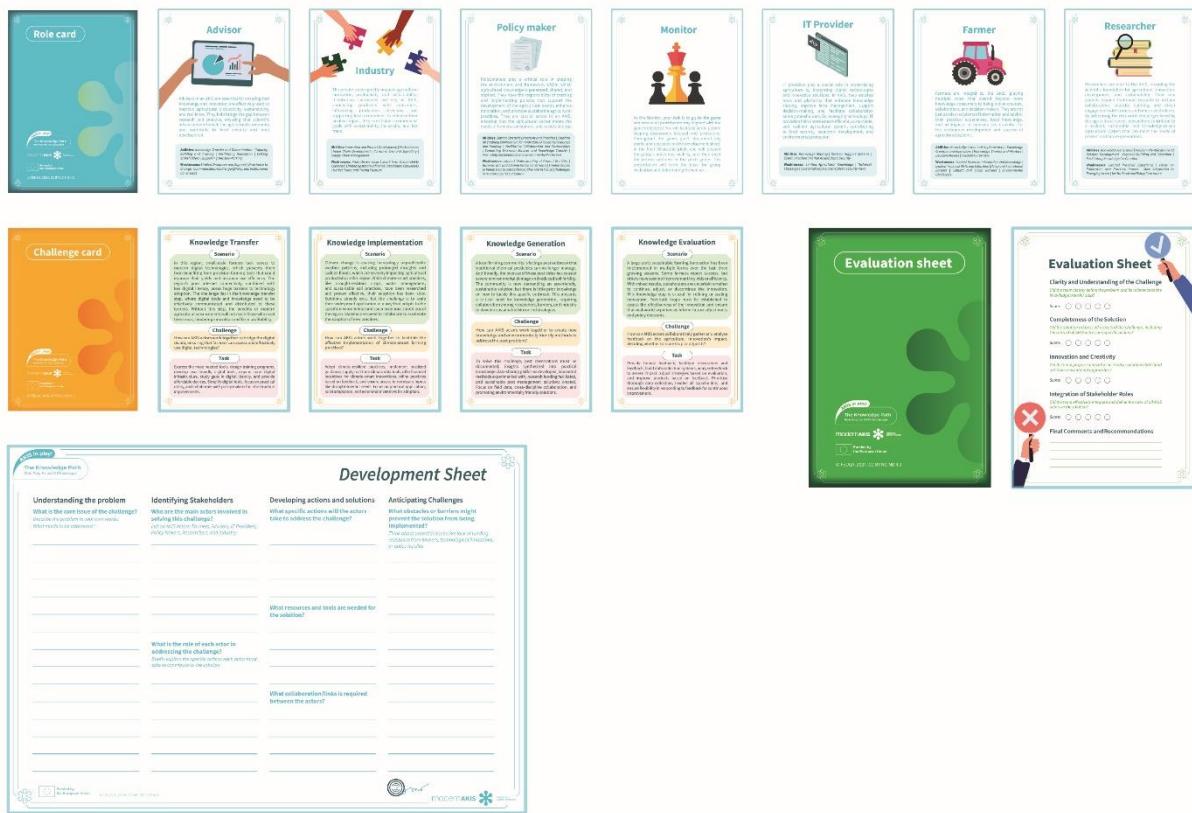


Figure 10 AKIS in Play: The knowledge path

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Sticking Barriers

This barrier identification game within the AKIS context is an effective tool for diagnosing and understanding the challenges faced by AKIS actors. Participants work collaboratively to identify the most significant barriers and place them within a central image representing the AKIS system.

Predefined barriers are provided to facilitate the process, allowing the group to discuss whether these barriers exist in their environments, determine where within the AKIS they are located and explore why the barriers exist in those specific parts of the system. They also examine who is affected by these barriers, identifying the actors or stakeholders involved and propose solutions to address the issues. Solutions may include capacity-building initiatives, infrastructure improvements, policy changes or other strategies.

In addition, participants are encouraged to introduce new barriers beyond those predefined, enabling them to incorporate their unique insights and ideas into the exercise. This collaborative approach fosters a comprehensive understanding of the AKIS system and promotes practical, tailored solutions to the challenges identified.



Figure 11 AKIS in Play: Sticking Barriers

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5. Future directions

5.1. Baseline assessment, Monitoring & Evaluation

In line with the context and theoretical framework provided, it is necessary to address how the Capacity Development will be measured throughout the project. Setting indicators and gateways will enable course checks within project planning while providing AKIS actors a depiction of their relative position not only towards the desired array of capabilities, but to their peers in other regions and countries.

It has to be considered that measuring CD is not a solution in itself and should not limit the ability to pursue new avenues. The measurement mechanism must serve the purposes of defining and communicating the strategy, monitoring the implementation plan, and evaluating performance (Davila, Epstein, & Shelton, 2006). When designed for CD, a measurement system should be liberating from the managerial point of view, requiring the minimum input and pace possible, for it is preferable to make monitoring the exception, rather than a daily exercise. Additionally, self-reflection and expectation management play a crucial role in tracking the evolution of individuals and organisations; AKIS actors thus need a way to convey their insights and exchange points of view within the CD M&E.

Of course, any measurement must commence by a Baseline Assessment, so that the effects of the CD can be compared with the absence of the ccCoPs intervention. Given that Task 4.3 deals with intangibles such as knowledge, behaviour and external networks, the proposed baseline refrains from developing technical performance indicators. Instead, it will focus on inputs and outputs linked to the CAP and the SP, and the perception of integration of the AKIS actors. As described before, the desired outcome is the measurement of the impact of the ccCoP sessions, not the solutions generated by the AKIS themselves.

As for the inputs and outputs, the use of ccCoPs as the vehicle for knowledge transfer has some particularities in terms of workload and governance. These can be turned into an opportunity from the MAA perspective by transforming the session attendees into Surrogate Instructors. Those taking part in the ccCoPs will link research and practice, transferring knowledge to and from AKIS, coming back to present their findings and contributions to the ccCoPs, participating in peer-to-peer programmes, and becoming part of an AKIS Board of mapped facilitators by network and capacity.

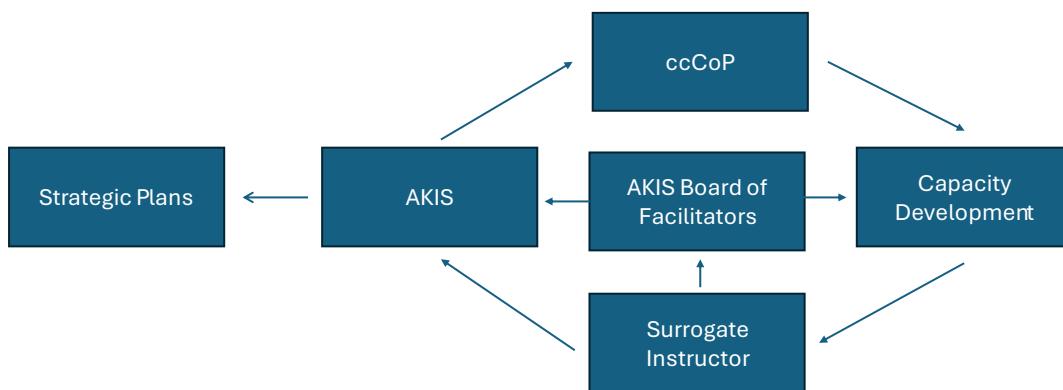


Figure 12 Surrogate Instructors model for Capacity Development

For the evaluation process, it is proposed to follow the Actor-Network Analysis framework as outlined in Deliverable 1.1. This approach will enable the differentiation of three distinct levels of impact: individual, organizational, and network levels. Capacity development will be achieved by fostering partnerships, supporting knowledge transfer frameworks, encouraging participation in communities of practice, and

promoting learning through practice (ITCILO, 2025). Additionally, it will facilitate the grouping of results and the mapping of the relative positions of both thematic and local structures.

Incorporating all of the above elements leads to the following criteria for establishing the baseline for follow-up actions related to impact measurement:

On one hand, a joint action with WP1 will be carried out to establish an "Exercise Assessment" for all capacity development (CD) actions within the project. This will measure overall satisfaction, accuracy, as well as gather participant opinions and feedback regarding the CD actions. Additionally, this action will be conducted annually in the form of a common survey to consistently capture feedback and evaluate the effectiveness of CD actions over time.

On the other hand, at the ccCoP level, independent monitoring measures will be implemented for each ccCoP. Questionnaires will be tailored to the specific thematic focus of each ccCoP. To improve the consistency and accuracy of the impact analysis and work results of the sessions, a standardized set of core questions will be developed. These core questions will be supplemented by additional questions specific to the themes of individual events. This approach will ensure continuous monitoring of the predefined evaluation criteria for each questionnaire while also capturing detailed insights into the specific group and event being evaluated.

Finally, tracking will be conducted for the use of tools uploaded to the platform www.akisconnect.eu, as described in Section 3.2. This will involve monitoring their downloads and reports from those partners who use and develop these facilitation tools within their networks. The aim is to assess whether these tools have contributed to a deeper understanding of the AKIS issues they address and whether they have enhanced the capacities targeted in the events in which they are used.

The results of these combined and individual measures at the ccCoP level will provide an approximate view of the impact of the CD actions in WP4. This course of action is a dynamic and collaborative process involving other actions and WPs engaged in CD activities, evolving as the project progresses.

5.2. Next steps

The plan for 2025 already includes several dates for the upcoming actions that will take place in the first 6 months of the year:

- **February 2025**
 - Next ccCoP2 online: *continuation on the digital tools for advisors*.
 - First M&E online event (T4.4) for CBs: *AKIS assessment and evaluation of the AKIS strategies: concepts, meanings and purposes*.
- **March 2025**
 - Next ccCoP1 online: *Enhancing Transnational Cooperation of EIP OGs: Tools, Methods and Insights from LEADER*.
- **May 2025**
 - Next ccCoP4 F2F (during next GA in Helsinki): *addressing challenges in knowledge flows: collaborative solutions for the stages of sharing, transferring and applying knowledge in an AKIS*.
 - Next ccCoP1 F2F event (during next GA in Helsinki): *AKIS Strategy: defining scope, intervention logic, co-creation methods and tools for local adaptation and integration with policies*.
 - Second M&E F2F event (during next GA in Helsinki): *Co-designing the evaluation framework of modernAKIS*.



- **June 2025**
 - Next WP4 meeting to establish events for the second half year.

5.3. *Early impact analysis*

The ccCoPs are a crucial part of the project, serving as a hub for many interactions where the reinforcement of AKIS and the capacities required to achieve them take place. These spaces offer European AKIS actors the opportunity to learn, exchange knowledge, and foster innovation. It is a task that involves nearly all key partners (including WP leaders and others) and demands high levels of organization and impact analysis, as reflected in each ccCoP group event.

The ccCoP events held so far, given that the groups have not yet been fully established with representatives from all countries (except for ccCoP1 that is complete), have primarily focused on conveying fundamental concepts, analysing barriers and solution to specific AKIS-related scenarios and fostering discussions on essential areas within each thematic framework of the respective ccCoP. Once the ccCoP groups are fully formed and reach maturity (Milestone 8, M36), the focus will shift towards more technical topics, driven by group demands and topics identified in collaboration with other WPs as potential needs of the actor groups to strengthen AKIS. Additionally, with fully established and closed groups, more in-depth and closer work will be possible, including feedback loops and evaluations through surveys as previously explained, which will gather input from official ccCoP members to implement their ideas in future events both thematically and methodologically.

The ccCoPs working teams and collaborating partners have reached a sufficient level of maturity, having successfully managed several events. This has resulted in an optimal workflow that enables the organization of high-quality events with engaging content for participants.

Thanks to the interactive and co-creation methodologies employed in ccCoP events, participants are actively engaged through exercises, opening spaces for dialogue and assessment. So far, all feedback has been positive, demonstrating strong interest and commitment to the groups from attendees.



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