Insights from the AgriSpin project

Presentation at the SCAR SGW AKIS4
Bratislava, 27 March 2017

Alex Koutsouris
[Heidi Hundrup Rasmussen - Eelke Wielinga
& AgriSpin Science Team]

AgriSpin: creating SPace for AGRIcultural INnovation

- The project name reflects the overall aim of this project: to strengthen support systems in creating space for innovating farmers.

- The project aims to create more space for innovations, through amplifying good examples of innovation support systems and through multiactor learning about ways to stimulate innovation and remove obstacles.

- The main target group is intermediates who connect initiators to other actors for involving them in creating innovations, such as farmers, knowledge workers, actors in the value chain, administrators, civil society groups, etc..

AgriSpin project:

- *Learning about innovation processes at farm level*
- *Collecting best practices of innovation support*
- *Provide Recommendations to SHs*
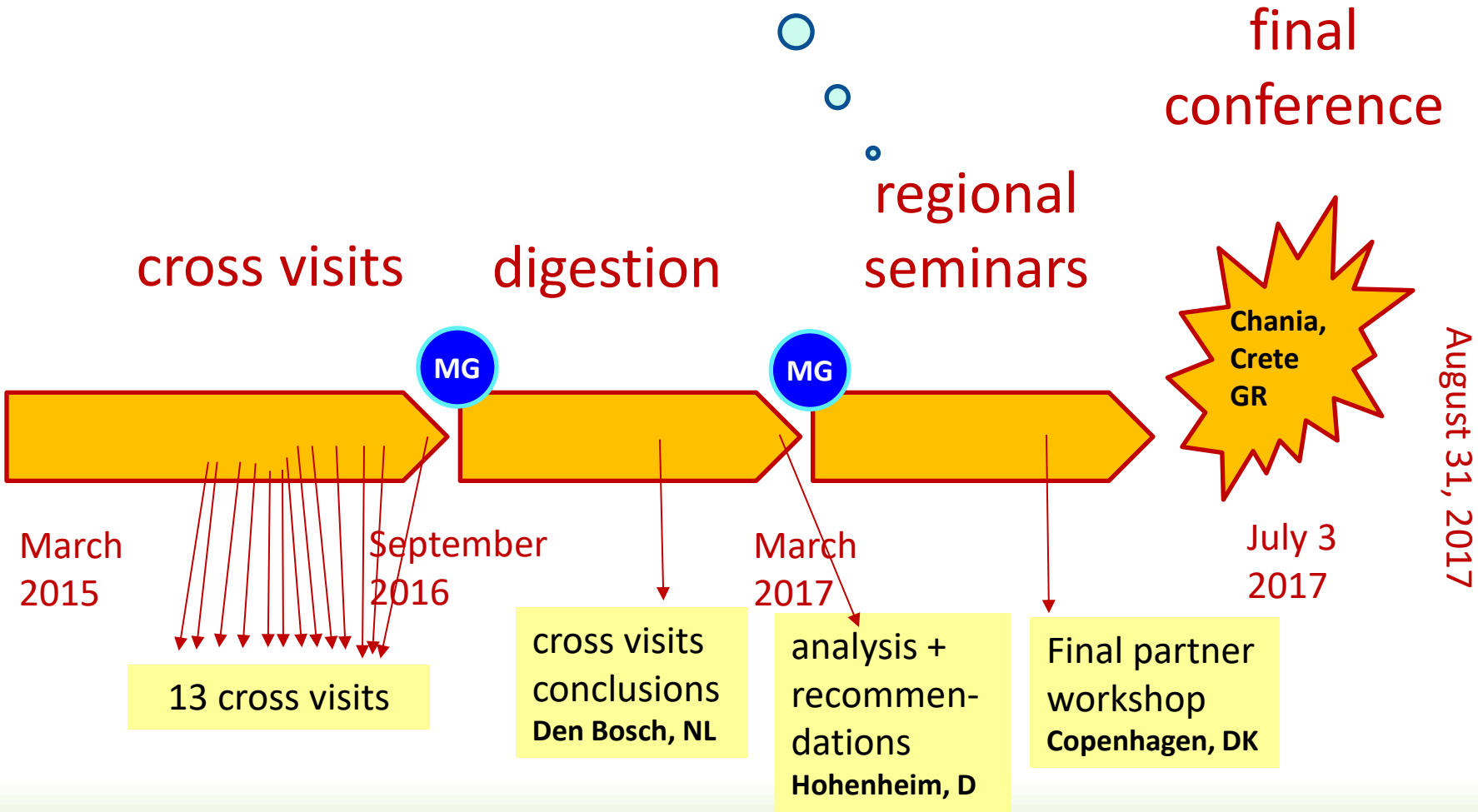
AgriSpin: 15 partners, 12 nationalities
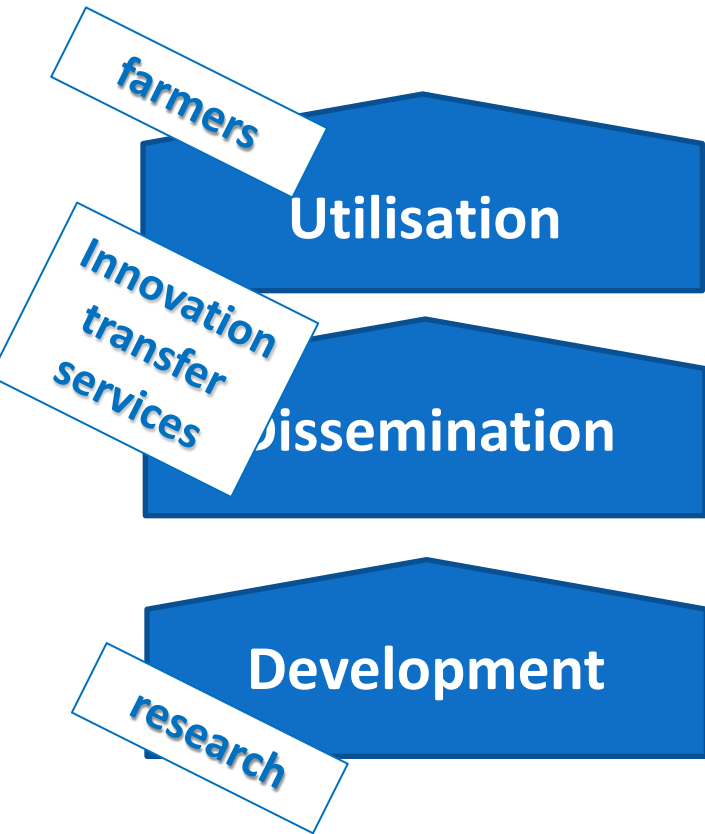

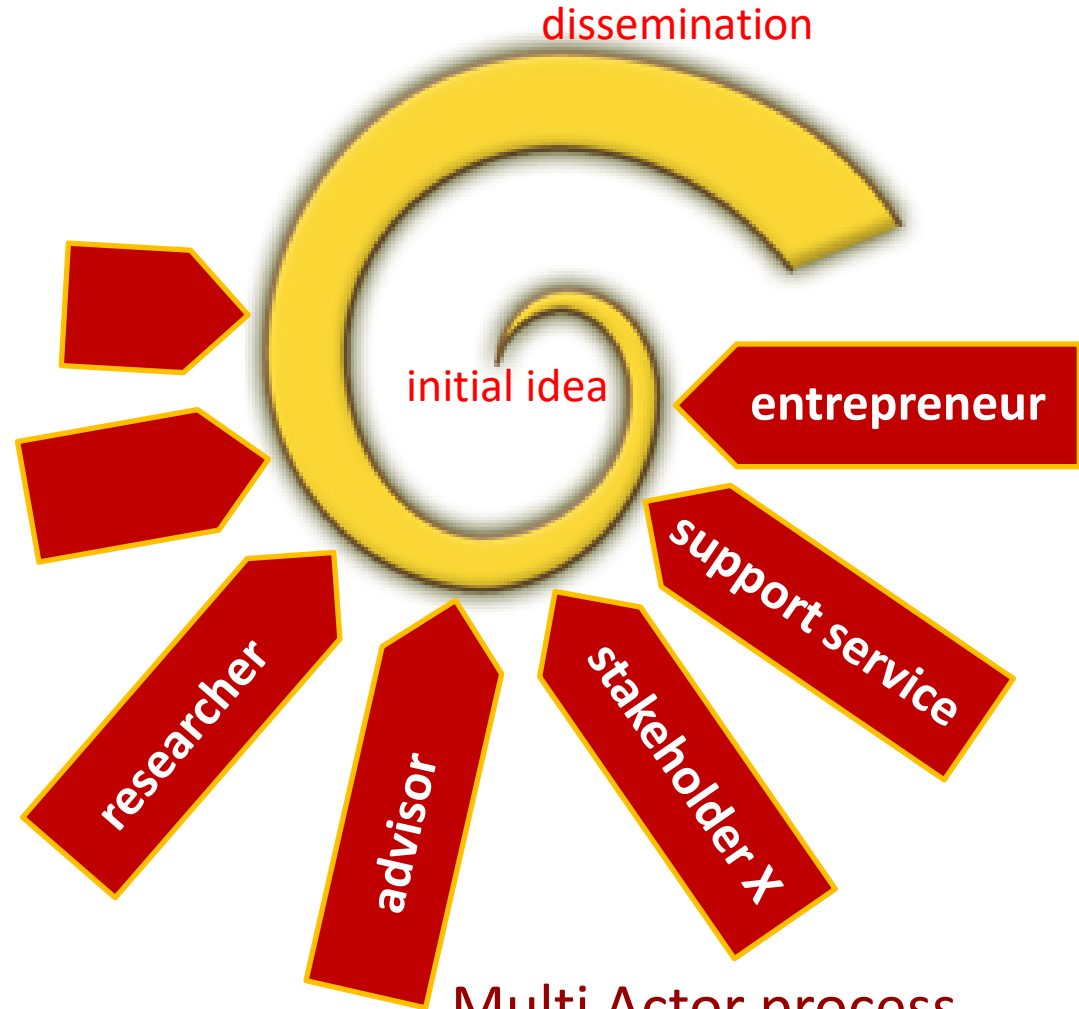**13** Cross Visits

7-12 team members

4 days / visit

50 cases

Map labels:
- Teagasc — Ireland
- ZLTO — The Netherlands
- Innovatiesteunpunt Boerenbond — Belgium
- SEGES — Denmark
- Hohenheim University — Germany
- ProAgria — Finland
- LLKC — Latvia
- VLK — Germany
- Adept — Romania
- HAZI — Basque Country Spain
- IFOAM — Europe
- ACTA — France
- CIRAD — France
- Tuscany Region — Italy
- Agricultural University of Athens — Greece

How does innovation work?

Linear process
Transfer of Technology

- farmers
- **Utilisation**
- Innovation transfer services
- **Dissemination**
- **Development**
- research

Multi Actor process
Co-creation of innovations

dissemination

initial idea

- entrepreneur
- support service
- stakeholder X
- advisor
- researcher

PHASES OF INNOVATIONS PROCESS
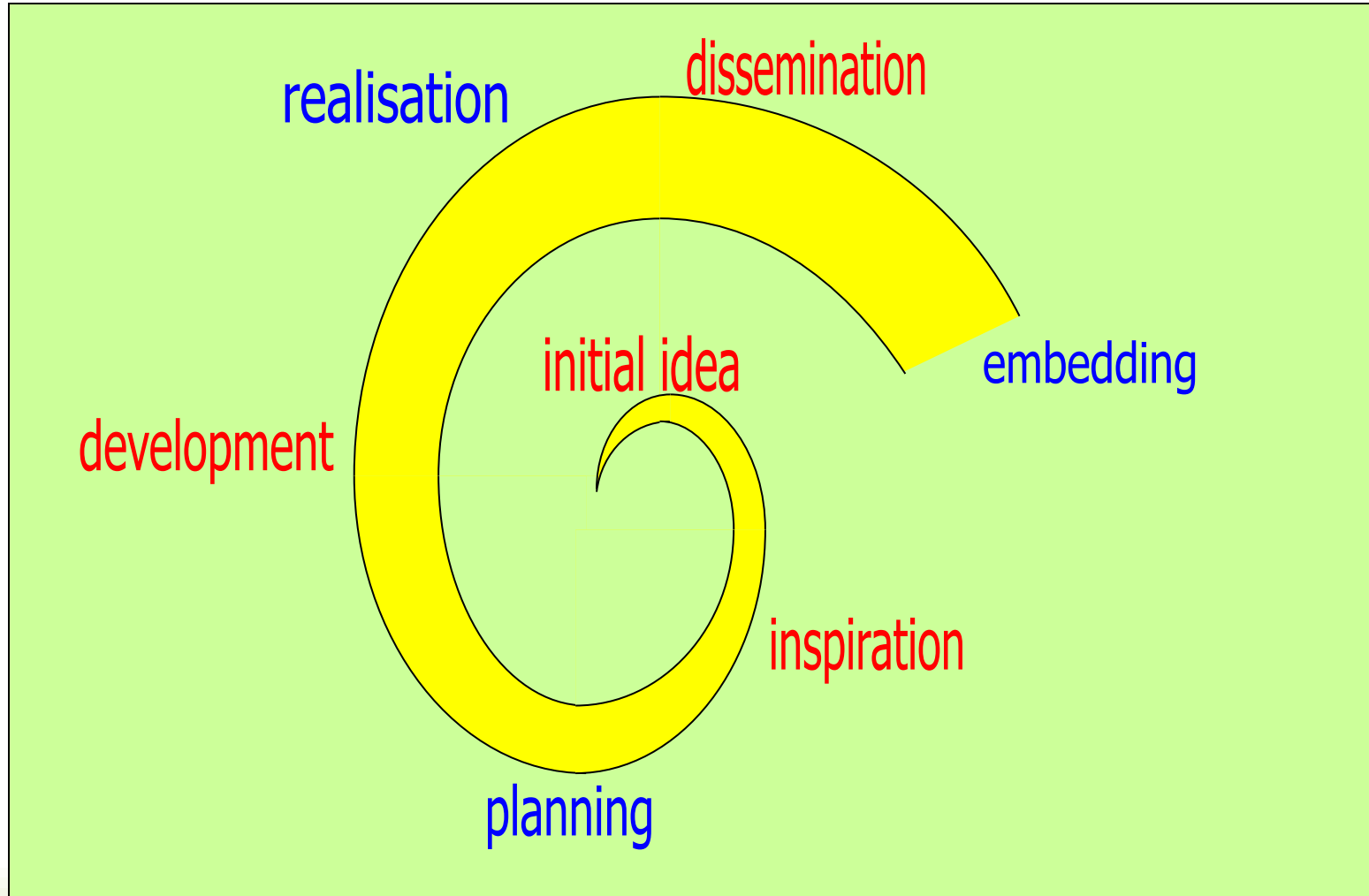
THE HOST ORGANISATIONS

Type	Countries	(assumed) impacts
Farmer based org (FBO)	NL, BE, DK, FI	• Near to farmers' interests • *'serving the most advanced, outspoken …'?*
Public org, permanent	SP, IT, LT, IE	• Near to political and/or societal goals • Strength through institutional continuity
Public org, project-based	F, IT	• Near to political and/or societal goals • Weakness because of institutional uncertainty
NGO	DE, RO	• Near to clients / user groups • Flexibility and high degree of autonomy • Economic stability continuous concern
Mixed (public/private)	GR	• Public and farmers' interests integrated • Challenge to integrate goals • Project of permanent character?

THE INNOVATIONS,
ACCORDING TO SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

Degree of novelty	Dominant component*	Dominant results	Innovations
Radical	Orgware	Organisation, process**	RITA (F), ORTI (IT), ASYST (GR), Farm (DE), Farm (FI)
	Hardware	Product, process	IMViTO (IT), Citr green (F)
	Software	Training, Social Learning	ENTRA, CECRA, AHA (DE), Bio district (IT)
Incre-mental	Orgware	Product, process Learning Organis., process	NL all cases LT TW for adv., Busin inc RO Visri
	Hardware	Product, marketing process	SP all cases, DK 3 cases, Yams, APILOG (F), IT-Tusc 3 cases, GR 3 cases, RO 3 cases IE 3 cases
	Software	Product, process	SOP_LEAN (DK), Farm, Youth entrepreneurs (LT)

*We acknowledge that there is almost always a combination of all three components
** process refers to 'production process' (not learning process, this is 'software'!)

HYPOTHESES

- *Support services (functions) vary according to the various phases of the innovation process*

- *Support services (functions) vary according to the types of innovations*

- *Support services (functions) vary according to the characteristics (types) of the providers involved in the innovation process*

- *Support services (functions) depend on the (exceptional) personality factor of innovators and support actors*

FIRST INDICATIVE INSIGHTS

- While innovation support functions vary for the various phases of innovation process, there is no clear pattern as to which support intervention is best suited for which face of the innovation process;

- Corresponding support functions for each phase of the innovation remain to be case specific and cannot be easily generalised.

We have two situations :

- cases with "weak" and "fragmented" services/AKIS with a strong need of coordination between service providers to fully support innovation (e.g. case of Italy?)

- cases with "strong" and "concentrated" services/AKIS which facilitates strong coordination

[examples of] Recommendations:

For Technology Uptake: Multi Actor Approaches are key

• The incentive structure in the current research system does not favour interaction with practitioners.

➤*In a fair value chain for food production, costs and benefits for the partners must be balanced in a fair way.*

➤*This can be promoted by investing in Multi Actor projects for interactive innovation development.*

Funding must allow for discovery and creativity

•The current 'product type' requirements for funding innovation projects are hostile to what such projects actually need.

➤*Instead of SMART formulated deliverables, the focus should be on questions to be answered by the project.*

➤*A new generation of monitoring and evaluation tools should be applied. (reflexive monitoring, learning histories, etc.)*

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS – *ABOUT THE ENABLING ENVIRONMENT*

- Recommendations from AgriSpin workshop in Hohenheim – 8-10 March.

- ”Testing and feedback phase” (e.g. regional seminars)

- **Public authorities should set relevant ecosystem for innovation (Regional/ local scale)**

➢ Public authorities should set the right framework/conditions ("without political influence/interest") to build networks of actors and stakeholders (public, private, farmers, RDI, economics etc…) that will run innovation projects (matching the overall Innovation and agricultural regional policy)

➢ Means and Tools: Round table, communication, training, education, dedicated persons

➢ Cases :ESEK (+) / Biodistrict (+) / Basque country (+) / RITA 2 (+) / Yam (-)

- **Need for simplification of funding mechanisms and administrative rules to exploit the whole innovation potential (All scales)**

➢ Decrease administrative burden

➢ Regulation(s) should foster innovation rather than being based on mistrust

➢ Actors should spend time on "innovative work" rather than on administrative and financial issues

➢ Potential mission for ISS : Administrative and financial work to relieve Innovation actors from these tasks

➢ LIB: (+) / Transition from RITA 1 > 2 : (-)

• **Public authorities and funding bodies should recognize/endorse that innovation implies taking risk (all scales)**

➢ Innovation is adaptive experimentation and not a linear process

➢ What matters most is to reach the final objective and not to reach the milestones

➢ Evaluate the process (where are you in the innovation spiral) instead of evaluating milestones and pure outcomes

➢ Explore new ways of monitoring: monitoring on soft skills and learning should be more considered

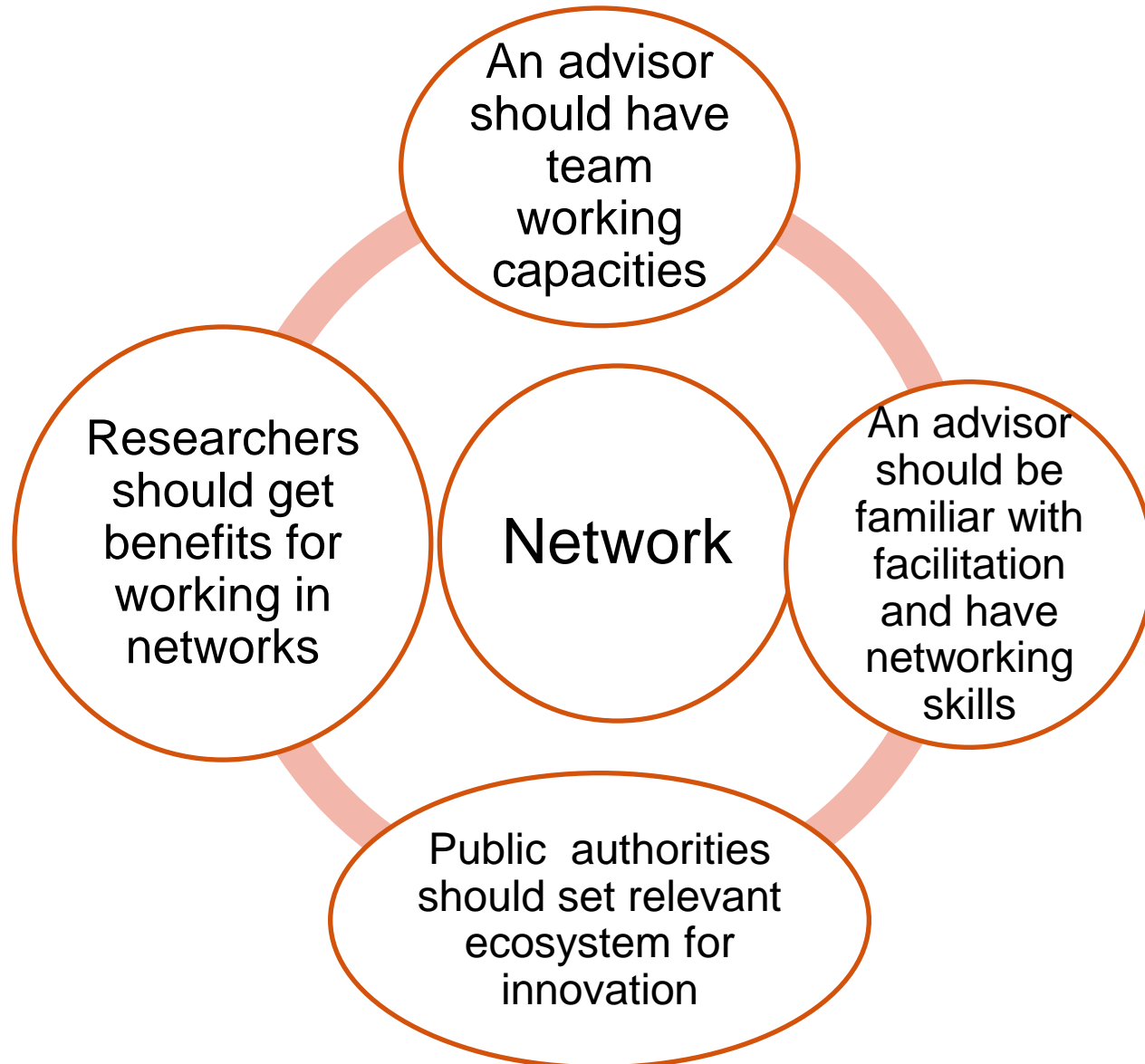➢ Communicate more on and learn from failures is important : "concept of smart failures"
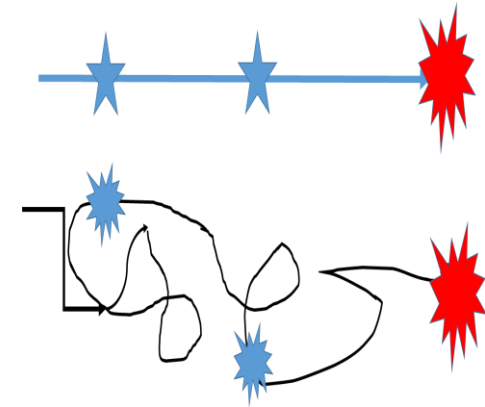
• **Public authorities should nurture/foster Synergies among funding sources to reach innovation (all scales)**

➢ Innovation is composed by different steps (Innovation Spiral) and there's a set of available funding sources matching these different steps

➢ Need to foster the use of different funds to properly address these different steps

➢ Need to communicate on this range of possibilities towards actors and stakeholders to plan Innovation implementation more efficiently

➢ Latvia case 39: (+) (business incubator)

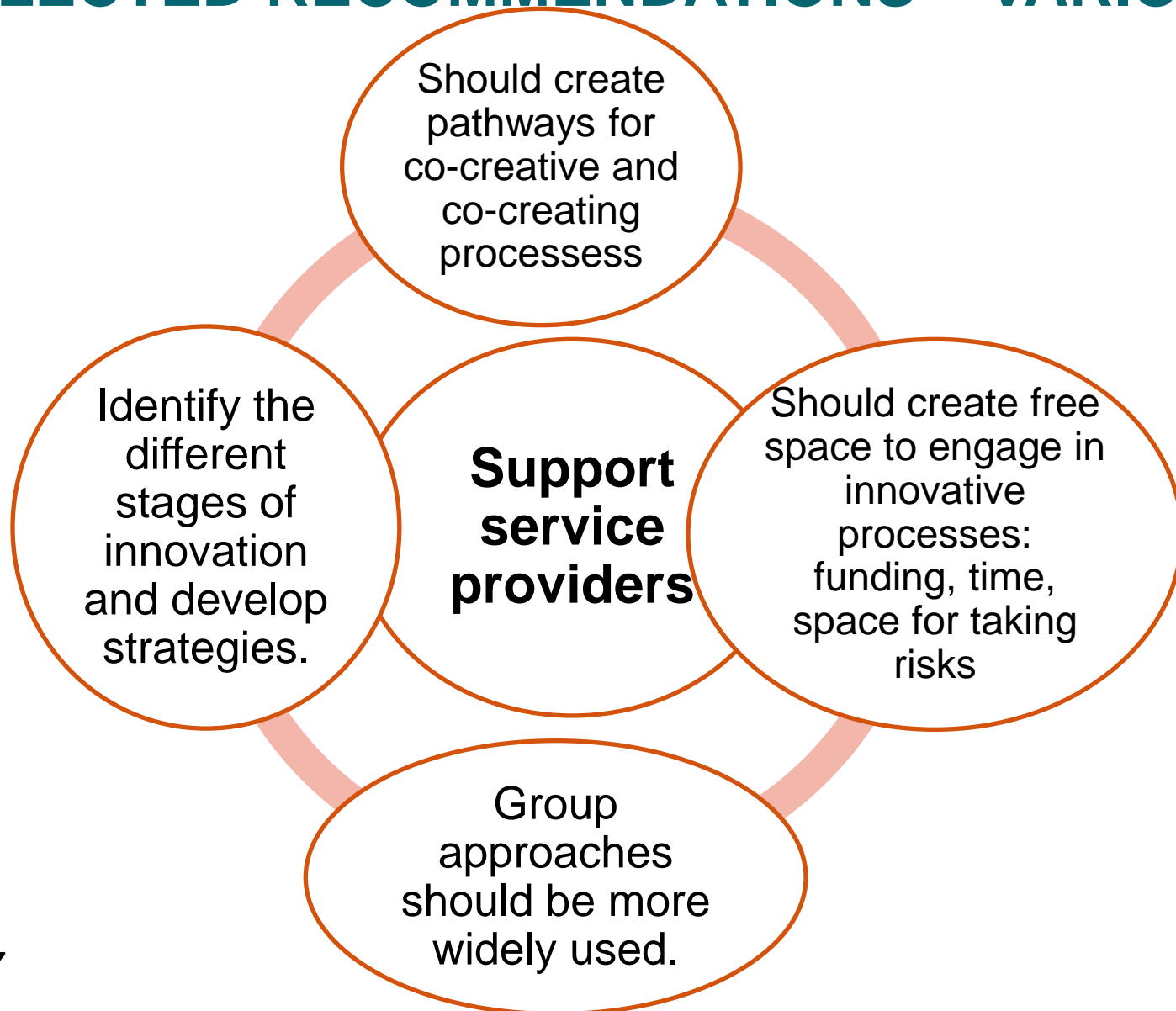- **Public authorities should develop adequate skills for stimulating innovation process**

➢ Change mindset and understanding of innovation (Innovation driven rather than science-driven / Interactive and not linear)

➢ They have to think in an holistic and transdisciplinary way

➢ Organising training in soft skills and network facilitation

➢ Need to participate to cross-visit to learn and improve the catalyzer effect

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS – VARIOUS

An advisor should have team working capacities

Researchers should get benefits for working in networks

Network

An advisor should be familiar with facilitation and have networking skills

Public authorities should set relevant ecosystem for innovation

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS – VARIOUS

Should create pathways for co-creative and co-creating processess

Identify the different stages of innovation and develop strategies.

Support service providers

Should create free space to engage in innovative processes: funding, time, space for taking risks

Group approaches should be more widely used.

SELECTED RECOMMENDATIONS – VARIOUS

ISS should involve and nurture dedicated persons and their ideas.

Who to support?

Prioritise benefits for end users when choosing research topics and connect to transfer organisations.

Public authorities should nurture/foster synergies among funding sources to reach innovation.