

REPORT SCAR SWG AKIS-3 WORKSHOP

Uptake of the interactive innovation model and ICT issues

Oeiras - Carcavelos (Portugal), November 13th-14th, 2014

Chair: Krijn Poppe | Report: Anne Vuylsteke

1 PARTICIPANTS

The following people participated in the meeting:

Name	Country	Name	Country
Anne Vuylsteke	Belgium	Luz Correia	Portugal
Leif Raun	Denmark	Maria João Fernandes	Portugal
Küllli Kaare	Estonia	Marta Norton	Portugal
Jyrki Aakkula	Finland	Ramalho Ribeiro	Portugal
Cyril Kao	France	Jaume Sió Torres	Spain
Pascale Riccoboni	France	Andrés Montero Aparicio	Spain
Valérie Dehaut	France	Inger Pehrson	Sweden
Jill Ebert	Germany	I	Switzerland
Elke Saggau	Germany	Evrar DOĞAN	Turkey
Emilie Gaetje	Germany	Ferya TAŞCI	Turkey
Kevin Heanue	Ireland	Sahin ANIL	Turkey
Ines Di Paolo	Italy	Inge VAN OOST	EC – DG AGRI
Jasper Dalhuisen	The Netherlands	Karin Ellermann-Kuegler	Chambers of Agriculture
Krijn Poppe	The Netherlands	Michael Kuegler	EUFRAS-EU-Contact-point, Brussels
Carla Brites	Portugal	Bram Moeskops	TP Organics
Filipa Sacadura	Portugal	Carola Ketelhodt	Germany
José Matos	Portugal		

2 OPENING, AGENDA AND PREVIOUS MEETING

Nuno Canada (President of INIAV) welcomed the participants. The main activities of INIAV concern applied research and innovation, scientific and technical support to the ministry and farmers, laboratories and reference labs and the conservation of gene resources. INIAV employs 620 people, has 1.105 ha experimental farms, has a budget of nearly 37 million euro and has yearly 600 students. INIAV's main research lines are based on the problems identified by farmers, farmers' associations and the food industry.

After a round of introductions, the agenda and the report of the previous meeting in Bari were adopted.

3 PROGRESS IN EIP AND THE UPTAKE OF THE INTERACTIVE INNOVATION MODEL

3.1 An overview from the Commission (Inge Van Oost)

Inge started the overview of the progress with information on the state of the EIP. The results of the AKIS workshops on reporting are now implemented in the practice abstracts in the database of operational groups. The focus groups of the first wave are finalizing their reports, while the others

are drafting their report or have 1 or 2 meetings to go. More than 100 themes for new focus groups were suggested via the website. EIP Workshops with key players are planned on the profitability of protein crops (building on the outcomes of the focus group) and on biosecurity. The work programme 2015 of the Service Point is still in preparation and should be ready for the first assembly of the rural networks in January.

Most of the Rural Development Programs (RDP; 112 out of 118) have been submitted and are in negotiation with the European Commission. Nearly all EU countries will implement the EIP in their RDP. Replies to the questions harvested in the regional workshops have been added to the innovation guidelines. This e.g. concerns clarifications on the options for cross-border activities, types of costs accepted and selection criteria. The majority of the RDP's will be adopted in the first half of 2015.

The EIP communication and outreach is now supported by a new website. It holds a lot of information and has interactive functions. The part on the needs for research from practice is only starting, but will enhance visibility at EU level. An annual summary report on the "needs for research from practice" is planned.

In this programming period 2014-2020, there will be a single governance structure for the ENRD and EIP network. The EU Rural Networks' Assembly consists of country representatives (1 each for the rural network, managing authority, paying agency, local action groups, advisory services and agricultural research institutes), civil dialogue groups (29 organisations) and regional/local authorities (3). From this large group of people, a steering group (40 people) will be elected, amongst which 4 representatives from innovation services and/or agricultural research institutes. There will be several subgroups, amongst which a permanent one on innovation.

In the EIP stakeholder consultation, there has been a lot of support for the multi-actor projects. The figures of the 1st stage H2020 evaluation suggest that there are no differences between the topics that ask for a multi-actor approach and the other topics.

The discussion learns that little practitioners are involved in focus groups. Language issues, limited experiences with (EU) networks and lacking resources (time and money) are possible explanations. Solutions could lie in the national/regional EIP networks and technical assistance budget, but language will remain an issue. The context of open innovation doesn't necessarily fit with the view of small farmers and companies who see innovation as a way to realize competitive advantage or who don't want to expose their problems in public. This could be a barrier for the use of the website.

3.2 Experiences in the member states

Countries were asked to formulate their experiences through a format that addressed bottlenecks and best practices, the national/regional EIP network and the interaction with research. Sweden, Flanders, Denmark, Spain, Germany, Portugal, France, Estonia, the Netherlands, Ireland and Italy presented their findings. Also the Swiss experiences with similar approaches were presented. The presentations are available in the Dropbox-folder.

Bottlenecks and best practices

Although the implementation has progressed significantly since the meeting in Krakow (March 2014), there are still outstanding questions and bottlenecks:

- There are still questions on the obligation to disseminate the outcomes of operational groups. Which information needs to be publicly available and how does this relate to ownership of the innovations developed?
- The operation in practice of mechanisms established to facilitate transnational and transregional operational groups or cooperation between operational groups are not yet clear.

- There are a number of questions that are related to the identification, willingness and ability of stakeholders to participate in the operational groups. Who are innovative practitioners? Will researchers participate or does the evaluation system for researchers remain an obstacle? Is there enough innovation capacity in the primary sector? How to promote cooperation and networking among the different stakeholders? What is the role of innovation support services and/or innovation brokers? Etc.
- Horizon 2020 and the RDP's run in parallel, but the way to bridge between both is further to be developed, as actors involved are different, instruments are different and funding is not simultaneous etc.
- Uncertainties about the practical implementation concern the administrative burden, selection criteria, identification of beneficiaries, time needed to (legally) implement support to operational groups vs. the short time horizon requested by companies, etc.

But the implementation of the EIP does not only trigger questions and bottlenecks: good practices were also shared. In several countries, the EIP builds upon earlier experiences. Examples are the RDP-measure 124 in Catalonia, the seedless watermelon in Spain, CASDAR in France, competence centers (BioCC and CCFFT) in Estonia and the Federal Organic Farming Scheme in Germany. When it comes to the practicalities, a 2 stage procedure for the application seems to be most suited. Because of the low administrative threshold, a large number of ideas can be collected in the first stage, while only the selected ideas are asked to submit a full proposal. Good practices also concern the provision of information, promotion and open consultation with and among stakeholders. Advisory services can play a role in this process. There are finally also best practices with regard to the guidance and process support of potential operational groups and the brokering between different types of actors

National / regional EIP network

Most countries intend to establish an EIP network, at regional and/or national level. These networks will operate within the Rural Network or in close collaboration with the Rural Networks. This cooperation is also reflected in the management structure of the EIP networks. In federated countries, there is a strong need for coordination between regions. For this reason, Germany for example established an EIP cross-linking point. The following tasks for EIP networks were mentioned:

- Provide information about the EIP at regional, national and European level
- Interact with the European level of EIP-AGRI (Rural development and Horizon 2020)
- Organize (thematic) activities with regard to innovation, meeting places to identify challenges and innovation ideas from practice, training and partnering, etc.
- Enhance networking of stakeholders and interaction between operational groups to exchange of knowledge and experiences (within the country and at the European level)
- Communicate through diverse channels and disseminate the results of operational groups and best practices
- Coordination and follow up of innovation support
- Set up thematic networks of OGs and foster transregional and transnational cooperation
- Compile, conduct and order questionnaires and studies; establish a database of operational groups

The involvement of research organizations differs between the countries. Research organizations were in some countries already a target group of and/or involved in the networks, while this relation still needs to be developed in other countries. The interest differs: in some cases there is a very active and interested research community, while in other cases there are differences between the types of research and the research actors.

The involvement of advisory services to promote innovations varies between the countries. This is related to the national and regional differences in AKIS and the choices made in the RDP-implementation. It might be that public advisory services will be involved in the promotion in one

country, while they don't exist anymore in other countries. Also farmer-owned or -managed advisory services (like chambers of agriculture) can take on the promotion of innovation. Many of these activities might also happen organically, based on the interest of the specific actor.

Interaction with research

There is no clear answer on the relation between the national research programming and the EIP. Some countries don't notice an influence, while others do. The relation also works the other way around: similar national instruments have influenced the EIP. Next to alignment of topics and themes, there are also other aspects of similarity: 2-stage procedure, multi-actor approach and emphasis on cooperation (e.g. with advisors and/or farmers as co-applicants), challenge-driven approach, programming period and timeline and the importance attributed to innovation.

In general, the operational groups will have good access to the research system, because of the overlap in actors, the willingness to collaborate, the open research system, etc. In some cases further actions will be needed to bring researchers and farmers in contact. A database can be a helpful instrument in this context.

If researchers participate in operational groups for the activities carried out. But most countries don't foresee additional incentives to stimulate researchers to participate in operational groups. Indirect incentives are previous experiences, the development of researcher's groups, the social and/or sectoral recognition and the access to new money or the improved access to existing funding sources. In some countries, the managers of universities and research institutes would encourage researchers to join operational groups, while in other cases the potential conflict with the scientific evaluation system is emphasised.

3.3 The Innovation Office as support for the EIP-process in Schleswig-Holstein (Carola Ketelhodt)

The German region of Schleswig-Holstein has decided to be pro-active and started the EIP from national funds in 2013. The Innovation Office was created to support the implementation of the EIP. The EIP activities started in 2013 with kick-off events and in 2014, a call for ideas was launched and 19 potential operational groups expressed their interest. The first public EIP forum served as a meeting point and networking event for all groups and interested stakeholders. There are now 18 groups which proposed 40 projects on diverse themes for a total amount of 3,2 million euro. The aim is to start the operational group project activities in the spring 2015.

In the summer of 2014, the Innovation Office was started by the Chamber of Agriculture to link between operational groups and the ministry. The innovation office supports the operational groups with regard to the project work in and between the groups, organises networking, meetings and partner search for the groups and provides assistance in the preparation of applications. In the future, the Innovation Office will develop following activities: management of innovations, raise and use the potential of the actors, give transparency about the process, standardise the documentation and administration, organize public relations and networking and open up new financing opportunities.

Based on the experiences, the main bottlenecks encountered are the time needed for bureaucracy, the limited money and groups' impatience (they want to start). The best practices are the early support by the ministry, the support by the Innovation Office and the enthusiasm and ideas in the agricultural sector.

4 DEMAND DRIVEN INNOVATION UNDER HORIZON 2020

4.1 Introduction (Inge Van Oost)

Inge started with recalling the definitions. Multi-actor projects (MA) are research projects involving actors throughout the research project and not only for dissemination or in a stakeholders' board. Thematic networks (TN) are coordination and support actions, which engage a wide range of actors relevant for the theme. The aim is to collect and share research results and best practices and to develop material for practitioners (long term available, attractive, easy understandable).

Although the first reactions were cautious, MA and TN were well taken up in the first round of H2020 and are appreciated. First impression is that the number of proposals, quality and chance of success are not very different from the traditional research projects calls. The multi-actor approach also helps dissemination activities, which were insufficiently addressed in the past. Dissemination is now a full and obligatory part of H2020 projects, and this was not the case in the past. Three main approaches for integrating non-research actors in the proposals can be identified: (i) as a partner in the consortium, (ii) as a subcontractor and (iii) through various other approaches, e.g. via the network of the research partners. In the evaluation, the appreciation for a sound multi-actor approach can be expressed under several (sub)criteria. Proper motivation and explanation in the research proposal makes it easier for evaluators to make the judgement. A first impression is that evaluators like to assess which partners will be involved and therefore appreciate non-research actors being clearly identified, e.g. as member of the consortium. Points of attention for the future are noting the difference between multidisciplinary and the MA approach, providing an adequate description of the state-of-the-art in relation to the proposal's objectives and the proper involvement of non-research actors in the consortium. Consortia submitting proposals for MA or TN, are likely to be bigger in comparison with traditional consortia. Coordination structures that are used in large technical projects, e.g. in ICT, might offer a solution. These have the additional benefit that all partners have a role to play so that the management costs should not be too high.

The discussion shows that stakeholder involvement should be addressed carefully. When proposals don't get funding, very engaged people might get frustrated and not tempted to participate in a next call. The 2-stage procedure is in this respect a good choice, but there is also a need for good feedback, a more restrictive choice in the first stage (only 5-7 proposals in the second stage instead of more than 20). For the moment, there is an open approach for TN, leading to a large number of themes for proposals. Limiting the scope (e.g. through linking themes for focus groups and TN) introduces the risk to miss opportunities on emerging topics.

Concerning the management of MA projects, it is suggested to analyse (successful) projects from the past on their management structure and make those structures in a generalised way available as suggestions for best practices.

4.2 Experiences in member states

In the template presented by the member states, there was also a question on the participation in and experiences with the first round of the multi-actor projects and the thematic networks. The presentations learn that researchers from all countries participated in consortia. Although the results were not known yet, some points of attention were identified. These are:

- Farmers are in general involved in an indirect way, through their cooperatives and chambers of agriculture. It's difficult to engage individual farmers.
- Some researchers had difficulties to understand and correctly implement the MA approach. It would be practical to have guidance and examples in addition to the footnote.
- The high number of participants and the differences in background make the design of an adequate organizational structure more complex. There is need for a strong partnership, but also for a good balance between research objectives and administrative requirements.

- The scope of action tends to broaden in bigger consortia, as all partners want to see their own particular issues represented in the objectives of the project.
- As the RDP's were not active yet, it was sometimes difficult to identify operational groups or similar practice-oriented groups.
- There are concerns about the focus on applied research and the low scientific impact factor for the resulting publications. MA projects are sometimes considered to be 60 years+ projects: projects for those researchers who are no longer driven by their impact factor.
- The success-rate for H2020 proposals in general is too low. In some countries, it's easier to get a project at national level than a H2020 project.

5 OUTREACH

Three items in the agenda were related the relation between the SWG AKIS 3 and other initiatives or fora: ARIMNet2, ICT-AGRI and the OECD.

5.1 ARIMNet2: From Research to Innovation (Sahin Anil)

The ERA-NET ARIMNet2 focuses on the coordination of agricultural research in the Mediterranean area. After a successful first round (involving 12 countries), a second round has started with 24 partners from 15 countries and 2 international observing organizations. The ambition is to deepen and ensure the cooperation, to develop a common vision and a strategic research agenda and to push the further achievements of the first phase.

In the work plan, there is a specific work package on the link between research and innovation (WP 5 - From research to innovation). The objective is (i) to understand the characteristics and the organization of Mediterranean countries' AKIS and to analyse what could be done to improve their efficiency and (ii) to prepare some support documents related with research calls. The work is divided in 5 tasks:

- Analysis of the Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems, with regard to (in)formal interactions (knowledge flows) between research – extension and farmers and to examine how research and farming practice are linked
- Internal Seminar on the AKIS concept among participants of ARIMNet2 to explain how information and knowledge flows and how these processes can be strengthened
- International Conference on AKIS in the Mediterranean to provide a larger view on areas open for coordination and improvement
- Analysis on the previous ARIMNet1 call, regarding the way the research results could create innovation. The emphasis will be on the innovation potential of the results, training for the researchers on valorisation plan and development of technology transfer plan
- Guideline with criteria for the calls and joint activities on how to enhance the link between research and innovation

The first three tasks will lead to deliverables. ARIMNet would like to interact with SWG AKIS 3 on the experiences with AKIS in the EU, would like to be present in relevant AKIS meetings and want to invite representatives of the SWG in the internal seminar and the international conference.

The discussion learns that several EU projects (PRO AKIS, VALERIE, IMPRESA) are also of relevance for ARIMNet. It would moreover be interesting to see how Mediterranean partners are involved in the multi-actor projects. Documents developed in the framework of the EIP could be also be interesting, e.g. in the development of the selection criteria.

5.2 Draft Policy Brief on ICT and Research and innovation.

In the Bari-meeting, we had a first discussion on ICT. This resulted in the idea to develop a policy brief on ICT in relation to research and innovation together with the ERA-NET ICT-AGRI. In the meanwhile, both groups have been in contact and a draft policy brief has been developed.

The ERA-NET ICT-Agri was briefed on AKIS during its EIP oriented workshop in Bonn and this was followed by a meeting in Riga. Currently Krijn Poppe and Elke Saggau are working on a draft. A first version of that will be shared in December / early January in a small circle of interested persons in the SWG AKIS and the ERA-NET. A second version should be available for our next meeting.

5.3 OECD case study NL

In the past, there have been contacts between the AKIS group and the OECD, as both have a keen interest in agricultural knowledge (and innovation) systems. In the current activities on innovation for agricultural productivity and sustainability, the OECD has developed an evaluation framework, that is tested on Canada, Brazil, Australia and the Netherlands. It is currently performing the case study on the Netherlands. Jasper Dalhuizen gave a short impression.

The activities started with a background report on the Dutch AKIS. Then the OECD visited the Netherlands to have interviews with all actors involved. These interviews were based on the OECD framework, which distinguishes between policy areas, incentive areas, drivers of growth and outcomes. For many interviewees, this was a good opportunity to reflect on the Dutch AKIS. Main elements in the discussions were the top sector policy and the position of the green education.

The discussion learned that it would be interesting to invite the OECD to the next meeting. They are mainly focused on the countries, but it would be interesting to get them involved in the discussions with regard to the European level.

6 CONCLUSION

During her concluding remarks, Inge Van Oost expressed the hope that the AKIS Group can make a nice link to the new EU rural network activities. It's also time to reflect upon future steps. These concern e.g. the interaction with the OECD, the outcomes and lessons learned on the multi-actor consortia, the studies to be carried out and the interaction with the consortium that will carry out the thematic network on innovation brokering. With regard to Horizon 2020, the next step is to go from the strategic programming phase to drafting the specific topics. Ideas on AKIS and innovation approaches are welcome.

The next meeting will be organised in Belgium (Antwerp) and will focus on the AKIS foresight. The group prefers 26th and 27th March.