Deliverable D3.4 – WP3. HIKR multi-actor approach



Connecting Thematic Networks as Knowledge Reservoirs towards a European Agricultural Knowledge Innovation Open Source System



# Task 3.4 HIKR multi-actor approach

#### **Summary**

Task description: Report on HIKR multi-actor approach

Results and conclusions: A 2-day workshop was held in Paris on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019 with end-users and TN practitioners to identify recommendations on how to foster and enhance end user-engagement in all phases of a projects' life span, from conceptualization to implementation, (initiation and execution) to post-execution. Ensuring end-user representation in the MA consortium and a good structure and management of the MA partnership within all WPs and tasks is crucial for an efficient implementation of collaborative processes. Moreover, a co-construction shared by all actors involved in the project on 'how to work together' contributes to the construction of a trust-based ecosystem of actors and is likely to increase the mutual understanding between actors.

Apart from end-user representation in the MA consortium, mainstreaming end-user engagement in all steps of project execution is essential to increase the impact of the MAA. In this report, recommendations are provided to foster the approach in all project activities

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Lead Beneficiary	Deliverable Author(S)	
GLZ	Arno KRAUSE, Elodie PASCAL, Lisa van Dijk, Sylvia Burssens, Elena Feo & Jess Stokes	
Beneficiaries	Deliverable Co-Author (S)	
PSKW, IDELE, ARC, USC, NAK, LFG, AU, IfA, UGent, ACTA, RAU	Maxime Marois/Patrick Sarzeaud, Davino Van Hal / Laurens Van der Cruyssen, Ilse A. Rasmussen / Merete Studnitz, María Rosa Mosquera Losada / Darío Arias Martínez, Els Berckmoes / Alexander Opdebeeck, Eniko Fazekas Lisa Williams Van Dijk / Jessica Stokes Pieter Spanoghe / Nathan De Geyter, Elena Feo / Sylvia Burssens	
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# List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EC European Commission

EIP-AGRI European Innovation Partnership e-KRP e-Knowledge Reservoir Platform

FG Focus Groups

HIKR High Impact Knowledge Reservoir

IA Innovation Actions

KIP Knowledge Innovation Panel

KR Knowledge Reservoir
OGs Operational Groups

RDP Rural Development Program RIA Research Innovation Actions

RN Rural Network

SIB Strategic Innovation Board

TNs Thematic Networks WG Working Group

M&E Monitoring and Evaluation
KTN Knowledge Transfer Network

MA MA

MAA MA approach P2P Peer to peer

KE Knowledge Exchange

CSA Community Supported Agriculture

KPIs Key Performance Indicators



#### 1. Introduction

Europe's future economic growth and jobs will increasingly have to come from innovation in products, services, and business models (European Commission, 2014). The traditional, top-down linear model of knowledge 'transfer' from science to farmers is increasingly outdated: knowledge no longer only flows in one direction. Challenges in agriculture and forestry are becoming more and more complex, so it is necessary to see them from all angles (EIP AGRI, 2017). In this context, agricultural professionals increasingly realize that adopting a strategic multi-actor approach (MAA) will maximize the impact of their work.

Multi-actor (MA) projects bring together partners with complementary types of knowledge scientific, practical and other (such as farmers, researchers, advisers, and agri-businesses) to tackle real needs from the field, supporting the idea that innovation is strengthened by combining knowledge and experiences from a diverse range of people (EIP AGRI, 2017). The MAA puts into practice the "interactive innovation model" which is promoted by EIP-AGRI. This involves focusing on different dimensions simultaneously, including technical, organizational, and social aspects, which helps to bridge the gap between science and practice, applying a "systems approach".

The interactive innovation model is also used by Thematic Networks (TNs) who work on collecting existing knowledge and best practices on a given theme to make it available in easily understandable and engaging formats for end-users, such as farmers, foresters, advisers and others. The EURAKNOS project aims to reinforce the EU agricultural knowledge base through the development of a blueprint for a data system that enables the farming/rural community easier access to best practices from all EU H2020 TNs. To realize this, the EURAKNOS project connects all TNs to 1.) map the stored knowledge within each network 2) develop a standardized approach to store knowledge and 3.) design a common data system to make this knowledge more accessible, findable, interoperable and reusable for the agricultural innovation community in Europe.

EURAKNOS brings together a project consortium of 17 different actors including academia, advisory centers, government institutions, SME, NGO, and farmer organizations from 11 EU countries from different regions across Europe. Some partners are involved in the European Rural Development Network and others are involved in other relevant H2020 proposals or have strong links with relevant European (e.g. EUFFRAS, member of SCAR SWG-AKIS group) and international organizations (e.g. FAO, OECD, the European Agroforestry). The main outcome of EURAKNOS is to have all the information from across these innovation networks more accessible to farming and rural communities by having it collated in and promoted through one system.

There is no doubt about the significant added-value of adopting a MAA for communication, dissemination, and exploitation purposes. It is foreseeable that this approach contributes significantly to enlarge the spectrum of knowledge and information available in project consortia. However, the implementation of such a complex interactive MAA, brings some significant challenges in terms of partnership management and end-user engagement.

The objectives of EURAKNOS WP3 were therefore to:

- define the best ways to collect, store and share information, knowledge, and data based on the qualitative and quantitative analysis carried out in WP2
- identify recommendations for making outputs targeted to specific agriculture and forestry sectors and/or European regions



- design a standardized but flexible HIKR architecture based on the best ways identified to disseminate, communicate and provide practical information to the end-user
- define the architecture of a standardized higher impact KR to maximize the impact of a KR based on key elements such as a successful multi-actor approach and innovation from the grass-root level

This report focusses on the outcome of WP3 Task 3.4: HIKR Multi Actor Approach. Task 3.4 selected the main tools to involve multi-actors in TNs with a focus on end-users (on the one hand the farmers/foresters, through farmers associations, on the other hand, the actors of the TN community) in the different phases in the project: conceptualization, initiation, execution, and post-execution; based on the outcomes of Task 2.4, Task 2.5, Task 2.6; Task 3.1, Task 3.2 and Task 3.3. The Deliverable 3.4 reports on strategies to enhance the impact of the MAA and present the project work on best practices carried out by EURAKNOS members between August 2019 and March 2020. This work has been conducted, in close collaboration with its sister Tasks 3.1 & 3.3, as effective end-user engagement is inextricably connected to communication, dissemination, and exploitation of the TN project results.

The input for this report was collected through a 2-day co-creation workshop (Working Group 3.4) in Paris on 12th and 13th December 2019. The experience shared by expert participants on numerous ongoing and finished projects included diverse types, geographical scales, duration, and sizes, representing the diversity of projects all over Europe. D3.4 report synthesizes all the results of the workshop in light of the European Guidelines regarding the MAA innovative project implementation (EIP AGRI, 2017).

In Chapter 2, the workshop methodology is described. Chapter 3 presents the results of each activity and Chapter 4 presents the resulting recommendations. Throughout the report, examples of good practice provided by the workshop participants that have already been implemented by some TN practitioners recently (European Commission, 2015) and which serve as good examples not only for future TNs but also for manager and participants of innovative agricultural projects interested in implementing a more effective MAA are also highlighted.



# 2. Methodology

#### 2.1 Working group 3.4 objectives and content

The input for this report was collected through a 2-day workshop (Working Group 3.4) in Paris during which several experts from different backgrounds (coming from various organizations across Europe: eastern and western Europe and having various skills) have reflected together on the followings questions posed:

- What are the best practices and methods to foster the MAA for the production of knowledge?
- What types of knowledge are needed depending on the type of actor?
- What type of knowledge could be of interest while aiming at aggregating it into a common repository?

This collective work with the participants led us to identify as many good practices as possible for improving the way that we use appropriate and effective MAA to build and implement innovation projects, including the dissemination of project results. The composition of the group of experts and the overview of the activities carried out within WG 3.4 are displayed in Annex (1). A follow-up workshop with the WP3 team (IDELE, RAU, UGent, GLZ, PSKW, AU and LFG) took place on 27th and 28th February 2020 in Brussels to analyze and consolidate the outcome of the working groups, prepare a validation workshop and write up of the TN How-To guide (T3.5).

#### 2.2 Workshop participants: strong links to numerous innovative agricultural projects

The recruitment of the 12 experts who composed the Working Group 3.4 was a crucial and very strategic step as a success of this task relies on their experience in various domains since the aim was to utilize the participants' expertise to select the best recommendations on how to implement a high impact MAA in innovative agricultural projects. To reflect the diversity and complexity of European innovative agricultural projects, all experts were selected from different European countries with a strong wish to represent as many European countries as possible. The experts are from different actors' types and belong to the two end-users groups of EURAKNOS: TN community on the one hand and farmers, foresters, advisors on the other hand. Moreover, the skills and experience from the participants ranged from independent farmer to consultant and trainer, and those evaluating TNs as part of the evaluation carried out by governmental institutions and others. Respective countries, skills, and actors types of experts of WG 3.4 are presented below. To meet the GDPR requirements, the names of experts are not disclosed:

- Hungary, Farmer and Social researcher
- Sweden, Lecturer at Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (involved in Inno4grass)
- Netherlands, Consultant, and trainer at Netwerk&Co
- Netherlands, Consultant, and trainer at Netwerk&Co
- Belgium VLK+ EUFRAS, M Sc Agriculture Bruxelles
- Germany, Research associate at the University of Kassel (involved in SynSICRIS Project)
- Germany, Chamber of Agriculture of the Federal State of Lower Saxony, Agricultural advisor for water protection, Farmer (secondary occupation)
- Germany, independent farmer
- Germany, dairy farmer, and farm-owner
- Germany, Farmer
- Ireland, Research Officer at Teagasc (involved in the FAIRshare project)
- France, Accompagnement du Changement technique et humain Etudes, formations, coaching IDELE (involved in LIAISON project, WP leader of the work package dedicated to MAA)





• France, Chargée de mission Partenariat européen pour l'innovation, Ministère de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation



# 3. Results of the working group 3.4

This third chapter presents the results, based on the experience and expertise harvested from the participants at the workshop. In the first section, section 3.1, to set the scene for further reflection, the lessons learned from two MAA projects. This is followed by section 3.2 focusing on best practices to involve end-users and increase MA impact in the project from conceptualization, execution, and through to the evaluation phase.

#### 3.1 Setting the scene: Lessons learned from the other MAA projects

As an introduction to the Paris workshop and as a starting point to reflect collectively on the most effective way to engage end-users (farmers/foresters and advisors) in current and future TNs, two experts of the working group 3.4 presented the results of their respective MAA projects at two different levels, the H2020 LIAISON project at the European scale and Waterbuddies at a regional scale (Lower Saxony, Germany). This was followed by a reflection on the major challenges faced while implementing a MAA.

In the two good practice examples special attention is paid to two major aspects of the MAA; the MAA partnership structure and management of the MA consortium e.g. how all LIAISON partners agreed 'how to work together', and how to maintain engagement of end-users throughout the project. Please find key lessons learned and recommendations for future MAAs in the Good practice examples below. These case studies highlight that good structure and management of the MAA within all WPs and tasks is crucial for an efficient implementation of collaborative processes. Moreover, a co-construction shared by all actors involved in the project on 'how to work together' facilitates a trust-based ecosystem of actors, increasing the mutual understanding between actors. This trust-based ecosystem is also perceived as a key success factor by the SCAR AKIS Strategic Working Group, to increase the size of the knowledge reservoir, as well as the impact on the end-users of the project (Chourot and Pascal, 2018).



## Good practice example: The implementation of a MAA in the LIAISON project



LIAISON is a Research and Innovation Action (RIA) H2020 MA project composed of a diverse team of academics and practitioners from 17 partner organisations from 15 countries. Between May 2018 and August 20121 we are working together to help unlock the potential of "working in partnership for innovation" in agriculture, forestry and rural business, by linking actors (see map), instruments and policies through networks.



#### **KEY MAA RECOMMENDATIONS FROM LIAISON**

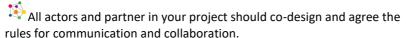
#### **During project initialisation**

Allocate dedicated budget, human and time resource to facilitate, monitor and reflect on the multi actor approach. Identify facilitators who can held you develop and deliver a truly multi actor approach where all actors are engaged and have ownership over the co-creation of the process and outcomes.



#### At the beginning of your project

Design and facilitate a workshop right at the beginning of the project to build trust, engage and co-create your MAA approach. This will ensure all partners take ownership and responsibility for delivering the approach throughout the course of the project.



Set up a critical assessment of actors cooperation as a multi actor partner and review the assessment at each consortium meeting.



#### Throughout your project

LIAISON recognise mobilising the multi actor approach is an iterative process which needs to be evaluated, reflected apon, responded to and adjusted accordingly through out the course of the thematic network.

Allocate clear led roles and responsibilities for the MAA approach within all WPs and tasks.

Run an MAA reflection session at every consortium meeting and make sure there is time to share and come up with an action plan to address problems and implement solutions as a matter of priority.

Between consortium meetings create a mechanism to share MAA challenges you maybe facing so that other partners can learn from these and share potential solutions.



## At the end of your project

Reflect and evaluate your MAA approach. Identify lessons learnt and share with the EURAKNOS community.







#### **Good practice example: Waterbudies**

Waterbuddies is a regional multi-actor innovation project implemented in Lower Saxony (2018) to support family farms by co-developing a higher ambition for environmental and climate action, sharing knowledge and innovation to upscale sustainable resilience. All relevant actors concerned with water management are involved (chamber of agriculture, farmer associations, regional government, water, soil management and federate state authorities, research institutes and water supply companies) but addressing the **needs of local farmers is at the core of project purpose.** 

#### **KEY MAA RECOMMENDATIONS FROM WATERBUDIES**

#### **Project initialisation**

- Identify and analyse your key stakeholders before the project starts.
- Survey to understand the needs and drivers of the farmers in the region. This will not only create ownership by the farmer involved which will mean they are better engage throughout the life of the project, it will also mean the outcomes of your project will be more wider applicable, potentially creating higher dissemination impact.
- Evaluating the aims, interested and motives of all your actors and understand their radius of action and reach to understand and maximise the impact their involvement can have.

#### **During the project**

- Set up a work task force, known in Waterbudies as the living lab, composed of regional actors with complementary backgrounds and skills.
- Utilise a strong facilitator who can build trust, stimulate the interactions between actors, embedding a respectful culture of empathetic exchange so that all actors can share their different ideas, interests and drivers, and contribute equally to the process where they want to.





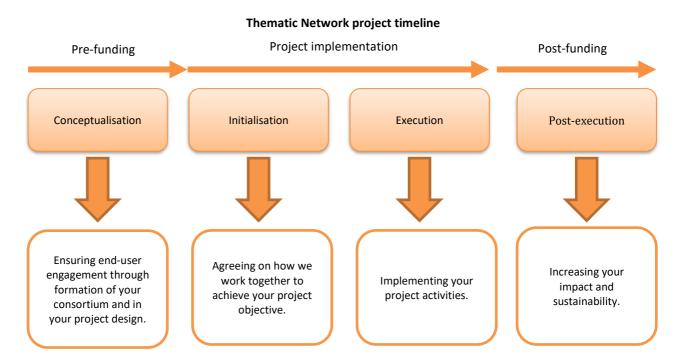
#### 3.2 Best practices to enhance a multi-actor approach throughout the projects' lifecycle.

This section presents the best practices experienced by the experts of the Working Group 3.4, involved in numerous innovative agricultural projects, including TNs, focusing on nurturing the MAA for the harvesting and co-production of knowledge. This section focusses on the best practices for the involvement of end-users engagement to increase project impact. Fostering the MAA is explored in three phases in the projects' lifecycles (see Figure 1):

- MAA in the Conceptualization Phase
- MAA in the Project implementation Phase: Initiation and Execution
- MAA in the Evaluation Phase

In the final section, 3.3 the recommendations made by the workshop experts for the aggregation of knowledge into a common repository are presented.

Figure 1 The key phases in a projects' lifecycle



#### 3.2.1 Fostering the MAA in the project conceptualization phase

The conceptualization phase of a project occurs in the initial design activity when the scope of the project is drafted and a list of desired design features and requirements are created. In this conceptualization phase, the partnership is formed and the project implementation strategy developed. Key in the project design is developing a strategy for the highest level of engagement of end-users to ensure uptake and exploitation of results (This is also described in detail in D3.3).

The development of the multi-actor partnership can be quite challenging, especially if the different partners have multiple backgrounds, perspectives, priorities, and modes of working, e.g. advisory organizations, research institutes, and farmers organizations. According to the scientific literature on the topic, trust is vital when crossing professional cultural boundaries, as people are opening themselves up to vulnerability and risk (Harris and Lyon, 2013). Moreover, as relationships are built up through existing relationships, building trust through the progression of projects and the use of intermediaries or guarantors is fruitful. The main requirement related to the implementation of a MA





partnership (project consortium) in the conceptualization phase is to create a smart-space for trust between all actors, directly (e.g partners of the projects consortia) and indirectly (members of an external advisory board for example) involved in the project (Chourot and Pascal, 2018; Deliverable 2.4). It is even more important to build up a sustainable environment of trust between all actors while carrying out innovative projects in agriculture because of:

- The numerous elements of uncertainty regarding the quality and reliability of the project results,
- The communication challenges related to the potential geographical and physical distance between the project stakeholders,
- The social and educational backgrounds diversity inside the project consortium,
- Last but not least, the long period of the whole transfer process of the project results.

Moreover, as far as the co-development of an initial project idea into a realistic and appropriate design is concerned, the translation of end-users needs, especially those of farmers and foresters are critical to enhancing the impact of the project. This is a critical step. Apart from end-users being directly involved as consortium partners, further engagement of end-users in project implementation is essential. Key questions identified and discussed by the workshop experts to this regard were:

- A. How to involve end-users in the conceptualization phase of a project (beyond the direct engagement of end-users as consortium partners)?
- B. How to get their needs translated into the project idea?

#### A. How to involve farmers and foresters in the conceptualization phase of a project

The initial discussion of this question resulted in the further break down in two main reflections:

- How to better understand the needs of farmers and foresters to involve them better, and
- How to incentivize the involvement of farmers and foresters in practice

The conclusion was that you have to take into account that different types of farmers and foresters co-exist, depending on

- Agricultural sector
- Farm size
- Demography of the region
- Region
- Self-identity
- Cooperative/individualistic
- Social skills



For the reflection, the results on 'How to incentivize the involvement of farmers and foresters in practice, the experiences of the participants are summarized in the text box below.

#### Lessons learnt: Creating a smart space for trust to incentivise end-users engagement

- Ensure that farmers costs for not being working on the fields are compensated
- Set up Field days/Fairs/Study days
- Contact them directly, not through intermediary organisations
- Phone them
- **Provide** them feedback during the project's progress
- Be direct and short in communication with them
- Adopt a clear language, understandable for farmers&foresters
- **Involve** them in small peer group;
- Launch a Focus group at the start
- Provide food and drinks
- Plan timing with farmers
- **Send** surveys to farmers and foresters
- Find the issue of interest to them
- Listen to discussion groups
- **Demonstrate** the benefits (technical, social, regulatory etc.)
- Use existing networks, groups
- **Use** extension services as intermediary
- Prefer informal setting
- Give them short consultation work

The experts of the WG 3.4 indicated that it is sometimes quite challenging to involve end-users at the conceptualization phase if they are not included as consortium partners. If involving end-users as consortium partners is not possible, involving end-users representative organizations and other organizations is recommended:

- Farmers organizations
- Agro-industry: feed companies, agricultural machinery, startups as they can also implement the results
- Advisors
- Networks linked to farmers and foresters
- Educators/Trainers community
- Media/Agricultural press



The involvement of such mediators might be even more relevant to reach farmers and foresters during the dissemination process of TNs when the innovative agricultural projects have their first results and can disseminate the outcomes among the agricultural community.

#### Good practice example: The Hennovation Innovation networks



In the case of Hennovation, project partners concluded that successful multi-actor, practice-led innovation networks depend upon the following key factors: active participation from relevant actors, professional facilitation, moderate resource support and access to relevant expertise. These key success factors should be mobilised right from the conceptualization phase of innovative agricultural projects. Therefore, Hennovation partners encourage government, industry and other organisations to work collaboratively to realise the potential of a practice-led approach, by focusing on the critical role of the professional facilitator. For more information see http://hennovation.eu/results/index.html

#### B. How to get farmers and foresters needs translated into the idea of a project

The first method to ensure the embedding of farmers and foresters needs in the idea of a project is to include end-users in the project consortium. This is the key essence of the MAA. As indicated above this might not always be possible, and the following solutions are therefore recommended:

- 1. To send short surveys about their agricultural priorities and needs, using simple wording.
- 2. Value end-users time and interest by sending the results of the survey in which they have participated. There were challenges faced by involving end-users in surveys. Lack of time, low interest at first sight for the project, lack of trust in the initiative, or in the ability of the project to deliver results that could help their daily business.
- 3. To overcome this challenge in several TN such as EUpig, EuroDairy, Bovine, and Hennovation the key themes addressing end-users needed were defined at a higher level during project conceptualization with support sector experts. Further definition at farm level with the involvement of end-users was carried out within the project execution phase (this is further explained in D3.1).
- 4. To translate end-user needs using intermediaries or mediators (also mentioned in the previous section). The method of involving intermediaries was promoted by the experts of the WG 3.4 and is supported by the scientific literature (Howells, 2006).



5. In some cases, professional facilitators can also help translate and embed the farmers/foresters' needs into the idea of the project (See good practice example - Waterbuddies).

#### What do intermediaries do?

In particular, Howells' (2006) typology of intermediaries in innovation activities drew attention to the varied and holistic role played by intermediaries than was previously recognised. In the area of both industrial clusters and agribusiness clusters, a range of studies (for example, Bell and Giuliani, 2007; Watkins et al., 2015) have increasingly underlined the roles of intermediation, particularly in knowledge transfer. Intermediation also includes activities supporting local producers by improving vertical and horizontal coordination roles (Bolwig et al., 2011; Kilelu et al., 2017b; Poulton et al., 2010) and enabling the collective action of producers (Kilelu et al., 2017a; Poulton et al., 2010). Intermediaries are also argued to help in the upgrading of producers in terms of process and product upgrading, introducing better production methods to boost cluster performance and enhance compliance with quality standards (lizuka, 2009; Kilelu et al., 2017b; Klerkx et al., 2012; Perez-Aleman, 2010). Lastly, intermediaries may help enhance the institutional environment, for example helping producer organisations lobby for favourable legislation (Poulton et al., 2010).

#### 3.2.2. Fostering the MAA in the implementation phase

Once a project receives funding and the grant agreements are signed the actual project implementation starts. This phase consists of two steps, the initiation phase, and the execution phase. In the initiation phase, the MA project consortium has to agree on how to work together to achieve the project objective. A consortium agreement is often signed to formalize this process. Working in partnership can be a challenge, especially where many different organizations involved with different objectives and organizational cultures. The examples in section 3.1 provide insight into these. Throughout the life span of the project this MA 'partnership' continuously develops and deepens.

The second step in the project implementation is project execution. This step consists of 5 sub-steps to ensure effective end-user engagement throughout the project execution (see Figure 2). These steps are explored in more detail in D3.1 and D3.3. The work done in WG3.3 related to communication, dissemination, and exploitation strategy is of particular relevance in the discussion around the MAA and end-user engagement in the project execution phase. Especially related to the TN project as their core objectives and project activities enhance uptake and use of the knowledge harvested (and co-produced) from, with, and by end-users in the project.

Based on the outcome of the working group related to T3.3 the concept of 'Pathways' for knowledge co-production, harvesting and dissemination are introduced, consisting of three complementary engineered knowledge pathways to construct a project knowledge ecosystem:

- Pathway 1 Generate: co-translation and co-creation of knowledge by end-user within the network
- ❖ Pathway 2 Multiply: upscaling of knowledge by the network members to end-users beyond the end-users directly involved in the TN (peer to peer)
- ❖ Pathway 3 Disperse: out scaling of knowledge to end-users beyond the network (advisors etc. who have not been involved in the network)

This framework is helpful for a TN especially to define its end-user engagement strategy. Each pathway requires end-user engagement on a different level. Whereas Pathway 1 represents how the knowledge is co-produced within a TN, involving all active members of the consortium, all actors engaged in an advisory board, and a cohort of end-users, pathways 2 and 3 represent the production

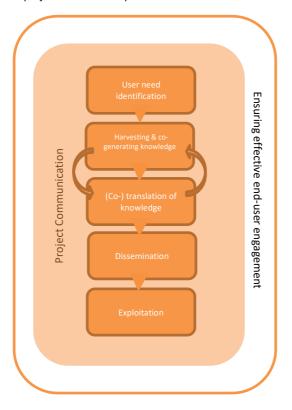




of knowledge which occurs beyond the scale of the TN. To achieve its three objectives (generate, multiply and disperse), each TN should ideally implement a tailor-made MAA which allows the three pathways to complement each other, and even more, to interact in close ties, so that all the knowledge co-produced in Pathway 1 is upscaled in Pathway 2 and out-scaled in Pathway 3.

Moreover, to maximize the impact of the implementation of an MAA would solve the issues related to the decreasing level of trust observed (in particular for farmers and foresters) when the knowledge produced in Pathway 1 is upscaled in Pathway 2 and then outscaled in Pathway 3. Whilst Task 3.3 looks at all communication and dissemination tools which enable and optimize the uptake and use of knowledge across the three pathways, Task 3.4 seeks to identify which actors play the most significant role in each Pathway, and from one Pathway to another. Additionally, Task 3.4 looks at how to optimize actors involvement in the MAA.

Figure 2 Thematic Network project execution steps



Based on the learnings from SCAR AKIS SWG and Task 2.4, Task 3.1, Task 3.2 and Task 3.3, the choice was made to focus on three key questions during the working group session related to maximizing the MAA during the project execution phase:

- A. How to make actors work more effectively together in MA projects?
- B. What are the roles of the different actors in MA project?
- C. What role does the facilitator play in interactive innovative agricultural projects and what is their ideal profile?

#### A. How to make actors work more effectively together in MA projects?

- Develop a high end-user engagement by taking into account the specific interests and profiles of actors' regarding the production of knowledge
- Respect that different actors have different agenda and availabilities
- Assign roles and workload depending on actors' appetence and abilities





- Implement a workable taskforce on MAA (not too many actors, so that communication pathways don't become unmanageable)
- Implement regular internal meetings
- Raise openly the difficult questions, discuss the problems which may occur during the project so no one feels left out or isolated with difficulties
- Celebrate the success or progress made during the project with all partners
- Assign clear roles and responsibilities with clear expectations
- Repeat expectations when needed
- Be patient
- Be optimistic
- Be open-minded: different cultures have different social and cultural codes, European mindsets have different patterns

#### B. What are the roles of the different actors in MA project?

- After carrying out a thorough actors' analysis, the MA partnership should assign roles to each
  actor in a well-balanced manner, on an equitable basis, with regards to what can be expected
  from them (calculation of person-months, WP effort) to avoid dominance amongst actors
- After defining the roles of actors in the project, it is sometimes important to arbitrate and
  even rebalance weights and responsibilities that some dominant actors might take on at the
  expense of other actors: for example, within Hennovation with some industry actors tried to
  dominate the agenda away from the ideas of the farmers this requires expert facilitation
- This readjustment can be done by the coordination team of the project, or in some cases by a
  facilitator involved in the project and who knows the actors well (example of the facilitation
  made in Waterbuddies)

# C. What role facilitators play in interactive innovative agricultural projects and what is their ideal profile?

- The role of the facilitator should be related to that of the project manager but not similar, there is some discussion amongst the different participants about how this role differs exactly. They don't use the same tools and differ in effectiveness on certain tasks.
- A facilitator should be involved in the writing phase, but to remain independent this facilitator
  might best be replaced during subsequent phases of the project. Once the project begins, the
  facilitator starts building a trusting space to allow healthy organic interactions amongst involved
  partners. The facilitator will bring the right actors in at the right time. The role shifts during the
  project from organizing to facilitating. Meeting organized by facilitators will involve more dialogue
- Potential roles of the facilitator:
- The facilitator needs to be a polymath, empathetic
- The facilitator needs to have empathy, both cognitive and affective
- o The facilitator needs to be able to listen
- The facilitator needs to be respectful of other people's opinions
- The facilitator needs to be sensitive to the needs of the group
- o The facilitator should follow and enhance the energy of the group

#### Characteristics of a good facilitator

Organizational skills

The facilitator needs to have excellent organizational skills.





The facilitator organizes different meetings than a project manager, these meetings will be more focused on creating a constructive dialogue between all actors

- The facilitator needs to give responsibility to the group and remain impartial
- The facilitator needs to be able to withstand frustration
- The facilitator needs to have self-confidence
- The facilitator should not be very visible
- Connecting skills

The facilitator needs to be able to connect people

The facilitator needs to know that he/she needs to detect the key actors early on

The facilitator needs skills to understand the languages of the different actors involved

The facilitator needs to meet people F2F and meet them when there is a problem

o Open-mindedness

The facilitator needs to be open-minded

The facilitator needs to be creative

The facilitator needs to be flexible and adaptive

The results collected during the consultation of experts of WG 3.4 show that the involvement of facilitators in innovative agricultural projects is crucial to the success of MAA. The role and profile of a facilitator for the mediation, moderation, and facilitation of innovative agricultural projects were intensively discussed and the debate resulted in the production of a facilitator visit card. The experts emphasized that more than just having organizational skills, facilitators must display high networking skills, and be flexible and open-minded to succeed in facilitating innovation networks, such as TNs. Facilitators must be able to understand the complexity of MA partnerships and support the coproduction of knowledge by adopting a positive attitude, setting a smart space for trust between all actors engaged in the project, and by triggering interactions along the three pathways presented earlier which apply during the execution phase of TNs.

#### *3.2.3.* Fostering the MAA in the post-execution phase.

The post-execution or evaluation phase represents an assessment of the project after its completion, analyzing the actual achievements against the projected aims in terms of time, cost, and quality specifications. The evaluation of uptake and use of new knowledge is methodologically challenging. Many current tools and indicators used are limited and only measure participation and engagement in project activities, and crucially not whether or not end-users adopted or adapted the new knowledge. Multiple elements contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and the process of learning by end-users. The decision making by the end-users on whether or not to use the new knowledge is complex and context-specific. Also as increasingly shown in the literature on the evaluation of agricultural projects, any single agricultural project or program is necessarily part of a highly complex, interrelated system (Casley D.J. and Kumar, K.,1987). To deliver utility and value, evaluation in the agricultural sector must take into account contextually sensitive issues. This means that in addition to the adoption of the more generic evaluation approaches of the social sciences (including anthropology and economics), evaluation practice applied to agricultural research and development has also required the adaptation and development of more closely-tailored options and tools to meet its peculiar needs (Horton, D. et al., 1993).

The key questions related to the evaluation of MA projects discussed during the third working group session were:

- A. How to do MA project evaluation effectively?
- B. How to measure impact and the uptake of results by the end-users?
- C. Which actors could be involved and how to involve them?





#### A. How to do MA project evaluation effectively

- The AGRISPIN TN **used** a **list of 'side-effects'**: a multi-partner contribution to perform a self-evaluation and also **set up** a **mid-term evaluation** to improve the effects (efficiency) of the project before the project ends.
- Collective reflections in LIAISON aim for a critical assessment of actors' cooperation as an MA group.
- The evaluation phase can be invested by innovative agricultural partners themselves for certain criteria, especially the measurable indicators set up for the completion of tasks, and the indicators foreseen during the proposal writing of the project.
- There is **no funding** for the evaluation phase in TNs today
- The evaluation of innovative agricultural projects such as TNs is considered to remain a challenge by most experts involved in WG 3.4
- The evaluation of a project is likely to bring some unexpected results (positive or negative unplanned results) due to unexpected events: is the actual environment of TNs (very standardized) able to accompany the flexibility required by most innovative agricultural projects?

#### B. How to measure impact and the uptake of results by the end-users?

- The impact, as such, of innovative agricultural projects, is complex to estimate and/or to measure.
- Evaluating the impact of a TN in terms of uptake of results is quite complex because the impact is not monocausal to the project work. The uptake of results by farmers is, in fact, the result of many parameters, as farmers/foresters' choices are influenced by many factors. Moreover, the necessary time for the project's results uptake by end-users is usually quite long and starts only when the project delivers its first results. This process usually occurs at a quite advanced stage of completion of the project.
- The evaluation of the impact of TNs could be performed by new TNs or innovative agricultural
  projects, taking into account the minimum period required for the uptake of results by endusers to be completed, which means that in a best-case scenario, a TN in charge of the
  evaluation of other innovative agricultural projects should look at the projects' impact 3-5
  years after they were completed.
- The uptake of results generated by a project cannot be measured entirely and with full accuracy by the partners of a given project themselves.
- The uptake of results' evaluation/estimation could be considered a project in its self
- However, at the workshop some concrete examples were given to help to measure the impact and uptake of results such as: doing a survey in a post-project phase, phoning farmers
- Moreover, some tips are known to improve the uptake of results such as: offering Open Innovation Challenges and Research-into-Action summary awards to engage broader participation for social, technological, and silvicultural innovations like in the Incredible project.



#### C. Which actors could be involved and how to involve them?

- All types of agricultural actors and forestry actors could be involved in the evaluation phase
- In practice, only actors who receive money for this purpose would participate
- It is clear that fundings are mandatory to trigger contributions
- In practice, it is better to ask actors already experienced in MA innovative projects, and having a strong and proven expertise in agriculture
- The self-evaluation method raises the problem of impartiality
- The self-evaluation method raises also the problem of significant staff, turn-over which occurs in many TNs
- The self-evaluation (made by TN members themselves) is however relevant to estimate the
  consumption of resources (H&R, time, cost) and to estimate other variables such as risk
  management.
- The self-evaluation of a finished project should help future projects designing their project's scope: project management data could be easily accessible and shared.
- The actors to be involved in the evaluation phase should be found by using the existing networks.

The inputs collected from the discussion show that the evaluation phase of innovative agricultural projects, such as TNs, requires the implementation of a tailor-made MAA to serve the purpose of the evaluation, require both numerous resources (human, time, cost) and strategic planning.

Fundamentally what is still missing from a TN practitioner's point of view is to perform a good evaluation of innovative agricultural projects. The following good practice textbox, therefore, investigates existing recommendations and guidance provided by some reference institutions, aiming to provide clearer guidance to TN practitioners.



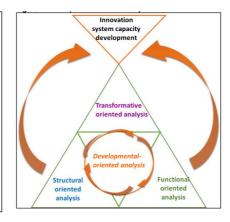
# Good practice example: Evaluating interactive innovation processes: towards a developmentaloriented analytical framework

(Cristiano and Proietti, 2018)

"The novelty and complexity of interactive innovation and multi-actor approaches in European innovation policies asks for a comprehensive framework to analyse co-innovation processes and, particularly, the interactive processes performed by the operational groups (OGs). This paper is aimed at raising the discussion on frameworks and practices to analyse and support of innovation processes of OGs in rural development policy. The analysis highlights an increasing interest of the current evaluation and research practices on interactive innovation processes, collaborative learning and capacity development both at individual, collective and systems levels. Particularly, transformative-oriented frameworks have been developed in view of supporting capacity development in innovation systems. Supported by previous studies, the paper moves towards a proposal for a developmental-oriented analysis (DOA) framework which is inspired by reflexive and developmental approaches draw up in recent research as well as in evaluative experiences of multi-actor projects. The DOA framework intends to support the design of evaluation strategies aiming at assessing OGs performances and innovation processes at local level. As well, the DOA could be a reference for policy/programme design aiming at promoting the development of innovative capacities and systems in agriculture."

Through thorough analysis of the literature this paper proposes a developmental-oriented analysis of multi-actor innovations, highlighting evaluative practices and meaningful insights applied to multi-actor research and innovation projects to expand those proposed by Lamprinopolou (2014):

- → Developmental-oriented analytical (DOA) framework assesses OGs performances and their contribution to major long-term goals of rural policy.
- → Combine the integrated analytical framework with participatory, capacity development and reflexive approaches.
- → Support critical thinking in multi-actor organizations, through collective learning processes and capacity development paths, both at the partnership and system level (e.g. OGs and policy makers).



The DOA framework is proposed for the design of evaluation strategies aiming at assessing OGs performances and innovation processes at local level. Furthermore, the DOA framework has been recommended as a reference for policy and programme design aimed at practice led innovation. The key tenet of a DOA approach is the continuous involvement of end-users and institutions in research and innovation development, which allows iterative improvements in processes and co-learning. It is recommended that the DOA approach should be applied at the very beginning and during the entire implementation of the innovation process. For full details, please to go http://ifsa.boku.ac.at/cms/fileadmin/Proceeding2018/Theme3 Cristiano.pdf



#### 3.3 Recommendations for the aggregation of knowledge into a common repository

In the final session in the WG3.4 workshop discussion was facilitated to explore the best practices and methods to aggregate the co-produced knowledge into a common repository. One of the core objectives of the EURAKNOS project is to design a common data system to make this Multiactor project knowledge more accessible, findable, interoperable, and reusable for the agricultural innovation community in Europe. An assessment template was co-designed by consortium partners to collect feedback from the experts of WG 3.4 about the type of knowledge which they perceive the most needed per type of actor (stakeholder need) to carry out their activities. This first investigation explores which information /or content (for example training tools, videos, etc) is relevant to be included in a digital database for by end-users. Initially, a group of ten major actor types involved in innovative agricultural projects was selected to be investigated. The results from this assessment are presented in Table (circulated through the assessment templates) are presented in the tables below.

Table 1 Type of knowledge or information needed by each type of actor

Type of actors	Type of knowledge or information needed by each type of actor
Authorities	Legislation Partners, actors, project time, results, dependency on other projects, summary (what did we learn?) Funding
Local Administration	Legislation issues, funding, the ambitions of the project, results, summary
Public Advisor	All-new tools, knowledge, legislation, marketing and communication methods, social and other medias media, content for peer-to-peer learning, infrastructure, facilitation training
Farmers/foresters	All technical tools and data related to their agricultural sector, knowledge, regulatory information on their agricultural sector, economical data of their sector, indicators of the sustainability of their sector at local, indicators of competitiveness, farm management toolbox
Innovation broker	Networking skills, specific competence to link the right people → training tutorials to develop these skills?
Facilitator	The methodology of different studies, what is done before?
Private Advisor	All-new tools, knowledge, legislation, marketing and communication methods, social and other medias media, a car for peer-to-peer learning, infrastructure, facilitation training
Technical Experts	IT skills, applied skills, different sources of knowledge, e.g. conferences → training tutorials to develop these skills?
Retailer	Consistent supply, trust, connections between supplier and consumer, marketing skills, bargaining power, monitoring body (food safety authority), where the product comes from, how the product is produced, certification, storytelling skills
Consumer	Nutritional content, where the product comes from, the story behind, certification, quality, packaging



Table 2 Type of knowledge needed per type of actor (from low-moderate (+) to intensive (+++) need)

Type of actor	Type of knowledge needed			
	Social	Scientific	Technical	Legal/
				administrative
Authorities	++	++	++	+++
Local administration	+		+	+++
Public advisor	++	++	++	++
Farmers/foresters	++	+	+++	++
Innovation broker	+++	++	+++	+
facilitator	+++	+	+	+
Private advisor	++	++	+++	++
Technical experts	+	+++	+++	+
Retailers	++		+	+
Consumers	+	+		+

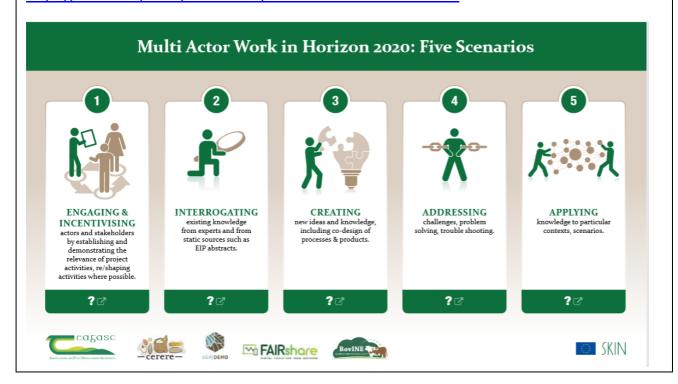
This first consultation of experts of WG 3.4 provides, in particular, an interesting breakdown of actors' needs into four groups of knowledge/information which are respectively linked to social content, scientific content, technical content, and legal/administrative content. Using this breakdown of needs would possibly enable the EURAKNOS partners involved in other WPs, such as WP4, to create a digital system based on different users' experiences. The desired users' experience would somehow refer to a fine-tuned and validated categorization of needs, a categorization which was only initiated in the Paris Workshop, depending on the type of actor, on the one hand, the appetence for innovative content on the other hand.

Moreover, the example of the 'MA toolbox' developed in the frame of the FAIRshare project and presented by John Hyland (Teagasc) during the Paris workshop, illustrates perfectly how to collect and display in an interactive tool best practices on MAA among the TN community, see text box below.



#### Good practice example: The FAIRshare project, multi-actor toolbox

The FAIRshare Multi-actor toolbox presents the wide range of stakeholder/actor engagement methods and tools available, each with their own (scenario-dependent) advantages. https://fairshare-pnf.eu/tool-details/5e2b18d850aeb3490a24f374





# 4. Conclusions and next steps

#### 4.1 Summary of recommendations to foster the MAA

#### 4.1.1. Fostering the MAA in the Conceptualization Phase

#### Enhancing partnership structure and management of the MA consortium

#### 1. Creating a trust-based project ecosystem.

The development of the MA partnership can be quite challenging, especially if the different partners have multiple backgrounds, perspectives, priorities, and modes of working, e.g. advisory organizations, research institutes, and farmers organizations. Investing time and effort from right at the beginning of the project is needed to build trust, engage, and create ownership of the project as a TN.

#### 2. Establish management and collaborative decision-making processes

TNs run for several years and at the beginning of a project, there are many uncertainties. There are often 10+ different partner organizations involved with diverse capacities and different social and educational backgrounds. Analysis of the strength of each partner and based on their strength allocate clear led roles and responsibilities within all WPs and tasks can help in maximizing the MAA within the TN project consortium. As there are so many partners involved clear processes need to be defined on how decisions are made and ensure there is inclusiveness as well as effectiveness in this process.

#### 3. Developing a common project communication platform

With a large number and diversity of partners, communication challenges exist related to the potential geographical and physical distance between the TN partners. The use of a shared online platform could help in overcoming these challenges.

#### 4. Facilitator as a key partner who enables the MAA functioning of a TN.

The WG experts, as well as previous work in WP 2, indicated that the support of a facilitator can help in the enhancement of a MA where all partners are engaged and have ownership over the co-creation of the process and outcomes. During the project design dedicated budget, human and time resources need to be included to facilitate, monitor, and reflect on the functioning of the multi-actor consortium. And this facilitator should, on one hand, be part of the project and on the other hand be slightly disengaged, for example, should not be the project manager. Who performs this role on consortium level will vary within a TN based on the capacity of the partners.

#### TN project design to maximize end-user engagement

5. Involvement of end-users in all stages of the project implementation.

Apart from end-users being directly involved as consortium partners, to enhance a MAA further engagement of end-users in project implementation is essential. The identification of who the end-users are that need to be involved in each stage should be conducted ideally before the project starts.

#### 6. Translation of end-users need in the project design, a two-step process

The first step to ensure the embedding of farmers and foresters needs in the idea and design of a project is to include end-users in the project consortium. During this conceptualization phase, the higher level the key themes addressing end-users needs need to be defined.



Potentially a survey to understand the needs and drivers of the farmers in the region can be conducted.

Further definition of the needs at farm level and within the value chain with the involvement of end-users need to be carried out within the project execution phase. WG experts indicated that these specific needs differ, depending on four factors, namely: technical and economic geographical, Cultural and political, and social factors. This is further explained in D3.1.

#### 7. Development of an end-user engagement strategy

The core objectives and project activities of a TN are to enhance uptake and use of the knowledge harvested (and co-produced) from, with, and by end-users in the project. Hence a project end-user engagement strategy needs to be designed in the project conceptualization phase. Based on the outcome of the working group related to T3.3 the concept of 'Pathways' for knowledge co-production, harvesting and dissemination are introduced, consisting of three complementary engineered knowledge pathways to construct a project knowledge ecosystem:

- **Pathway 1 Generate:** co-translation and co-creation of knowledge by end-user within the network
- ❖ Pathway 2 Multiply: upscaling of knowledge by the network members to end-users beyond the end-users directly involved in the thematic network (peer to peer)
- ❖ Pathway 3 Disperse: out-scaling of knowledge to end-users beyond the network (advisors etc. who have not been involved in the network)

Each pathway requires end-user engagement on a different level. Whereas Pathway 1 represents how the knowledge is co-produced within a thematic network, involving all active members of the consortium, all actors engaged in an advisory board, and a cohort of end-users, pathways 2 and 3 represent the production of knowledge which occurs beyond the scale of the TN. To achieve its three objectives (generate, multiply and disperse), each TN should ideally implement a tailor-made MAA which allows the three pathways to complement each other, and even more, to interact in close ties, so that all the knowledge co-produced in Pathway 1 is upscaled in Pathway 2 and out-scaled in Pathway 3. This is further explained in D3.3.

#### 4.1.2 Fostering the MAA in the Implementation: Initiation and Execution Phase

#### Effective collaboration in a MA project consortium

8. Co-design of the 'rules of engagement'

All TN project partners should co-design and agree on the rules for communication and collaboration. This should be done through a joint workshop at the beginning of the project implementation.

9. Regular reflection on the functioning of the MAA during the life span of the project

Throughout the life span of the project this MA 'partnership' continuously develops and deepens and mobilizing the multi-actor approach is an iterative process that needs to be evaluated, reflected on, responded to, and adjusted accordingly throughout the TN. Regular reflection sessions for example at each consortium meeting making sure there is time to share and come up with an action plan to address problems and implement solutions as a matter of priority. It might also help to set up a critical assessment of cooperation and co-ownership as a MA partner and review the assessment at each consortium meeting.



#### **Project execution**

10 Involvement of end-users in all steps of project execution from needs identification to exploitation.

In figure 2 the 5 steps in the project execution are explained to ensure effective end-user engagement. These were discussed in more detail in WG3.1 and WG3.3 and the details of the outcome of these working groups can be found in D3.1 and D3.3.

11 Facilitator to enhance end-user engagement during project execution.

The results collected during the consultation of experts of WG 3.4 show that the involvement of facilitators in innovative agricultural projects is crucial to successful end-user engagement. They identified that facilitators have a variety of tasks from actual facilitation to linking and networking, mediation, capacity building, to management and documentation. This facilitator starts building a trusting space to allow healthy organic interactions amongst involved partners. should build trust

The role and profile of a facilitator for the mediation, moderation, and facilitation of innovative agricultural projects were intensively discussed and the debate resulted in the production of a facilitator visit card. The experts emphasized that facilitators need to be flexible and open-minded to succeed in facilitating innovation networks, such as TNs. Facilitators must be able to understand the complexity of MA partnerships and support the co-production of knowledge by adopting a positive attitude, setting a smart space for trust between all actors engaged in the project, and by triggering interactions along the three pathways presented earlier which apply during the execution phase of TNs. This, however, requires different capacities of partners and in some cases, there is insufficient capacity to effectively facilitate this type of knowledge management process

#### 4.1.3 Fostering the MAA in the Evaluation Phase.

12 The evaluation of impact is complex and difficult to directly attribute outcomes

The evaluation of uptake and use of new knowledge is methodologically challenging. Many current tools and indicators used are limited and only measure participation and engagement in project activities, and crucially not whether or not end-users adopted or adapted the new knowledge. Multiple elements contribute to the acquisition of knowledge and the process of learning by end-users. The decision making by the end-users on whether or not to use the new knowledge is complex and context-specific. Attribution of impact is not mono-causal to the project work. Moreover, the necessary period for the project's results uptake by end-users is usually quite long and starts only when the project delivers its first results. The inputs collected from the discussion show that the evaluation phase of innovative agricultural projects, such as TNs, requires both numerous resources (human, time, cost) and strategic planning.

- 13 New approached and metrics are needed to evaluate and measure the difficulty to quantify results. Evaluation approaches need to integrate different objectives, methods, and priorities to sufficiently capture the effectiveness and outcomes of MA projects.
- 14 End-users involvement essential to capture more complex and ongoing impacts of TNs.

  An interactive and integrated approach where end-users and other innovation actors are engaged early in the design is needed to support learning processes and capture more complex and ongoing effects from TN and other MA projects.

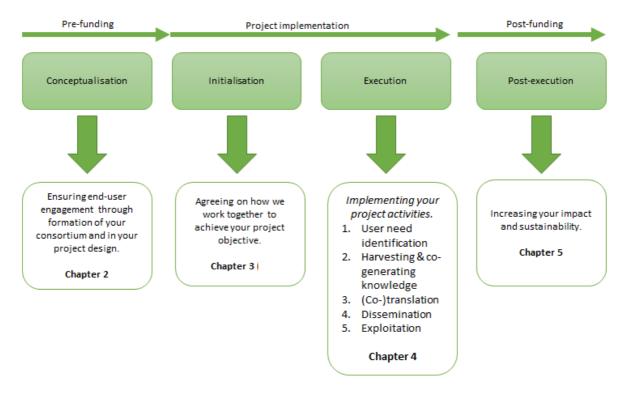


#### 4.2 Next steps

#### 4.2.1 Development of the TN guidelines

All the recommendations of the different working groups, including the ones summarized in the previous paragraph, will be collated into the HIKR TN technical guidelines T3.5 and D3.5. These guidelines will also include the results of D2.5 and D5.4. The recommendations from deliverable reports D3.1 to D3.4 will be combined into one document for a harmonized approach. Based on the discussion in WG3.4 what is evident is that at the heart of a TN is the MAA and this needs to be mainstreamed throughout the manual. This should not be seen as a separate element but an integral part of all sections in these guidelines from the very start of developing the TN project consortium to the dissemination and exploitation of the result. As also indicated in D3.3 we have to go beyond the functional WP task structure and develop an effective and usable content structure for the guideline. And this structure needs to allow us to include all the work done in the working groups, on the TN visioning and the TN recommendations coming out of WP 2 Budapest meeting, and pull all of these together in a coherent document with a consistent narrative/story, see Figure 3.

Figure 3 Visual of the chapter outline of the TN guidelines



#### 4.2.2 EURAKNOS workshop 2

A 2-day workshop is planned in T3.5 to validate the recommendations developed by the working groups in T3.1 to T3.4 and engage TN coordinators and end-users (through the KIP &SIB) in the codesign of the TN guidelines. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 outbreak, this workshop will not happen face to face and all sessions will be conducted online. In this workshop, the results of the WG3.4 will be shared and discussed.



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# ANNEX 1 Overview of the activities carried out in the frame of the WG 3.4

Activity & time	Description	Facilitator
Welcome and introduction <b>5</b> '	Welcome participants and explain shortly the objective of the workshop, agenda	Elodie Pascal (GLZ)
Tour de Table <b>5'</b>	Every participant presents him/her self	Elodie Pascal
Presentation on MAA 10'	First results of LIAISON project	Christele Couzy (IDELE)
Presentation on a national MAA project <b>10'</b>	Experiences of Waterbuddies	Mathias Paech (GLZ)
The MAA in the short, medium and long term of TNs <b>10'</b>	Presentation of the D2.4 results as a basis for the discussion, examples of best practices and methodologies, Intro to questions of the workshop	Elodie Pascal (GLZ)
Session 1 Guidelines for the MAA in thematic networks <b>1h35</b> '	The participants are divided into three groups of 4-5 persons here and change each 30' from A to B to C etc	
A. MAA in the Conceptualization Phase <b>35'</b>	How to involve end-users in the conceptualization of a project? How to get their needs translated into the idea of the project? 5' to change groups, moderators stay at the table, a rapporteur is appointed at each table	Sylvia Burssens (UGent)
B. MAA in the Execution Phase <b>35'</b>	How to make actors better work together? Defining roles? Local Hubs? Role of a facilitator? Profile of the facilitator?	Elodie Pascal (GLZ)
C. MAA in the post- project (evaluation) Phase <b>35'</b>	How to do the post monitoring of a project? How to measure impact and the uptake of results by the end-users? Which actors could be involved and how to involve them?	Franz Janssen-Minssen (GLZ)
Session 2 <b>1h</b> <b>10'</b> intro and <b>50'</b> work	Each group to work on the type of knowledge needed per type of actor in an open-source knowledge repository for agriculture and forestry innovation A template has been provided by Elodie	Elodie Pascal (GLZ)
Reporting in plenary		Maxime Marois WP3 lead (Idèle)