

REPORT of the SCAR SWG AKIS 4 1st Meeting Barcelona, 6 to 8th of April 2016

-
1. Introduction and meeting objectives
 2. EC framework for synergies and EIP concrete synergies
 3. Catalonia S3 and related community
 4. Member States experiences on synergies and lessons learned
 5. Parallel sessions outputs and first outline recommendations
 6. Catalonia Vocational training
 7. Mediterranean Innovation Partnership
 8. EIP Update
 9. EIP Catalonia OGs pre-event meeting
-

Contacts: Co-chairs of the SCAR SWG AKIS

Andr s Montero (INIA-ES): amontero@inia.es

Adrien Guichaoua (ACTA-FR) : adrien.guichaoua@acta.asso.fr

1. Introduction and meeting objectives

The SCAR SWG AKIS4 meeting in Barcelona was the first of the mandate endorsed by the SCAR plenary in December 2015. This meeting mainly addressed the first topic of the fourth AKIS mandate:

- **1A: Improving the integrated approach within the European AKIS and the implementation of the EIP will be fulfilled by looking at the complementarities and synergies among funds (H2020-EAFRD-EFRD-ESF-Education)**

The meeting aimed to provide a comprehensive overview of the synergies and complementarities among funds, both institutional/theoretical and practical, but also provide a practical approach for implementation, notably through the identification of best practice and examples from Member States and Regions. The parallel group discussions completed the overall debate and allowed the identification of several needs and policy recommendations for a synergistic approach of the EU and national funds within the EU AKIS. This meeting was also the opportunity to learn from first experiences from OG's recently funded in Catalonia.

Both topics (synergies and OGs) also partly support the development of the following cross-cutting items of the mandate:

- **1D: Further development of the EIP approach**
- **2: Learning and feedback from interactive project approaches**

This report synthesizes the exchanges and documents the main outputs of the 2 day meeting.

2. EC framework for synergies and EIP concrete synergies

2.1 Smart Specialisation and synergies in Agro-Food related priorities

Mathieu Doussineau, *Policy analyst in the JRC in Seville* presented the EC framework for synergies and some examples of EC schemes seeking to foster synergies among funds.

The presentation is available on the AKIS Dropbox and was sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

The AKIS group members were enthusiastic to see that there are more possibilities and EC Schemes fostering synergies than in the previous programming period. However, the synergies scenarios still looks quite complex, even for public policy specialists, **because of the difference of scale (EU vs Region) and focus (RDI vs Investments) of the several tools that may fund synergies.**

One important problem is that in early 2016 most of the Members States and Regions have not yet implemented their own strategy, so it is difficult to understand and anticipate how it will happen in practice and how they plan to put in place synergies strategies between S3 (Smart Specialisation Strategies) and Horizon 2020.

It is necessary to create more synergies but we need precise guidelines on “how to manage these different funds and programmes together”. **Managing authorities really need to have more financial engineering skills and training: there’s even more complexity for policy makers than for RDI actors.**

“How to improve the capacity of public authorities to create synergies and how to strengthen the RDI actor’s capacity to benefit from this policy scheme”?

The use of public money can be more efficient if it’s strategically planned and if all the actors (policy makers and RDI actors) act in the same way (e.g. Spain now has excellent results in Horizon 2020 compared to the previous FP7 programme). So there’s still room for improvement.

However, despite this tangible complexity most of the RDI actors are implementing “Synergies by opportunity”, rather than by strategy. Indeed partners that know each other from previous experiences often cooperate in successive EU projects funded by the same or different EU sources.

The idea to extend SoE to others multi-beneficiary projects is very interesting but SoE is still a pilot initiative and has to be implemented and to work before being extended to other more complicated tools.

EC Definition of Synergies

Synergies among programmes: Synergies mean joint or coordinated efforts to achieve greater impact and efficiency, not only combining ESIF and Horizon 2020 money in the same project!

Synergies can be achieved through:

- ▶ bringing together Horizon 2020 and ESIF money in the **same project** (that could be a single action or a group of coordinated actions/operations, but always provided that there is no double funding of the same expenditure item) in view of achieving greater impact and efficiency
- ▶ **Successive projects** that build on each other
- ▶ **Parallel projects** that complement each other.
- ▶ ESIF programmes could also be designed and implemented to take up high quality project proposals from Horizon 2020 or other centrally managed programmes for which there is not enough budget available in the respective programmes (**SoE: Seal of Excellence**).

2.2 Overview of synergies opportunities in the Agro-food sector and EIP related synergies

Adrien Guichaoua, *Head of the EU affairs at ACTA, H2020 BIO NCP and co-Chair of the Group*, presented other EC synergies opportunities in the Agro-food sector and some first results of EIP allowed by the EIP Scheme.

The presentation is available on the AKIS Dropbox and was sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

A. EC synergies opportunities in the Agro-food sector

- ✓ Stairway to Excellence: <http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/stairway-to-excellence>
- ✓ Seal of Excellence : <http://ec.europa.eu/research/regions>
- ✓ Widening Excellence/Widespread (H2020): <http://www.ncpwidenet.eu>
- ✓ Complementarities between EFSI & EARDF: <http://enrd.ec.europa.eu/en/en-rd-events-and-meetings/EFIS-workshop-20160419>

These Synergy schemes do not totally fit with the AKIS dynamics (except the “Stairway to Excellence” that provides support to EU 13 to foster synergies in every sector) because they are either too “research excellence” oriented (Widespread), or dedicated to SMEs and not to collaborative projects (SoE), or dedicated to large infrastructure or business investment above 100 million € (EFSI & EARDF).

B. Examples of synergies empowered by the EIP-AGRI

The coordinators of several thematic networks (TNs) funded under Horizon 2020 ISIB2 calls 2014 and 2015 were contacted and asked to answer some simple questions about their connection and relation with EARDF Operational Groups (OGs).

- ☐ Are there EARDF OGs funded and directly linked to your project?
 - If yes, what are the complementarities and the working synergies between your project and the OGs?
 - If not, is it planned to have such OGs linked to your project and what are the expected complementarities among your project and these groups?
- ☐ Are there any other complementarities /synergies between your project and other national, regional, EU projects?
 - If yes, what are the characteristics of the synergies?

Even if there is a temporal gap between Horizon 2020 and EARDF implementation hindering effectiveness of synergies in early 2016, some tangible and promising results emerged from the answers of the coordinators:

- ***TN partners may get directly engaged in OGs***
- ***OGs may result from the work of TNs (sometimes a dedicated WP).***
- ***TNs are multipliers/disseminators for the interactive innovation approach of the EIP into other funding sources***

Through this investigation we can identify different kinds of synergies:

- Direct operational synergies between TNs and OGs **during the project's life.**

- Production of synergies between funds **in different timeframes** thanks to the activities of the TNs (OG incubator).
- TNs have a **multiplying (and synergistic) effect** on an “interactive innovation approach” in other funding sources.
- In the future, several existing **OGs could be the Core Groups of TNs**.

This first analysis of the synergies empowered by the EIP AGRI is very positive because despite the temporal gap between H2020 and EARDF, some concrete synergies from projects between TNs and OGs are already happening and much more synergies could be envisaged in the coming years. TNs are going a step beyond the EC requirements: **they are not only committing OGs but they incentivize and generate OGs through their activities.**

We suggest that all TNs actively take up this role of **multiplier of the interactive innovation model** and of **incubator of OGs**.

3. Catalonia RISS3 and related community

Tatiana Fernández Sirera from the Directorate General for Economic Promotion, Competition and Regulation of Catalonia presented the RIS3CAT.

Mariona Sanz, Director of the Business Innovation Unit of ACCIÓ (Innovation Agency of Catalonia) presented the RIS3CAT community.

Both presentations are available on the AKIS Dropbox and were sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

The Catalan government adopted RIS3 in October 2014.

The priority challenge of the Catalan RIS3 (RIS3CAT) is to make the R & I system and the production system work together in order to create economic and social value. The main challenge is to translate knowledge and technology into competitiveness, increase exports and generate more jobs.

The RIS3CAT has four pillars: 6 key enabling technologies (pillar 1) as the main instrument for transforming the business fabric of the 7 leading sectors (pillar 2) in which Catalonia has competitive advantages, critical mass and future opportunities, and for generating new scientific, technological and economic opportunities (this is emerging activities, pillar 3). Improving the innovation environment (pillar 4) is very important for the success of the RIS3 strategy although these public policies are not included as such in the RIS3 action plan. The Catalan RIS3 action plan includes 12 instruments financed by European funds.

One of the main instruments is the RIS3CAT communities, which brings together companies of one leading sector and R&I stakeholders to implement big R&I projects that will contribute to the modernisation of the business. RIS3 communities ‘projects are always oriented towards the global market and have strong synergies with Horizon 2020 projects. The RIS3 communities are very important for the specialisation process. The investment priorities of these RIS3 communities will influence and dictate Catalonia’s smart specialisation process. The food sector is a major player in the RIS3 communities.

Connecting businesses and projects with market success: innovation is not only about finding a new product, but also creating **benefits and employment**. Strategic investment projects in

partnership with the leading actors of the seven high impact areas have been funded in order to **take advantage of the local economy**.

Through the RIS3CAT communities the Government expects to:

- **Mobilize private and public investment** for innovation in Catalonia.
- Develop **high impact research and innovation action plans** to transform the regional economy
- **Create jobs** which is the main impact indicator for the future

For the first call, 9 proposals were submitted and 5 of them will obtain financing from the ERDF (72m €). The Food Community led by IRTA has 58 participants and **represents the most advanced community for food in Catalonia**.

Another important instrument is territorial projects with a strong involvement of local authorities and R&I stakeholders. The territories have to define their smart specialisation strategies and select investment priorities related to innovation and to its territorial specialisation.

The RIS3CAT has a comprehensive system of indicators to follow up this specialisation process. The indicators are part of the indicator system of the ERDF operational programme. This means that in future years the Catalan Government will have very precise information about how the operations financed by the ERDF contribute to Catalonia's smart specialisation process.

4. Member States experiences on synergies and lesson learned

The aim of this session was to benchmark Member States' experiences, to learn from these experiences and several study cases, to identify the main path of synergies among funds implemented in Europe, to identify some recurrent bottlenecks and to formulate related recommendations.

Seven Member States' experiences were presented during the meeting: Estonia, France, Germany, Latvia, Slovakia, Spain, and Sweden. All presentations are available in the AKIS Dropbox and were sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

Different key questions related to EU Funds synergies were asked:

- Is there a RIS3 dedicated to Agriculture and Forestry in your country/region?
- Is there a national/regional framework for EU funds synergies in your country/region? Is the NRN taking up this role?
- List, describe and explain one or several projects linking FP7/H2020 with ESIF.
- List, describe and explain one or several projects/programmes linking FP7/H2020 with national/regional funds
- List, describe and explain one or several projects linking ERDF/EARDF/ESF at regional/national scale
- List and describe the barriers and bottlenecks for synergies you identified in your region/country
- Explain the national/regional perspectives for further deployment of synergies between EU funds by 2020.

The paragraph below aims to succinctly synthesize the main outputs of these sessions:

As mentioned in paragraph 2.1 above, most of the partners in most of the countries are implementing **synergies by opportunity**. Indeed partners that know each other from previous experiences often cooperate in successive EU projects funded by the same or different EU sources.

Regarding the 4 EC models for synergies (same project, successive projects, parallel projects, project funded by another EU fund) it appears that the main identified bottlenecks is **mixing funds in the same project**; it appears that it is much easier and more “natural” for parallel or successive projects that are commonly implemented in the Member States.

Synergies are often complicated or hindered in Member States because of **the fragmented management of ESIF**:

- The different ESIF (ERDF and EARDF) are usually managed by several Ministries who don't communicate sufficiently with each other: sometimes there are “fights” between Ministries, which doesn't facilitate the implementation of actions: **clear administrative burden in the ESIF management**.
- In some countries **ESIF are not managed at the same level**: EARDF is managed at regional level by regional authorities whereas ERDF is managed at national level by Ministries. Consequently, there are **different management strategies** and logics that hinder concrete synergies.
- In these cases, administrations should **first align strategies and create synergies between strategies at different levels** (regional and national) in order to achieve synergies between funds.
- Moreover in line with this separated management, there are huge **difficulties to get relevant information on ESIF from disparate administrations**.
- We also noticed **a lack of understanding from local and national administrations regarding the added-value of EU and international cooperation** that doesn't seem to be considered as priorities or dynamics that deserve additional funding.
- **The mindset of the different managing authorities** and their beliefs and willingness is also key to facilitating synergies in national territories.

However, the exchanges among AKIS members allowed the identification of positive points and draw up suggestions for improvement:

- Each EU programming period and particularly the 2014-2020 one (because of the key and striking evolutions in R&I funds management) is a learning process for the managing authorities that usually progress in time: **there's clear room for improvement**.
- This programming period **trigger awareness for better synergies**: this “learning by doing” process will strengthen the whole actor's skills and is helpful for the **preparation of the next programming period** in order to improve the overall scheme after 2020.
- The synergies scheme contributes to a **better understanding of the concept of innovation** in the member states.

- *The administrative burden of implementing actions to improve synergies could prove difficult, but **some countries experienced in managing funds at regional level are reaching the objective of coordinating different funds at different scales with obvious synergies.***
- Despite the above bottlenecks, some actors try to fund their project with at least 3 EU funds plus national and regional funds: **Improving administrative and financial engineering skills is key to benefit from synergies.** Particular efforts should be given to training activities in the R & I organisations. **Innovation support services could also play this role.**
- **Encourage structuring of partnership in “national/regional clusters” within H2020 projects (Multi Actor Approach) to anticipate further continuation and exploitation of the projects results in a second step through ESIF by the same national/regional clusters or even in cross-border cooperation through INTERREG for neighborhood countries.**

The proposal was made to focus the potential external study related to Synergies on the topic of **“Information availability and exchange”**: in all MS we need to have an overview of who manages what and where we can catch accurate information and knowledge. This study would be relevant for the overall AKIS group objectives as it could complete the “picture of funding opportunities”.

5. Parallel session’s outputs and first track of recommendations.

Two parallel sessions have been organized during the 2 days meeting. The objectives of these sessions were the following:

Day 1 - What would be the most important end-users needs/priorities in relation to the following themes and actions (Regional/National/EU level) and what complementarities exist with other themes?

- Infrastructures
- Education & Training
- Advisory services
- R+D+I : Interactive Innovation model
- Supply/value chain (systemic approach)

Expected outputs: Key thematic priorities and expected synergies with other themes.

Day 2- Starting from the thematic needs/priorities of synergies identified in day 1:

- Discuss the different funds that could match these needs/priorities of synergies for each themes:
- Come-up with Recommendations
- Imagine what could be the role of NRNs and NCPs

Keeping in mind the numerous Barriers and Bottlenecks we have to overcome:

- Different conceptions of the funds (by nature, timeframe, concrete objectives)
- Difficult to have access to the whole knowledge at national level (fragmentation)
- Lack of cooperation between Ministries, Managing authorities

The main bottleneck is identified in the synergies of the same project, rather than parallel or successive projects.

All of the results of the parallel sessions are available in the AKIS Dropbox and have been sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

I. Education and training

Needs and priorities:

- a. To be Entrepreneurs (Why? How?)
- b. Easy to use and understandable education and training material
- c. Where to get help (Funds? Other supports?)
- d. Training in Multiplication (Professionals including advisers)
- e. Listen to the Students: what do they want/value?
- f. Practice and repetition (The value of work experience – the time)

Funds, projects and initiatives that may support Education and training:

- a. Entrepreneurs : Erasmus + and Marie-Curie
- b. Training: RDP Measure 1
- c. Simplification - translation - Wikipedia : Valerie FP7 project; NRN's translation ; EIP service point and follow up; EIP practice abstracts; H2020 dissemination WPs
- d. Innovation support methods: H2020 (e.g. AgriSpin)
- e. Other funds that may support: National funds; training fees; industry supports.

Role of NCP & NRNs:

- a. Continuity guarantee
- b. Brokering role with all actors
- c. Translation
- d. Guidance for actors in education

Bottlenecks:

- a. Lack of co-operation between Ministries
- b. Language (different among countries)
- c. + Language (different among actors)
- d. Institutional envy/mistrust

Recommendations:

- a. Training **is key to success in the supply chain**: suggest to the task force on Agriculture markets to put education and training on their action plan
- b. **Develop special courses which are not viable in only one country/region** should be strongly supported
- c. **Sharing expertise** across regions and MS
- d. More use of **ICT**
- e. **Work together** as Europe

Different EU and national (public and private) providers are available and can be used to improve the educational and training system in Agriculture: a **combination of**

i) EARDF + national + private funds at national and local level to lay the foundation of high quality education and training, to ii) **EU funds** (H2020 – Marie Curie – Erasmus) to foster

cross-border knowledge and expertise exchange and to develop **cross-cutting courses** at EU level, with iii) a **facilitating role of NRNs and NCPs**.

II. Advisory Services

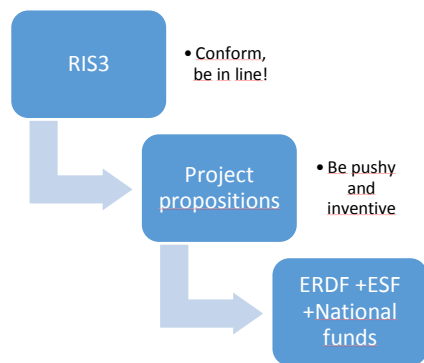
Needs and priorities:

- Clear identification of who is the end user (a farmer, an engineer, a researcher) and the needs of the end user
- Once you are clear on who is the end user and what are his/her needs you can start a dialogue, coaching (not only transfer of knowledge).

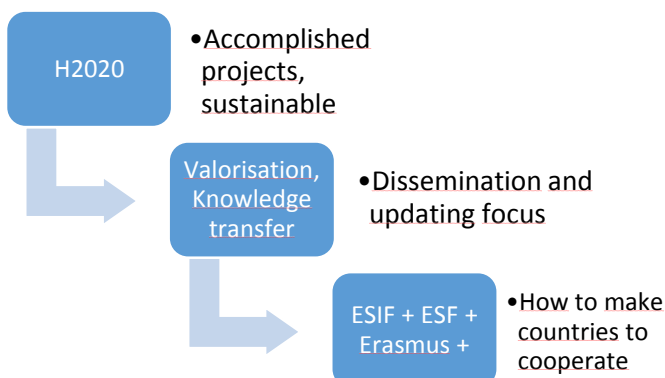
Synergies Needs

- Need to improve the connections between four elements (Infrastructure, Education, Research and innovation, Value chain)
- Advisory service is the focal point for all of them
- By making synergies between funds to improve the capacities of the end users.

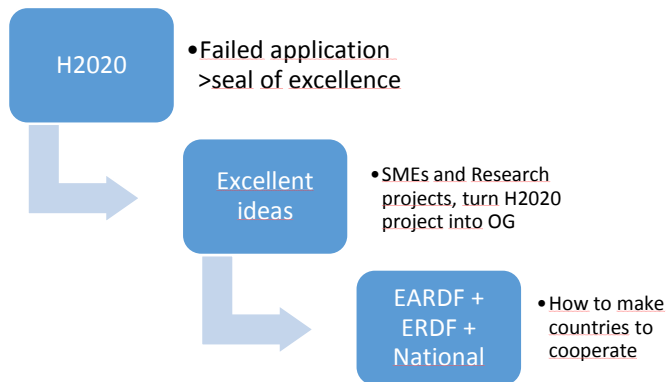
Fund synergies for RIS3:



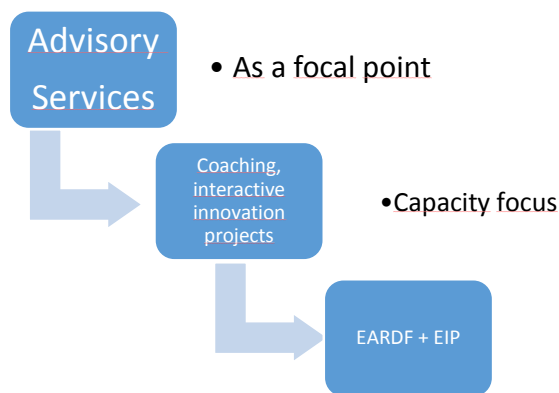
Fund synergies for H2020/ex-post projects:



Fund synergies for H2020/ex-ante:



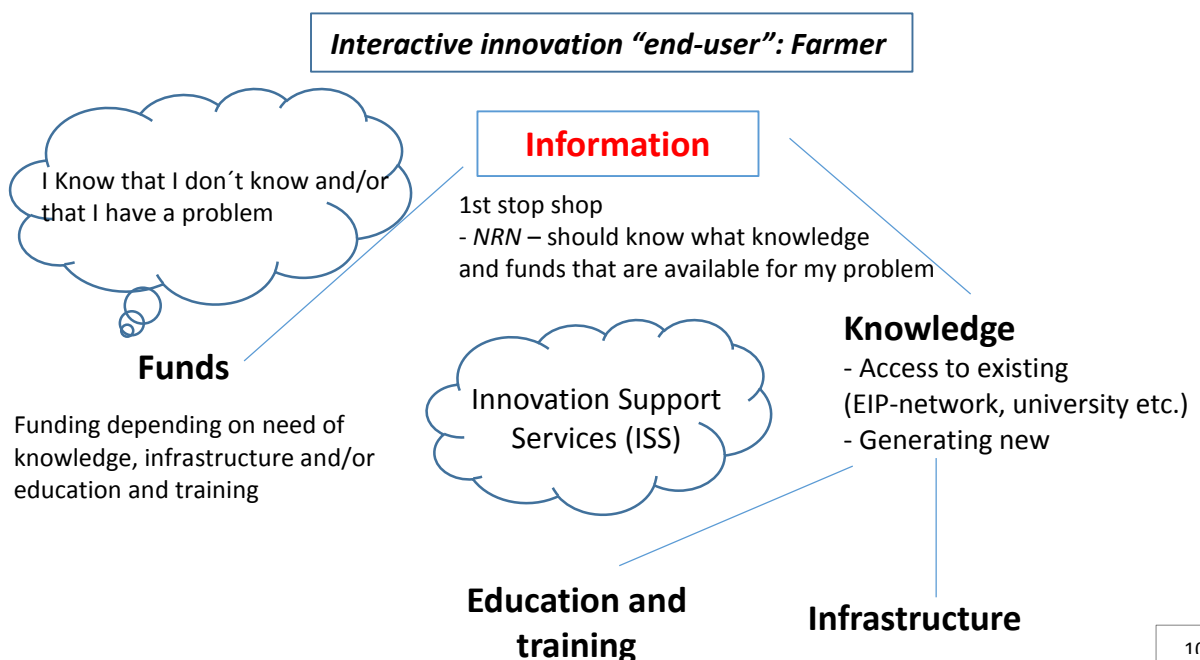
Fund Synergies for Advisory services:



III. Interactive Innovation approach

Interactive innovation needs at different levels:

- End user : farmer
- EU-level: Framework
- National level: Rules/flexible (simple, clear, predictable)
- Regional level: Contact point/information/innovation support services



Recommendations:

- a. NRNs – 1st stop-shop – NRNs should know all the actors of their AKIS
- b. NRNs could develop to "national" network
- c. NRNs need to get more resources to facilitate their own AKIS
- d. ISS needs: funding opportunities, creating partnerships
- e. Education: "long-life learning", teach innovation!
- f. Training and information relating to end-user interests.

Synergies among funds to support interactive innovation models should be developed in order to allow good efficiency of the EIP within several EU AKIS initiatives. Interactive Innovation approaches are directly linked with the themes addressed in this exercise (i.e. Education & training; advisory services; infrastructures; supply chain) and could benefit of the whole EU, national and Regional funds available for synergies (Example: ESF funds education of farmers / EARDF funds training for advisors/ ERDF funds experimental infrastructure / H2020 funds a collaborative research & innovation project/ EARDF funds dissemination). **There's a huge potential of synergies among EU funds for the Interactive innovation model that should be further develop for an effective implementation of the EIP within the overall EU AKIS.**

NRNs should play a major role in facilitating knowledge exchanges, supporting actors in finding the accurate fund and supporting actors in finding partners.

IV. Supply/Value chain

Assignment:

When discussing food supply chains, we need to make an actor analysis which would involve the entire world...

Q: who is the end user?

A: everyone!

Needs and priorities:

- a. Shortening supply chains:
 - Making links in the chain shorter e.g. starting material and cultivation in one horticulture farm or direct sales from farms
 - Local for local, regional production and consumption, peri-urban, city agriculture
- b. Education and campaigns on sustainable food production and consumption
 - Starting with primary school children
- c. Less is more: stimulating less production and consumption quantity, focus on quality (including sustainability)
- d. Migration streams: new food demands and new knowledge sources (avoid loss of valuable knowledge)
- e. Role of ICT: new supply chain business models and consumer apps for background of food
- f. Which future business models: will bulk (Aldi/Lidl) and experience food (Star Bucks) actors win from middle segment supermarkets?
- g. B-2-C: will online food shopping beat physical shops, like clothing?

The consumer has many faces or is a multi-actor (citizen, parent, employer...), consuming for convenience, awareness, experience...

There is an urgency to revalue the function of the farmer as the pivot in the food chain:

- Both as 1) food supplier and 2) eco system servant
- Bankruptcy of farmers especially in some EU rural areas might be closer than we think...

Recommendations:

- a. The topics we discussed above should **be on the agendas for multi-actor networks in multiple instruments/funding opportunities**
- b. **Include immigrants for the agenda** on new agro products and new market opportunities
- c. **Revaluing the function of the farmer as the pivot in the food chain** both as 1) food supplier and 2) eco system servant:
 - May become a condition for multi-actor networks
 - To enhance the value of the farmers, the NRNs should work together with schools, advisors, extension work, researchers to organise educational activities
- d. Synergies: focus on strengthening **demand driven knowledge supply chain by better cooperation between research, schools and advisors**
- e. Based on the end user demands for knowledge in multi-actor networks, including students
- f. Stimulate **students to operate in operational groups! (Mandatory? As it is the case in the French RMTs...)**
- g. **One 'superbody' for coordinating synergies in different funds:** EU, national and regional level
- h. No politics, but experts; the managers of the funds (not the governors)
- i. First step: **map the links between different funds, managing authorities and synergetic projects.**

V. Infrastructure

Needs and priorities:

- a. Need to develop hubs that are open 24hrs online. It will work as facilitator to help people to meet people.
- b. Should start at regional level (language)
- c. It should be built making use of existing resources, institutions, networks
- d. Capacity building
- e. Facilitating role is key (ISS)
- f. It will allow the creation of new tool within the NRNs for the development of young farmers and involve actors along the value chain, farmer's organisations, food processing, Advisory services, etc...
- g. Governance structure for synergies of funds (example of competence centres for broadband).

Overall recommendations from the parallel sessions:

- **Need for a “single managing organisation” for greater synergies among funds (at least at national – Regional level)**
- **Need to have information and knowledge centres to gather all information on synergies and that could provide support to the actors (in line with the proposal above).**
- **Interactive innovation projects should benefit from more synergies as they are gathering a wide range of actors and as they are pluridisciplinary or transdisciplinary**
- **Facilitator and multipliers roles (ISS, NRNs, NCPs, etc...) should be strengthened in the future to support EIP implementation and stimulate innovation.**

6. Vocational Training : key element of the Catalan AKIS system

Jaume Sio, *Deputy Director of the Department of Agriculture, Livestock, Fisheries and Food of the Generalitat of Catalonia* presented the vocational training scheme in his Region.

The presentation is available in the AKIS Dropbox and has been sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

Vocational training in Catalonia is delivered both by the Department of Agriculture (DARP) and by the Department of Education, although the competences belong to the Department of Education. Even if in the last ten years the educational level of farmers has increased, at present one third of new farmers possess only basic education. The training delivered by DARP is based on a combination of formal, continuous (25 to 200 hours) and more informal and timely knowledge and technology transfer activities. All these training activities are delivered either face to face by the network of 14 Agricultural Schools or online by RuralCat (the agri-food and rural virtual community). These training activities are well received by the sector because each year 40,000 out of 100,000 professionals take part in them. Several aspects contribute to this success. For instance, it is very important to tailor the format and content of the training programs to the needs of the different target groups and ideally involve them in their design. Another key aspect is the definition and allocation of enough resources to a training program specifically adapted to the needs of young farmers. Another essential aspect is the inclusion and involvement of most knowledge generator agents (universities, research centres, technology companies). The experience points out that investment in human capital is at least as important as investment in physical assets and we wish to see this reflected in rural development policies.

7. Mediterranean Innovation Partnership

Claudio Bogliotti *from the CIHEAM in BARI* presented the “Mediterranean Innovation Partnership (MIP) for youth entrepreneurship and technological transfer in agro-food sector”.

The presentation is available in the AKIS Dropbox and has been sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

The aim of this presentation is to have an overview of the innovation scheme in the Mediterranean area. This promising dynamic will be analysed in detail in a further AKIS meeting in 2017 while

addressing the item 5 of the AKIS 4 mandate on “**Analyzing the perspective of AKIS in Food and Nutrition Security and Sustainable Agriculture across developing countries**”.

8. EIP UPDATE

Inge Van Oost, from the Research and Innovation Unit (H5) of the General Directorate for Agriculture of the EC presented an update of the EIP-AGRI focusing on the “**EIP practice abstract**”.

The presentation is available in the AKIS Dropbox and have been sent by the co-chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

9. First experiences from OG’s in Catalonia

1. Main characteristics of the OG call in Catalonia

Cooperation measure (16.1) of the rural development Program

Key point: Important to link the system with farmers, cooperatives, etc.

First call assessment: 78 applications submitted; a lot of good projects but only budget for the best.

- The 23 OGs are distributed by sectors: fruit, wine, agri-food industry...
- 90 different entities take part in these OGs: 57 are private companies receiving aid, 33 are OG members not receiving support from authorities (mainly researchers).
- Wide diversity of members of OGs
The budget available for the first call was 3.5 M€, while the total cooperation measure budget (2014-2020) is 17 M€

OGs Presentations

All the OG presentations are available on the AKIS Dropbox and have been sent by the chairs to the AKIS members on Monday 11th of April.

2. Striking points from the exchanges between AKIS members and members of OGs

The AKIS members have been impressed by the quality and the practical implementation of the OGs.

Catalonia is quite advanced compared to other European regions thanks to their collective mind-set, their long time habit of working together, potentially strengthened by the strong cultural background and identity.

There are lot of members which are not beneficiaries: what’s the (administrative) reason?

- The funder doesn’t pay all the project partners, and to make the management easier, **the number of beneficiaries is limited to 5**. It’s a choice of the Ministry of Catalonia.
- Each beneficiary take its part of the project.
- Innovation network in Catalonia is beyond R&D.
- Half of the budget of each OG is given at the end of the project which could be complicated for the organizations.

In France, we have the feeling that the main concern of regions is to establish their program, and the EIP networking is a second priority – what’s the situation here?

In the Mediterranean area, we share some similar concerns, so it's clear that we have to network with other OGs in the coming weeks and months.

Coming back to the AKIS topic of synergies found, is there a possibility to link your OG to the H2020 projects?

OGs have a really different approach with H2020; we are speaking on a small scale at the moment.

We should not forget the regional level which is really important. We need a base – **to have a network, you need a starting point**. Catalonia can be one of the starting points of European programs. Need to think about all programs to build a network.

Is there a global understanding among all members of the group? How do you get new ideas? How to solve the problems?

The OG is dealing with the technical problem which is usually the starting point. We can add more members to the OG eventually (but without funding). Ideas obviously come from problems and we see together what we can do to solve the problem by seeking additional impact.

In OGs, do you have consortium agreements and/or agreement in secrecy?

Basic agreement at the first step is established in a contract between partners – with different level of agreements. Cooperatives always have a culture of sharing.

A point of view of a coordinator:

- Companies are really enthusiastic to be on board
- The call has been known by everybody in the agricultural sector of Catalonia
- The coordinator must have a strong support role and is very important.

Selection criteria of the OGs in Catalonia: different topics were evaluated:

- Overall quality of the project
- The sector addressed
- The innovation potential
- An equilibrated budget
- Risk management
- Dissemination plan

Who are the people selecting the project?

Staff from the Agricultural and Agri-food Department of the Catalonia Region are the people who evaluate the projects. In Catalonia, all people and potential actors are well connected, so **it's difficult to find impartial people** and it's easier to do it in an internal way in order to avoid conflict of interest.

How do the managing authorities manage the failed projects?

A new call will be launched by next month and we've already told them how they can improve their projects to get funded. But we need an equilibrium between the number of projects and the available budget.

How do you communicate the results of the call?

Not in a public way so far. But we will do it in the coming months because it's mandatory and it has to feed the NRN and the EIP-AGRI Service Point.

Within all proposals received, do you have some good organization management (innovation without technical input)?

- This question is a good insight from the call management point of view, but for the first call and the pilot projects, we thought it was not easy to do so.
- There's not a clear separation between organization and technical innovation; what we want is a concrete project, whatever the characteristics...and in this case all the OGs have technical backgrounds
- Some regions have applied this type of OG and others have limited it.
- It's good to combine both types, but when you receive a lot of proposals, it's difficult to make a choice.

Concluding remarks:

Within few years, most of the actors will take up the interactive innovation model and the multi-actor approach, not only because it's mandatory but also because it's a suitable solution.

Mediterranean countries automatically connect with countries of the same area, but the overall aim of the EIP is to connect with other regions and Catalonia will have to work in that way even if it can take time to connect with thematic networks (focusing on sharing of knowledge and learning from each other) and other projects.

It's a lot of work to build a network with a small team. In Catalonia (ministry), we can connect the actors and we can disseminate the results...whereas research institutes (that have this experience of networking) do not have totally the same interests as the Ministry. We have to consolidate and build-up our processes and networks step by step with the support and commitment of all actors.

Concluding remark: The AKIS group would like to express its sincerest thanks to the Catalonia team as a whole for this outstanding organisation.