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Common Agricultural and wider bioeconomy reSearch Agenda

D4.2: REPORT OF BEST PRACTICES FROM SWG SCAR AKIS MEMBERS

November 2018

COMMUNICATION BEST PRACTICES IN THE FRAMEWORK OF MULTI-ACTOR INNOVATIVE AGRICULTURAL PROJECTS

EUROPEAN UNION
Project co-funded by **H2020 Programme** under Grant Agreement n° 727486

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The overall objective of CASA, a Coordination and Support Action (CSA), is a **consolidated common agricultural and wider bioeconomy research agenda** within the European Research Area.

CASA will achieve this by bringing the Standing Committee on Agricultural Research (SCAR), which has already contributed significantly to this objective in the past, to the next level of performance as a research policy think tank. CASA will efficiently strengthen the strengths and compensate for the insufficiencies of SCAR and thus help it evolve further into “SCAR plus”.

Table of Content

INTRODUCTION

The Deliverable 4.2 Report of best practices from SWG SCAR AKIS members presents the study on "best communication practices collected by the SCAR AKIS SWG members".

TERMS OF REFERENCE

CASA Task 4.1: Support development and implementation of a SCAR communication strategy

The expected outcomes consist in the identification of needs and obstacles in order to elaborate an improved communication strategy for SCAR [...]

CASA will study best communication practices collected by SWG SCAR-AKIS members as a contribution to the CASA objectives, linked to the activities of the SWG SCAR-AKIS.

Members of the SWG SCAR-AKIS could be invited to give input for this study. The study will help implementing the SCAR communication strategy, and it will help increasing the efficiency and impact of research and innovation projects in MS and at EU level.

I. THE STUDY

The study has been carried out between January 2018 and October 2018 based on the inputs of the SCAR AKIS SWG Chair, Co-chair and members. The SCAR-AKIS members have provided the examples and the main ideas for drafting this report.

Further discussions with some members and coordinators of the project which were used as examples have also been carried out.

The content of the study

Whilst *"Communication is essential for project effectiveness and sustainability"* (FAO, 2012), it seems interesting to challenge some multi-actor innovative agricultural projects against the efficiency of their communication activities. In order to carry out this work, the SCAR AKIS SWG identified striking examples of communication practices in projects.

Because of the diversity of the SWG SCAR AKIS members and their deep knowledge of the field of agriculture innovation and research in their country, from the national level to the regional level, the examples cover a broad range of natures, aims and inner structures of projects.

Despite of not being an exhaustive report on the communication strategies in the frame of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects, this report aims at gathering practical tools in the spirit of a toolkit guide about the communication best practices. It is the result of collective work sessions through the SCAR AKIS SWG, in the light of the European Guidelines regarding multi-actor innovative projects' communication. The experience sharing on numerous ongoing and finished projects is the basis of this study. The projects are of many types, at different geographical scales and of different sizes, showing the diversity of multi-actor projects all over Europe. In order to ensure a sounding study, the collected information is provided by projects participants, the SCAR AKIS SWG members and also persons belonging to the communication targeted groups. This report highlights some factors that can be considered as key success factors for best practices in communication applied to the frame of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects.

In conclusion, the examples provided by the SCAR SWG AKIS highlighted the diversity of the communication of EIP and multi-actor projects. They also showed hurdles which have been overcome but which might prove, in some cases, difficult to tackle. Moreover, these examples showed some key factors for ensuring the success of communication and to better disseminate the results.

The results of the study "best communication practices collected by SCAR AKIS SWG members" are available in the annex I of the present report.

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ANNEX 1

Report on communication best practices in the frame of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects based on the inputs of SCAR AKIS SWG

EUROPEAN UNION

Project co-funded by **H2020 Programme** under Grant Agreement n° 727486

Table of Content

INTRODUCTION

Europe's future economic growth and jobs will increasingly have to come from innovation in products, services and business models (European Commission, 2014). In this context, agricultural professionals increasingly realize that adapting a strategic communication will maximize the impact of their work. *While most organizations have heavily invested in agricultural research, many still need to enhance their communications to ensure that their findings reach the intended users and make sure action is taken*. (FAO, 2011). In the case of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects, **communication** is about promoting the project, its themes and the challenges that it is trying to solve (Sparks&Co 2018). Sparks&Co further defines communication using the following terms: "The Consortium partners must promote the action and its results, by providing targeted information to **multiple audiences (including the media and the public)**, in a strategic and effective manner and possibly engage in a two-way exchange. This two-way exchange allows audiences to become more invested in the project, the consortium and the issue it is trying to tackle. Therefore, science is no longer confined to laboratories but is being integrated into society, helped by effective communication".

From the European Commission point of view, strategic communication can bring several positive effects (direct effects and side effects), acting as a virtuous circle on the project and its environment. For instance, it can help publicize ones work in such a way that it is profitable for the project. It can also help to increase the success rate of a project proposal (provided there is a good communication and dissemination plan). It can raise the attention of national governments, regional authorities and other public and private funding sources to the need for ultimate benefits of research. It may also attract the interest of potential partners, encourage talented students and scientists to join partner institutes and enterprises; it is likely to enhance the project reputation and visibility at local, national and international level (European Commission, 2014); it may help the search for financial backers, licensees or industrial implementers to exploit results. It may also generate market demand for the products or services developed.

With this in mind, communication about research projects will have to enable project participants and their communication target group to reach higher objectives than ever. This of course applies to any kind of project, whether these are European, national, regional or local. In order to meet the requirements, which are more and more demanding, in the area of agricultural innovation, the overall communication within the project group and out of the consortium must be planned and managed.

Whilst *"Communication is essential for project effectiveness and sustainability"* (FAO, 2012), it seems interesting to challenge some multi-actor innovative agricultural projects against the efficiency of their communication activities. In order to carry out this work, the SCAR AKIS SWG identified striking examples of communication practices in projects.

Because of the diversity of the SCAR AKIS members and their deep knowledge of the field of agriculture innovation and research in their country, from the national level to the regional level, the examples cover a broad range of natures, aims and inner structures of projects.

Agricultural innovation put into practice raises several questions in terms of communication strategies.

In the light of the SCAR AKIS members' restitutions, it appeared that the essential aspect of innovative agricultural projects communication could be seen through a relevant analytical framework, which notably raises the following questions:

What are the main communication hurdles and levers relative to agricultural innovative projects ?

This question needs to be answered taking into account the particularities of the projects including the structure, the aims, the consortium, the context (geographical, socio-economic, cultural, environmental…)

Is there any added-value of adopting a multi-actor structure for communication purpose in agricultural research and innovation projects?

The **multi-actor** approach as such brings **diversity** to the consortium and therefore, it is foreseeable that it would contribute to **enlarge the spectrum of knowledge and know-hows** which is available inside the project consortium. Moreover, the multi-actor approach is also likely to **increase the number of specific communication channels and pathways**. As a consequence, we expect that such a structure of a project group (multi-partners) can exercise a **multiplier effect** on national, regional and local development projects.

How to manage communication all along the agricultural project life cycle?

A well-designed communication management throughout the timeline of the agricultural innovative projects is perceived by agriculture practitioners and innovative project members as a key success factor to enhance communication actions efficiency. Therefore, a reflection regarding the best ways to take into account the project timeline for planning communication actions seems to be essential.

Which specific communication channels and pathways are most impactful and most used for interactive innovation projects and AKIS?

Are there any channels, methods and means adapted to some specific targets (farmers, citizens, industry, advisory services, etc...)?

Despite of not being an exhaustive report on the communication strategies in the frame of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects, this report aims at gathering practical tools in the spirit of a toolkit guide about the communication best practices. It is the result of collective work sessions through the SCAR AKIS SWG, in the light of the European Guidelines regarding multi-actor innovative projects' communication. The experience sharing on numerous ongoing and finished projects is the basis of this study. The projects, are of many types, at different geographical scales and of different sizes, showing the diversity of projects all over Europe. In order to ensure a sounding study, the collected information is provided by projects participants, the SCAR AKIS

SWG members and also persons belonging to the communication targeted groups. This report highlights some factors that can be considered as key success factors for best practices in communication applied to the frame of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects.

PROBLEMATIC:

The list of key success factors of a well-designed communication strategy, in the context of innovative agricultural research and innovation projects, is based on the work of SCAR AKIS SWG. Whilst being confronted to the existing European Guidelines on communication, this list of key success factors can be displayed in four main chapters that could be considered as the four outstanding inputs of a sustainable communication strategy.

Those four main sections have been respectively divided into sub-sections in order to perform a more in-depth analysis of the key elements underlying the topics that they address.

I. BUILDING A TRUST-BASED COMMUNICATION ECOSYSTEM AND ENSURING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN ACTORS

From the European Commission point of view, building a trust-based communication ecosystem and ensuring mutual understanding between actors is a key element of the communication strategies in the context of multi-actor innovative projects. In this section, we will seek to identify how communication best practices can help build a trust-based ecosystem of communication and ensure mutual understanding between actors. The problematic of tackling key issues in building a trust-based communication and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of demand-driven approach projects will firstly be developed. Then, we will analyse how to tackle key issues in building a trust-based communication and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of policy or research driven approach projects, in a comparative perspective. The last sub-section raises the questions of communication strategies regarding the size of consortium and its nature.

I.1 Tackling key issues in building a trust-based communication and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of demand-driven approach projects

This analysis confronted to the existing guidelines on the communication topic, leads to the identification of a first typology of multi-actor innovative agricultural projects that is to be taken into account when identifying the key success factors that contribute to the establishment of a trust-based communication ensuring mutual understanding. In the frame of demand-driven approach projects, because the needs are initially expressed by the field end-users, the problematic of communication tends to differ from challenges met by the policy or research driven approach projects.

Indeed, in this case, which constitutes a first scenario for studying communication practices, the research and scientific communities create and develop solutions to meet the end-users requirements. Therefore, communication towards the end-users will not be the same in the sense that the target groups are already “on board”, that is to say much more aware of the project validity. As a consequence, the end-users are likely to be way more involved right from the start in the project activities. In contrast, in the case of policy and research-driven approach projects (which constitutes the other scenario for studying communication practices), some expected communication challenges would probably encompass the process of capturing the target groups’ (end-users’) interest for the given project and its perspectives (social, environmental and economic objectives)

I.1.1 Examples of challenges in building a trust-based communication ecosystem and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of demand-driven approach projects

According to the scientific literature on the topic, trust is vital when crossing **professional cultural boundaries** as people are opening themselves to vulnerability and risk (University of Hertfordshire, 2013)

Moreover, according to the same research paper, trust is shown to be built by having information on others, prior experience of working together, norms of cooperation. These relationships are built up through existing relationships, building trust through progression of projects and the use of intermediaries or guarantors.

In the Austrian project “Alternative methods for wireworm control in potatoes“, which aims at developing effective and environmentally friendly control methods as alternatives to the use of pesticides, the build of trust and mutual understanding faced the **challenge of** crossing **different social and educational backgrounds.** Although the involvement of the end-users (potato growers) was very strong right from the start of the project, which is often the case in the frame of demand-driven approach projects. Therefore, **the shared motivation** on the wireworm control topic allowed to **build** the **community** and to **schedule regular meetings** without huge struggles.

Another type of challenge is embodied by the spanish EIP project VITICAST. This project aims at finding innovative solutions for the prediction of grapevine fungal diseases. The innovation carried out by this project faces numerous challenges, such as the reliability of the tools which are deployed to predict fungal diseases on grapes, taking into account the unpredictable reliability of measurements and also the climatic conditions variations which impact the pathogens and its propagation. Therefore, the build of trust in this given project may have faced the difficulty for project members to stay involved and motivated on a long-term basis in order to deal with the uncertainty of the results.

I.1.2 Examples of solutions for building trust and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of demand-driven approach projects, based on the SCAR AKIS SWG outputs

In the frame of the Austrian project "Alternative methods for wireworm control in potatoes"[1], trust in the consortium is increased by regular presentations on the project results and progress. Those **presentations** are **clear and simple**, translated into **English**, with **photos** of the wireworm damages **taken on the fields**, and **photos of the used techniques** to solve the problems on farms caused by the wireworms. Thus, every single member of this project can follow the progress of research and the results obtained. A discussion is open at the end of the presentations to enable a participative functioning that creates a space and time-window for questions and experience sharing.

Slide of the presentation of Peter Schweiger for the University Krakow, with photos taken on fields

Regarding the Spanish project VITICAST, the use of various communication instruments all **along the project life cycle**, targeting **various audiences**, contributed to reinforce trust and mutual understanding inside the consortium and outside of it. For example, this project designed a logo to be used as a "brand" of the Operational Group in the dissemination activities and events. A brochure, both in Spanish and English, has also been delivered in meetings, events and through email. This communication "step by step" as the project progresses allows the partners to have a perfect understanding on "how things are going on", and therefore this participates to increase trust. Tailor-made information related to the project is included in the websites of the partners and collaborators, which highly contributes to strengthen the mutual understanding between the different professional cultures of the multi-actor project. The project members are also elaborating presentations with information and objectives of the project, which are meant to be used in meetings and events. This type

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/projects/arge-drahtwurm-alternative-methoden-der-0

of presentation participates in the construction of a positive environment for trust and mutual understanding. A banner has been incorporated in the emails of the operational Group members in order to increase the identity of the OG and to reinforce visibility of the project.

Last but not least, a poster on the project results and progress will be exhibited in the main locations of the group members. This identical communication tool displayed in the various locations of project members enables to increase the feeling of common identity and objectives shared among all the project partners.

I.1.3 Examples of multi-actor projects that managed to build a trust-based communication ecosystem and ensure mutual understanding between actors/stakeholders in the frame of demand-driven approach

This sub section is dedicated to elaborate on concrete examples of agricultural innovative projects, whether they are still ongoing or not, which managed to create inside the consortium and between the major projects partners a smart space for trust. This intellectual pathway aims at gathering illustrations of success factors in the process of trust and mutual understanding among actors in order to highlight some major good practices that may be either replicable, or transferable to other projects, in other geographical, historical, agricultural, social, economic and political contexts. It is particularly interesting in the sense that the tools developed by the projects featured below will be potentially inspirational to other projects.

So as to deepen the understanding of the different projects' communication specific contexts, especially in the matter of trust and mutual understanding between actors, some additional information has been provided by the project coordinators and members. Their kind answers were the basis for enriching this sub section with more contextualized elements.

Tip: encourage events where people can freely exchange and build mutual trust.

The choice has been made to introduce this **empirical part** with the presentation of the communication done under the H2020 project AgriSpin. AgriSpin, a 2015-2017 so-called "Thematic Network" H2020 multi-actor project, wants to contribute to improved methods of innovation in European agriculture. AgriSpin has focused on the processes through which innovation really becomes practice and found out that blind spots have to be circumvented or avoided from start. For that the AgriSpin project examined the practice of innovation today by answering questions such as: how does the European farmer seek information and support? What competencies does he expect of his adviser? What kind of support system is in place today? By doing so, AgriSpin intended to uncover best cases for innovation and identifies best practice for innovation brokering and support systems. Agrispin communicated on these innovation processes by using the comparison with a spiral in which several hurdles should be taken in order to come to a successful result.

Communication on the innovation process: avoid blind spots

Blind spots in an innovation project are all the important sub-processes which the participants may not view as critical. The entire project could fail if one or several of these sub-processes are derailed. For example, blind spots can occur in the collaboration between a farmer who has an innovative idea and his adviser to whom he turns for advice. If they understand each other, chances are that the appropriate supportive measures will be put into play. If not, the chances of the development of the innovation are a lot lower.

To this end, the **communication booklet**[2] explains

(1) the main steps in an innovation process, presented as a spiral[3], and

(2) best practices on how to study and assess innovation cases[4], taking this spiral concept into account

Agrispin furthermore ensures that the knowledge accumulated in the project is disseminated to as many stakeholders as possible. Besides the good examples presented in the above mentioned booklet, the Agrispin website also takes a very hands-on approach to present a nice set of practical cases by using concise **videos**[5] (max 4 minutes) which are easy to understand and attractive.

Tip: Make short and easy to understand videos explaining the innovation process with a practical example (max 4 minutes)

Another example of a multi-actor agricultural project which managed to create a smart space for trust and mutual understanding between the major projects partners, is located in Italy: Filos in Bus is an Operational Group (OG) which has for communication target groups all partners of the OG. The project, which aims notably at demonstrating the crucial role that stable meadows play in the environmental sustainability of the production of Parmigiano-Reggiano, has launched a creative concept of communication: partners travel together by bus during a one-day-visit to the farms which are partners of the OG. The travel to the partner farms include the visits, and also represents the occasion to share knowledge on territories, local products and other local actors which are involved in the supply chain of Parmiggiano Reggiano. During the bus travel, the partners of the OG discuss on project activities and results,

[2] http://agrispin.eu/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Inspiration-booklet-Agrispin-2017.pdf

[3] page 17-19 in the Agrispin communication booklet

[4] Page 12-16 of the Agrispin communication booklet

[5] 2 examples of videos on good practice for innovation support:

- 4 minutes video on Innovative logistics and distribution https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DmWWp4p9C04&feature=youtu.be
- 3 minutes video on Food Innovation Tour https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bis7LbXKIlg&feature=youtu.be

by focusing on common matters of interests (soil fertility, carbon footprint, carbon sequestration, …) around which they share practice and scientific knowledge.

This process of communication helps the partners to interact one to each other. It is democratic and iterative during the project implementation. It is supporting **team building** within the OG, through a major **coordination and interaction** among the partners, the development of collective knowledge and **common understanding** regarding on-going achievements of the project and of its results. Moreover, the **cross visits** on farms support **peer-to-peer processes** among the farmers.

Tip: whenever possible, initiate the trust prior to the project.

Last but not least, the on-going Austrian project "Alternative methods for wireworm control in potatoes" is a striking example of agricultural innovative project which managed to set trust and mutual understanding inside its consortium. The EIP Operational Group project, which aims at developing effective and environmentally friendly control methods as alternatives to the use of pesticides, organises regular meetings in person (at least twice a year). The regular meetings enable the project consortium to create the required time-window and space for **information-exchange between** the **lead-partner**, **farmers** and **researchers**. This possibility of exchange between researchers and farmers is highly appreciated by all the OG-Members. A deeper understanding of the context of this project allowed the identification of contextualized elements that contribute to explain the success in establishing sustainable trust among actors: in the case of this project the producers of the OG were very interested in working with scientists to find a solution to the wireworm problem in agriculture. Moreover, the scientists were looking strongly forward to build a bridge between science and practice. Prior to the start of this project, Global 2000 (lead partner, an independent Austrian environmental organization) has already been successfully working with the potato growers of the OG for several years. The previous and solid experience of work sharing between Global 2000 and the potato growers of the OG set a positive environment of mutual trust and good understanding between all actors at the very start of "Alternative methods for wireworm control in potatoes". Thus, the creation of trustful relationships between the project partners in the frame of this given project has been facilitated right from the beginning, and then reinforced as the project progressed.

I.2 Tackling key issues in building a trust-based communication and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of policy or research driven approach projects

Communication challenges in the case of policy or research driven approach projects constitute the second scenario for studying communication practices. We remind here that it may start by capturing the target groups' (end-users') interest for the given project and its perspectives (social, environmental and economic objectives) so as to facilitate their adhesion.

Depending on the project's context (historical, geographical, social, cultural, economic, environmental and political) the establishment of a trust-based communication that ensures mutual understanding may significantly vary. As such, this part also illustrates the communication efforts made by the policy or research driven approach projects so as to first of all:

- **adapt** to their **context**

then:

- **strengthen** their **role** in their **environment** in terms of building **trust**

finally:

- **increase** their project's **validity** and **legitimacy**.

I.2.1 Examples of challenges in building a trust-based communication ecosystem and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in the frame of policy or research driven approach projects

If each innovative agricultural project is unique by its history, its nature, the objectives it pursues and the challenges it has to tackle, the various difficulties met by the multi-actor project groups, which serve as an empirical basis in the purpose of this study, led us to identify some human-related challenges. These factors are respectively linked to:

- **the project timeline and the management of uncertainty, applied to**
    - project members availability,
    - agendas,
    - the acquisition of results, conditioned by a high seasonality in agriculture,
    - climate aleas,
    - monies' availability with respect to the project needs,
    - required flexibility in communication actions scheduling

- **geographical and physical distance between the project stakeholders**
    - difficulty to plan physical meetings,
    - difficulty to take into account other local specificities,
    - difficulty to share the project results and progress,
    - differences of spoken languages,
    - heterogeneous culture of innovation from one region to another,
    - heterogeneous communication skills

-the social and educational backgrounds diversity:

- bridge the different cultures, educational characteristics (Research, Advisers, Farmers, industries…), and the different fields of expertise,
- learn to work together as a project team beyond those differences and singularities

I.2.2 Examples of solutions for developing trust between actors and ensure mutual understanding in the frame of policy or research driven approach projects, based on the working groups outputs

Hereafter are insights, coming from the various projects' restitutions, and which constitute "tips and tricks" to set up trust and mutual understanding within a project consortium, and between the consortium and the main partners of the project

- ensure **close interaction** between **researchers**, **practitioners** and **stakeholders**

A close interaction between researchers, practitioners and stakeholders ensures the development of trust and mutual understanding among the project consortium. Moreover, it accelerates knowledge uptake and innovation transfer. (European Association of Research and Technology Organisations, 2018)

- Get the farmers to do as much as possible of the talking at events.

The informal talks at events between farmers contribute to enhance the **peer-to-peer learning process** and contribute to reinforce trust and mutual understanding between actors

- Assess target audiences preferred channels and format of communication. (Good communications plan)
- Seek **trusted opinion leaders**.
- Identify **demonstration farms** that other **farmers** can **relate** to.
- Ensure **events** are **well managed** and **engaging** and not too much information.

I.2.3 Examples of policy or research driven approach projects that managed to build a trust-based communication ecosystem and ensure mutual understanding between actors

The first example of relevant project regarding the build of a smart space for trust and mutual understanding between actors is the hungarian project "Tools for Assessment

and Planning of Aquaculture Sustainability"[6]. This H2020 project, which aims at consolidating the environmental sustainability of European aquaculture, involves in its consortium 14 major partners, including enterprises, universities and research institutions. In order to build a strong partnership between the project stakeholders, regular meetings and workshops following the Gantt chart of the project are organised, at milestones or when stakeholders are involved. Moreover, emails and Skype are used as means of regular communication inside the consortium, so as to tackle the physical and geographical distance challenge between the partners.

A consortium meeting occurs at least once a year, and the Steering Committee meets more often. The whole project communication management has obviously been designed in order to create and keep trust inside the consortium. The second element to highlight for this project, is its ability to develop trust with the targeted audience(s) and end-users by communicating step by step its major outputs and results. This is ensured through:

- Conference presentations at large
- Scientific conferences
- Meetings of relevant clusters or other aquaculture related associations, organisations
- Scientific publications (prepared when the scientific results come in)
- Continually updated website, Facebook page, Twitter account and a Youtube channel
- Newsletters

Key for success: Ensure strong commitment of all actors, in particular the end-users, so as to develop trust within the consortium.

Projects carried out by the French innovative networks RITA7 in the French departments overseas are also relevant examples that illustrate the building of a trust-based communication ecosystem in a spirit of best practices sharing. Adapting their methodology to the specific contexts of the French departments overseas (insularity, economical fragility, remoteness, but also huge diversity of cultures and traditions, visible in their different agriculture types and organizations), the project holders developed interesting strategies to reinforce the link between the overseas and the metropole. For instance, the project members use skype conferences and other medias to organise virtual meetings and connect to each other so as to tackle the distance challenge. According to RITA members who are very much involved in the construction and sustainability of RITA projects, a first key to success is to ensure a participative functioning among the RITA community. The co-construction approach of multi-actor projects is decisive for the RITA projects' stakeholders and reinforces the trust-based ecosystem and the mutual understanding between all actors. Another key

[6] http://tapas-h2020.eu/

[7] https://coatis.rita-dom.fr/?HomePage

element is the non hierarchical communication process: all actors can interact on equal terms.

On a macro-scale, both governance levels (at national level by ACTA-CIRAD, in region by the regional councils) also strengthen the trust-based communication ecosystem and ensure mutual understanding between actors.

Tip: Communicate often with impacting short and clear messages.

Another example of successful project in terms of building a trust-based ecosystem of communication takes us to Denmark: Future Cropping[8] is a Danish project that aims at increasing crop yield and quality without increasing the environmental impact. It is based on a partnership between universities, machine facturers and consulting companies. The double objective of improving yields whilst minimizing the environmental impact is to be achieved by integrating a range of data, decision support systems and technological solutions that enable farmers to tailor their management according to the local and actual conditions in the field. The breakdown of communication actions is such as actions are deployed all along the project life cycle, as soon as the project starts. Communicating all along projects' life cycle allows all actors/stakeholders including all end-users to develop and secure a relationship built on trust. Moreover, communication continuity ensures mutual understanding within the consortium, but also between the project core group, the target groups including the end-users.

Tip: Communication also aims at raising the public awareness. Be prepared to answer unexpected questions. Do not avoid addressing issues.

Regarding the challenge of raising the target group (s)' awareness, a striking example of multi-actor innovative project brings us to Slovenia: the national research project "raising entire males or immunocastration? Research of measures for boar taint reduction and emerging problem of meat quality"[9], which aims at improving national meat quality, was facing an "ethical" issue which is specific in the context of Slovenia, namely the fall back on boar immunocastration.

Therefore, one of the main challenge was to raise the farmers and meat industry's awareness at national level about the emergency of the topic. This has been achieved by operating various and numerous communiation incentives throughout the country, such as meetings, on farm demonstrations.

Other smart communication practices including trust development and mutual understanding are carried out by the project BETTER Farm Beef Challenge. The key success factors which contribute to trust reinforcement and mutual understanding have been identified by the project consortium as the following:

[8] https://futurecropping.dk/en/

[9] https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211601X1500098X

-Use of a **trusted source** of **information** for local farmers

-**Direct** communication between farmers **at walks** and **in articles**.

-**Transparency of processes and practices** on **demonstration farms**. **Honest sharing** of **results** and experiences.

-**Regular contact** between stakeholders.

-Formal arrangements.

-Staff with good **communication skills.**

-Strong **brand name** and **communications plan**.

-**Constant presence** with farmers and **availability** regarding their **needs**

-Exchange of real information

-Ability to bring **key technology** to a **local farm**.

I.3 Lessons learnt and recommendations for similar projects

With regard to the huge diversity of the projects, it is foreseeable that those projects will highly contribute to bring an outstanding inspiration for similar projects. Thereafter, the most relevant projects inputs can be summarised as “tips and tricks”.

Tip: Make a detailed project and communication plan.

The preparation of a detailed project and communication plan allows the project partners to better visualize what is expected in the frame of the project work. The clear distribution of tasks and actions throughout the project timeline increase trust between actors.

Tip: Establish a clear leadership of the project, which can guide and motivate the partners through the project.

The **role** of the **lead partner** is often mentioned as it enables to manage the whole project communication process. It contributes to **reinforce trust** by avoiding or mitigating potential misunderstandings between the project partners. It helps the entire project team by designating a **contact person**, which coordinates and streamlines the information exchanges. Finally yet importantly, it **motivates** the team members by developing with them a **shared vision** on the way the project should function and on the **major and final objectives** it has to deliver. The contact person must be someone **reliable.** It is desirable to choose also someone who shows **charismatic traits.**

- Do not be over-ambitious – things take time!

- Use efficient support and more precise information regarding handling, reporting.
- Reducing bureaucracy would free up resources for communication within the OG, dissemination of results.
- Use a channel that works well for everyone as a general tool, but allow the use of other means for ad-hoc meeting (for internal communication).
- Consider the characteristics of your target groups (i.e. where you can reach them) and try to access them through their most relevant channels in order to avoid ineffective communication.
- Always stay positive! It is sometimes challenging working in an international environment with people from many different cultures and work attitudes. It takes time and flexibility to learn about each other and to find the way to communicate in an effective way.
- Be prepared to communicate when there are news.
- Use many different communication channels.
- For transnational projects, visit every partner/country to increase trust and understanding between partners.

I.4 Tackling key issues related to the size of consortium and its nature

In this section, we address the problematic of building a positive environment for communication regarding the nature of the project and the nature of the consortium (its size and its governance type).

I.4.1 Examples of communication challenges regarding the size of consortium

Natures and sizes of consortiums may significantly vary from one project to another.

In the case of small consortium, it is expected that internal communication might be faster operated. Moreover every participant might contribute to the communication effort.

However depending on the size of the audience and target groups it is likely that communication will be more demanding and will require more efforts from the project participants. Moreover, it might prove difficult to dedicate full-time participants solely to communication. In that case, it can be interesting to consider outsourcing part of these activities. This, of course, has to be balanced with the availability of funding.

In the case of bigger consortia, it is expected that communication would be more easily performed, if compared to a smaller consortium. However, the internal communication might be slowed down due to, both, the number of participants, and to the difficulty of simultaneously ensuring a common level of understanding. As a consequence, trust might take longer to install.

On the one hand, it is expected that the outcomes of the project will be numerous and therefore, their communication will require an efficient coordination, especially when targeted at the “outside world”.

On the other hand, communication can be more easily managed as a dedicated work package which will be carried out with allocated resources (both human and financial).

The ESIF "Baltic Deal" project is a huge transnational project, involving the major countries of the Baltic Region which manages to overcome the hurdles related to its size. Specifically, the communication challenge in such a project is to coordinate the work between the different entities of each country and then to coordinate at larger scale with other member states stakeholders. The success of Baltic Deal lies on a very smart bottom-up approach at each national level, a multi-actor process, and a unified involvement on the project topic. This organization allows to smoothen the information exchange process and to adopt a more efficient top-down approach in each country afterwards.

Tip: Allocation of resources (humans and financial) have to be thoroughly thought with respect to the ambition of the communication activities.

Another striking example of communication challenges regarding the size of consortium is the project SolACE[10], which aims at designing new solutions for improving the agroecosystem and crop efficiency for water and nutrient use. The consortium gathers twenty five partners from the academic and the private sectors as well as from extension services, one NGO and project management organisation. The academic partners in the consortium belong to top level of European and International research groups in crop physiology (including root biology) and genetics, soil biogeochemistry and microbial ecology, agronomy and agro ecology, as well as social sciences.

To complete this scientific knowledge and excellence, extension service organisations and the NGO were involved in order to ensure that SolACE concepts and objectives are aligned with end-users' priorities and that results would be implemented.

Finally, industrial partners will help building the innovation strategy and development of the project and ensure that SolACE innovations will be exploited at the end of the project. The success of SOLACE in terms of communication and dissemination good practices was to build a strong relationship based on trust at local and national levels. In the same spirit as the project Baltic Deal, the strength of the consortium built locally and nationally, enables to fluidize the interactions with other actors in other countries.

[10] https://www.solace-eu.net/

SolACE consortium different locations on a map

Other thematic networks success stories such as the European project "Sust Use Fumigants"[11], the project Inno4Grass[12], or the SMART AKIS[13] european network show that these huge transnational projects characteristics upper described can be empirically seen as success factors for communication and dissemination:

- A very smart **bottom-up approach** at each **local and national level.**
- Adopt as much as possible a **multi-actor way of work** and culture of communication.
- **Unified involvement** on the **project topic.**
- **Shared vision** on project accomplishments and expectations.
- Smart **top-down approach** in each national/local level **afterwards.**

In the case of the Slovenian project "Pig production technologies and use of alternative feeds, natural additives for products of higher quality in conventional and organic farming", the challenge regarding the size of consortium was that the project worked with only a few partners. This means that the dedicated budget was lower than for other projects. Moreover, the end-users were not project partners. Although the targeted groups were more specific and small as well. According to this project leader, the end-users were advisory services, farmers and students. In order to better reach them, the project partners are preparing materials that are adapted to the end-users and easily accessible (web page repository). In general terms, such a small size of

[11] http://ec.europa.eu/environment/life/project/Projects/index.cfm?fuseaction=search.dspPage&nproj_id=3449&docType=pdf
[12] https://inno4grass.eu/en/
[13] https://www.smart-akis.com/

consortium makes the project have troubles to highly increase its visibility and notoriety. However, it doesn't mean that the project communication will not be successful, and even with a small size of consortium an innovative project can attract other partners and grow.

I.4.2 Examples of communication challenges regarding the governance type of the consortium

Two major governance types have been presented through the agricultural innovative projects used as illustrations in this study:

- Democratic functioning project team
- Core group of leaders

These two governance types are very much complementary and should not be understood as contradictory. Indeed, the creation of a democratic functioning project team inside the consortium is essential in order to collect the different opinions and feelings, and also to brainstorm as the project is on-going. The existence of a core group of leaders (lead partner) is useful and crucial when it comes to take any decision regarding the project management, including the communication management. It is also essential to have a lead partner in order to coordinate the different stakeholders' work. Moreover, the project leader can help the overall communication management by adopting a holistic vision of the project deliverables and progress.

HENNOVATION is striking example of a multi-actor project integrating a democratic functioning to incentivise bottom-up and user-led innovation. It is a H2020 thematic network about animal welfare and practice-driven innovation in the laying hen sector funded through the Horizon 2020 programme.

The HENNOVATION project[14] established on-farm and off-farm innovation networks searching for and use new ideas to make businesses more efficient and sustainable. The networks were led by producers or transporters and hen processors in collaboration with veterinary surgeons, farm advisers and scientific researchers, consumers and egg production certification organisations. The networks tackled two particular issues of concern in the production chain: injurious pecking and the transport and use of end-of-lay hens (hens which no longer lay any eggs).

The project demonstrated the potential of innovation led by producers and industry practices (on farm, during transport and at the abattoir). Due to increasingly stricter legislation with regard to animal welfare and sustainability of production, commercial animal husbandry has gone through tremendous changes in recent years. These changes place substantial pressure on producers and industry, but also create a need for innovative practices. Producers and others in the industry often do not get to hear about relevant scientific innovation, and so the intended change in terms of increased productivity and sustainability is not always achieved.

An overarching aim is to develop and disseminate **technical innovations which have come from practice**. A short video communicates and demonstrates how this went very well (https://youtu.be/mVsW4--ex0M)

[14] http://www.hennovation.eu/

The Hennovation project also developed the skills of the participants in the innovation networks and facilitated the interaction and communication of individuals within each network. Web-based communication tools and an on-line training programme were designed to support the knowledge sharing within and between the networks. The results of the Hennovation project are expected to inspire and support uptake of innovation in other livestock sectors.

II. EMPOWERING YOUR MESSAGE BY ENSURING ITS RELEVANCE AND THE LEGITIMACY OF THE COMMUNICATOR (S)

Effective communication happens when a **complete message** is **sent** and **fully received** and **understood** by an **audience**. Good communication is about getting **the right message** to the **right person** in the **right medium** at the **right time**. Depending on the nature of the message and audience, **the audience** may then have the **opportunity to engage** in a **productive discussion of the message.** (The National Archives, 2013)

According to the "Communicating EU Research and Innovation guidance for project participants" of the European Commission, the choice of messages is a very critical element of the overall communication strategy of innovative multi-actor projects. The two major components of the message empowering process are the relevance of the content and the legitimacy of the communicator. Therefore, after the empirical analysis of the main hurdles and levers regarding building trust and ensuring mutual understanding between actors in multi-actor agricultural projects, we will consider, with a special interest, one of the core questions raised by implementing a proper communication strategy: what is the purpose of the communication, what message(s) and who is (are) the most relevant communicator(s) for the selected message and audience? We will first address the problematic of picking the right audience(s). Then we will raise the issue of adapting the message to the targeted audience. Eventually, we will highlight the importance of the legitimacy of the communicator in the overall communication process.

II.1 Picking the right audience

The selection of the audience is the first decisive step of the message transferring process and has to be thought in such a way that it includes all relevant target groups, regarding the project goals and objectives previously defined. According to the European Commission guidelines on communicating EU research and innovation for projects participants, the main relevant questions to be asked when selecting the audience are:

Is each target audience a relatively homogenous group of people are present (not: 'the public at large' or 'all stakeholders')? Can the indicated audiences be further specified? For example: from 'the general public' to 'female citizens commuting by train to work in one of the EU-10 countries' or from 'decision makers' to 'European parliamentarians involved in the design of the new transport policy 2013'. Does it include all relevant target groups? Can your audience help you reach your objectives? Who has an interest in your research? Who can contribute to your work? Who would be interested

in learning about the project's findings? Who could or will be affected directly by the outcomes of the research? Who are not directly involved, but could have influence elsewhere? Does the project aim to address both a direct audience and intermediaries to reach more people? What about the possibility of audiences at local, regional, national and European level? Is the audience external (not restricted to consortium partners)?

II.2 Adapting the message to the audience

The ability of communicating by using adapted messages is also crucial, and the most impactful messages are very much audience oriented. The purpose of this subsection is to illustrate this fact with examples of multi-actor agricultural projects which managed to adapt their message (form and content) to the targeted audience in order to maximize the impact of their communication effort. The inputs of these projects examples are very much likely to shed the light on the best ways to adapt the message to the targeted audience (s).

Tip: Pick the right medium for the right message.

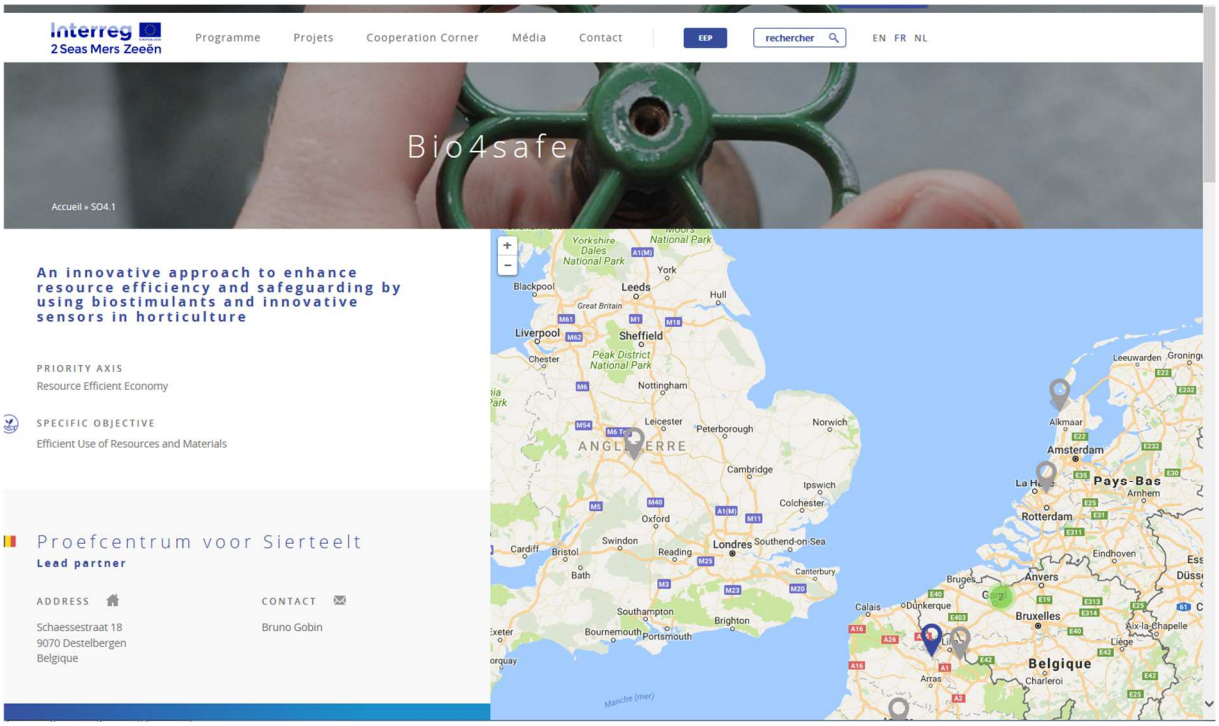
Examples of projects that managed to adapt the message to the audience

An excellent example of successful project which managed to adapt its messages to the audiences is the Belgian project Bio4SAFE[15]. Indeed, this innovative project which aims at reducing the water and fertiliser use in horticulture by using biostimulants and innovative plant sensor tools, used diverse communication instruments that are, each of them, very much audience oriented: Among the different communication tools such as posters, social medias (Twitter, Facebook, Linkedin), open days, website, congress, videos, articles and newsletters, meetings with policymakers, road trips, the **communication major asset** of Bio4SAFE is the ability of spreading clear and concise messages through interactive means. Moreover, the content is translated into the languages spoken by the different project stakeholders and audiences. An english version is available, as it is the current international language.

Below is displayed the homepage of Bio4SAFE, with three languages available, a user-friendly interface and many interactive possibilities.

Tip: Use the preferred media of your audience

[15] https://www.interreg2seas.eu/fr/bio4safe



Homepage of the project Bio4SAFE, September 2018

Another excellent example of project that managed to adapt the message to the audience is “Alternative Methods for wireworm control in potatoes”: through its presentations highlighting key messages, clear and simple, the project deploys huge efforts to adapt its audience(s). The presentations are more results oriented when mostly farmers and advisers are targeted. The messages are more process (how to evaluate) oriented when mostly researchers constitute the main audience.

In order to provide a very concrete illustration of the way this project builds its messages and presentation supports, the choice has been made to present the poster of this project, which has been used during the EIP Agri Lisbon 2017[16].

The sections on bold first indicate the Practical Problem, then the partners, the project’s objectives and the expected results. A major asset in communication is the existing milestone through the section “Results so far/ first lessons”, which enables the audience to better know about the project progress. Finally, the poster displays highly visual tools such as the project location on a map of Europe, or photos taken on the fields.

[16] https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020/en/news/agri-innovation-summit-lisbon-2017

Figure : Poster EIP Agri Lisbon 2017

Tip: Do not restrain communication to only one message through one medium.

The last but not least project which deserves to be mentioned here is the Hungarian project “Tools for Assessment and Planning of Aquaculture Sustainability”. Indeed, this H2020 project, which aims at consolidating the environmental sustainability of European aquaculture, managed to adapt its messages to its targeted audience (aquaculture related authorities and the aquaculture industry) through a smart range of communication instruments such as

- continually updated website, Facebook page, Twitter account and a Youtube channel,
- newsletters Workshops (mainly for stakeholders),
- conference presentations at large,
- scientific conferences,
- meetings of relevant clusters or other aquculture related associations, organisations,
- scientific publications.

II.3 Using legitimate communicators

According to the European Commission, the use of trusted sources of information is a key element for the overall communication strategy of an innovative multi-actor project. What we mean by "legitimate" in the context of agricultural innovative projects is different from the common definition of legitimacy perceived as the right and acceptance of a certain form of authority (political or moral assertion). As a matter of fact, a legitimate actor/stakeholder in the context of our study tends to be a role-model for communication actions whether this given actor is a well-known institution or entity or any other actor perceived as impactful for communication purpose. However a legitimate actor doesn't necessary have a normative or legal status. This section aims at illustrating the preponderant effect of using legitimate communicators in the overall communication strategy for multi-actor agricultural projects.

Tip: Legitimate communicators are not necessarily the research or innovation carriers.

Examples of projects that managed to use legitimate communicators

Projects carried out by the French innovative networks RITA in the French departments overseas managed to use legitimate communicators for the conferences once a year, for instance during Paris International Agricultural Show or even for the tropical conferences (Martinique 2016, Réunion and Mayotte 2017): During these shows and conferences, the local actors feel free to express themselves on various topics, in front of a professional audience or even the public at large. There is no communication monopoly, which means each participant of the project can freely interact with the targeted audience (s). The impact of communication actions is ensured by the geographical diversity embodied by each communicator, who thus becomes more legitimate.

Tip: Involve the trusted communicators.

In the frame of the H2020 multi-actor project AgriDemo-F2F [17](Building an interactive AgriDemo-Hub community: enhancing farmer to farmer learning), which aims at enhancing peer-to-peer learning within the commercial farming community, a "pioneer farmer" in some cases, is chosen as project communicator. Operating communication actions directly during on-farm demonstrations by involving "pioneer farmers" is seen as a major success factor to increase legitimacy of the communicator.

[17] https://agridemo-h2020.eu/

III. CREATING AND DEVELOPING SMART COMMUNICATION CHANNELS USING ADAPTED COMMUNICATION TOOLS WITHIN A LARGE TOOL BOX

According to the FAO Communications Toolkit (FAO, 2011), creating and developing smart communication channels using adapted communication tools within a large toolbox is a key success factor for the whole project communication strategy in the context of innovative agricultural projects.

This chapter aims at highlighting the positive effects of the creation and/or use of smart communication channels using adapted communication tools chosen among a large tool box on the overall communication strategy of multi-actor projects. In this part, we will sum up the main types of communication channels at disposal, before raising the practical issue of creating from scratch smart communication channels or using existing ones through a range of partners and a networking approach. This will lead us to tackle the question of using the most tailored communication instruments among a large panel. The subsections III.4.1 and III.4.2 address the problematic of communication after the end of a project through a short analysis of why communicating after the project ends matters followed by an up to date understanding of how and what to communicate when projects come to an end.

III.1 The main types of communication channels at disposal

The main types of communication channels at disposal are:

- Website / information system,
- social networks such as Facebook, Youtube depending on territories,
- institutional letter,
- technical letter,
- brochure,
- databases,
- videos,
- posters,
- technical leaflets,
- presentations (with scientific content, or technical content, or targeting public at large),
- on farms demonstrations,
- meetings
- podcasts…

However, not all these channels are fulfilling the same use and each of them can be involved to complement the communication activities.

III.2. Creating from scratch smart communication channels or using existing ones through a range of partners and a networking approach

The choice between creating from scratch smart communication channels or using existing ones through a range of partners and a networking approach remained an open question raised through the SCAR-SWG AKIS restitutions. Because there are **transactional costs** in the case of the creation from scratch of communication channels, a key question concerns the return on investment, not only financial but also intellectual, human (example of a youtube channel creation) of such a process. Another question raised whilst choosing and implementing communication channels is: **how to capture and keep the audience**?

Results gathered at this stage show that depending on the project situation (geographical and political context, genesis of the project, presence or not of existing communication channels…) and its objectives, the need to create from scratch smart communication channels rather than using existing ones through a range of partners and a networking approach may vary. In short, there is no systemic recommendation to give and each case must be contextualized.

Tip: Do not necessarily reinvent the wheel. Use trusted communication channels which are already in place.

The H2020 multi-actor project "SMARTCHAIN"[18], which has for objective to foster and accelerate the shift towards collaborative short food supply chains, initiated the creation of new channels such as a digital innovation platform, and uses at the same time existing channels.

Its innovation platform (joint stakeholder platform) contains a **database,** an **inventory** of practical **new solutions and recommendations** relevant to short food supply chains, which will be supported by **new interactive tools**, facilitating the **interplay platform-user** and the **cooperation among the project's actors and other stakeholders**. In the case of this project, the creation of the new communication channel such as the innovation platform is in link with the objective of fostering and accelerating the shift towards collaborative short food supply chains.

Regarding the project VITICAST, the communication instruments were designed **from scratch** to **communicate** and **disseminate** the objectives of the group, its motivation and composition. This is in link with the **genesis** of the VITICAST OG and with the fact it has been **financed** in the **first stage**.

A striking example of project which illustrates the strategic choice of communication channels is the Estonian project "Long-Term Knowledge Transfer Program for Cooperatives" which pursues the objective of fostering the transmission of knowledge among agricultural producers and processors. The program operates in close collaboration with many cooperatives and sectoral umbrella organisations. Communication – inside and outside – happens throughout the program. Among the numerous communication channels, the project uses Facebook, a dedicated homepage, e-mail, and direct communication. Registering for the events (e.g. or i.e.

[18] https://cordis.europa.eu/project/rcn/215956_en.html

seminars) is through direct e-mails. A week before the event, the organiser will call all the participants to make sure the stakeholders are attending the event and to make a better connection.

III.3. Lessons learnt for the creation or use of existing communication channels

In order to increase the potential impact of communication in the frame of demand driven approach projects, some operational groups have expressed the fact that it would be interesting to create initiatives and/or funding calls to promote the co-relation and joint activities among Operational Groups in similar fields. This would also increase the impact of the results, create channels for knowledge transfer, and develop on a larger scale the experience sharing.

In general, whatever the structure (research driven or demand driven approach) of the agricultural innovative project, the major lessons learnt can be summarised as below:

- Use a channel that works well for the targeted audience as a general tool, but allow the use of other means for ad-hoc meeting (for internal communication).
- Consider the characteristics of your target groups (i.e./e.g. where you can reach them) and try to access them through their most relevant channels in order to avoid ineffective communication.
- Always stay positive! It is sometimes challenging working in an international environment with people from many different cultures and work attitudes. It takes time and flexibility to learn about each other and to find the way to communicate in an effective way.

III.4 Using the most tailored communication instruments among a large panel

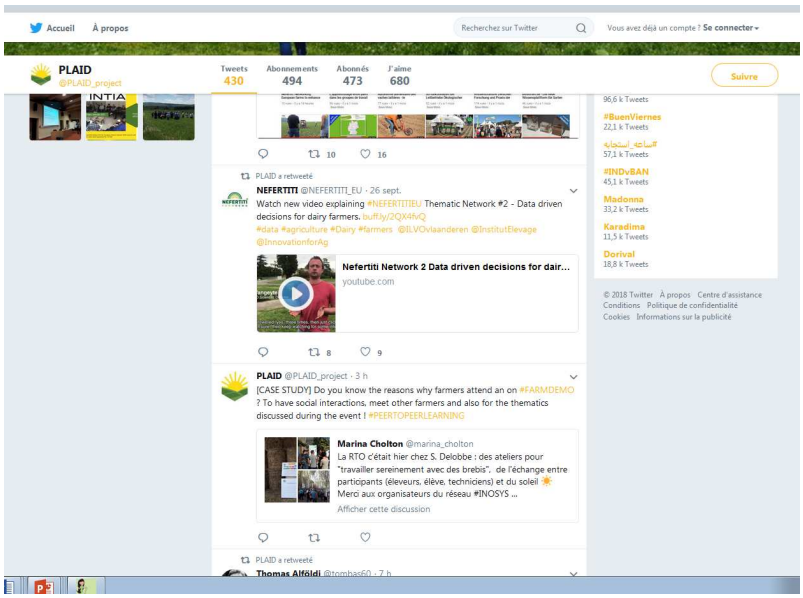
Whilst using a large panel of communication instruments is a key success factor of an efficient and impactful communication strategy (such as mentioned by the members of the Danish project “New scientific knowledge goes into the field”), it is as much important for multi-actor project participants to be able to identify and use the most tailored communication tools that fit with the ongoing context of the project. What we mean by “using the most tailored communication instruments” is using the tools that make the strongest impact to the targeted audiences, keeping the overall level of communication costs reasonable (in consideration with the global project funding and financial capacities). Based on the restitutions of the SCAR AKIS SWG on one side, and on the existing guidelines on communication strategies on the other hand, a good way **to ensure the use of the most tailored communication instruments** is to **ask directly the targeted audiences about their preferred communication channels.** While the digitization of the agricultural world is becoming more and more visible, we selected a few examples of projects which chose to communicate using new digital tools. They are presented below.

Tip: Consult your audiences about their preferred communication channels

A striking example of multi-actor agricultural project which managed to use the most tailored communication instruments among a large panel is FarmDemo[19], through the conception of very interactive videos, displayed on a dedicated YouTube channel[20]. All videos have a simple title, translated into English, so the web user knows what to expect by clicking on the video beforehand. Te videos show either new techniques applied to field work, or examples of damages on crops, or any concrete topic that farmers are likely to feel concerned with.

Another project which deserves to be mentioned here is PLAID[21]. PLAID is a H2020 multi-actor project. Its aim is to improve inventorise commercial demonstration farms, to boost knowledge exchange and innovation. PLAID created smart interfaces on the internet.

The homepage of PLAID on Twitter is presented below:



PLAID on Twitter, 28/09/2018

Based on the principle of *"Register your farm today on the #FarmDemo Hub https://farmdemo.eu/hub/bin/registerjoin … join the farming community interested in demonstration #peertopeer learning"*, PLAID developed a communication instrument among a large panel, which means the one that allows the building of a digital community of farmers. By using this mean, the website visitor can also see the number of other visitors who joined the virtual community. The counting system included is could help for assessing the impact of the communication instrument. Counting visitors is not enough to assess the real take-up of what is on the website.

Let us finish this "digital communication channels section" by highlighting two major elements:

[19] https://farmdemo.eu/hub
[20] https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdigVLNjyy5YrAdHl5G2frA
[21] https://www.plaid-h2020.eu

- A website / information system is an important tool for communication but **needs** a **dedicated facilitator** to be **fully effective.**

- A digital communication channel can be a good communication instrument, but should not be the main communication channel: it is crucial to **diversify the communication channels and keep a focus on face-to-face and peer-to-peer in real life conditions** (on field, on farm etc)!

Another type of communication channel which is relevant to mention here is the example of the on farm demonstration activities (multi-actor approach) developed by the project AgriDemo F2F (Austria). A special highlight concerns the link between the use of the demonstration farms and the process of understanding effective on farm demonstration activities (multi-actor approach). In the frame of this project, this specific communication channel is very adapted considering the final objectives pursued by the project.

It appears essential to also highlight in this section the impressive work of the French collaborative project on vineyards carried out by the CNIV. This project, which aims at finding solutions against the grapevine declines, managed to communicate its objectives and results through diversified channels, involving key partners for the aims of the project. The meetings were well managed and very impactful. Press trips were also organised, involving journalists on the project's topic. A dedicated website has been launched and finally a toolkit guide for wine growers was elaborated. As a result, all the communication and dissemination efforts provided the project with an increasing notoriety and influence in the whole wine inter-branch in France and even beyond the French borders. This example illustrates the fact that using relevant communication channels and communication tools act as a virtuous circle on both communication and strong development of the project's community.

III.5 Raising the issue of communication after the end of the project

Communicating after the end of an agricultural innovative project may be a difficult task for three major reasons:

- A lack of resources (human, financial, time) dedicated to the communication operations when the project ends.
- Uncertainty regarding what results must still be communicated and disseminated.
- Uncertainty regarding the best way to communicate when the project is over
  - ✓ Uncertainty regarding how often the communication/ dissemination actions should occur,
  - ✓ Uncertainty regarding how long these operations should last.

However, if communicating when an agricultural research project comes to an end is far from being an easy task, it seems to be essential to keep the memory of the project and to ensure that its results have completely been disseminated among all the actors who could be interested in the project's main outputs. Moreover, as mentioned by the coordinator of the European project "Farmpath"[22], to stay in touch with stakeholders and inform them on the outcomes of the project after the end of it, creates a stable and robust contact and facilitates any future communication for the purpose of future projects.

State of the play of communication at the end of a project

In most cases, communication after the end of a project is performed under a passive way: The project's data and main outputs remain available on websites, but for contractual reasons, the continuity of communication actions on results is no longer mandatory. Examples of solution to this issue are described hereafter.

Building Knowledge reservoirs - EURAKNOS

The H2020 multi-actor project EURAKNOS, which will start in January 2019, aims to include all outcomes of H2020 thematic networks for longer term communication by building long term knowledge reservoirs.

EURAKNOS[23] aims to boost the compilation of knowledge ready for practice by intensifying interaction between various agri-food or forestry networks thereby maximising outputs for practitioners. The project focuses on widening existing H2020 thematic network outputs in an interactive way, both content-wise and in terms of geographical coverage, and avoiding duplication with the existing networks. Cross-fertilisation will be organised among countries, regions and production systems. EURAKNOS will tackle the data management with a view to ensure sustainability of these knowledge networks and maximise their outputs for end-users. To this end, EURAKNOS aims to search for a harmonised approach. This project will also explore the end users' needs and possibilities of setting-up a European agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Open Source System that may connect all thematic networks. Euraknos will be followed by further attempts to broadening the EU knowledge reservoirs, connecting also with knowledge produced and communicated at national and regional levels. The future CAP proposals will support the improved functioning of AKIS and knowledge sharing in the Member States and regions, innovation and knowledge sharing is a cross-cutting objective of the post 2020 CAP policy.

EIP-AGRI website

Also the EIP website keeps information available and contributes to provide concrete answers to the raised question: how to communicate (and what) after the end of the project? The outcomes of EIP seminars, EIP workshops and EIP Focus Groups are all stocked on the EIP-AGRI website for longer duration, as well as all outcomes of EIP

[22] http://farmpath.hutton.ac.uk/
[23] http://www.Euraknos.eu
http://www.vignevin.com/en/english/ongoing-european-projects/euraknos.html

Operational Groups and H2020 multi-actor projects (https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/my-eip-agri). The plans and results of Operational Groups and H2020 multi-actor projects must use a common – although concise - format, with information and practical recommendations on the outcomes of the project. This unique EU repository is very important also to connect AKIS actors which are working in the various projects, and sometimes even on the same topics, without being aware of each others' activities.

The example of the EIP-AGRI workshops

EIP-AGRI workshops typically bring together 80 participants on all kind of subjects related to agricultural productivity and sustainability. An example is the "EIP-AGRI Workshop Cities and Food – Connecting Consumers and Producers" [24]. The workshop took place in September 2016 in Kraków, Poland, and included a field visit in Malopolska Region to illustrate challenges in food supply systems. The workshop has been prepared in kind cooperation with representatives from the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFFP) and the Polish Environmental Partnership Foundation. The workshop aimed at building innovative food systems and supply chains which improve connecting producers with consumers, looking at it from the perspective of the farmer as well as from the perspective of the city. The report stays available at https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/sites/agri-eip/files/eip-agri_fg_citiesfood_final_report_2016_en.pdf

The example of the EIP-AGRI Focus Groups

EIP-AGRI Focus Groups[25] are temporary groups of selected experts focusing on a specific subject, sharing knowledge and experience.

Each group explores practical innovative solutions to problems or opportunities in the field, and draws on experience derived from related useful projects. Each EIP-AGRI Focus Group meets twice and produces a recommendations and outcomes report.

The EIP-AGRI Focus Groups also discuss and document research results, best practices and identify the implications for further research activities that will help to solve practical problems in the sector. These may be related to production, processing, consumption, transport or other issues.

[24] https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/event/eip-agri-workshop-cities-and-food-%E2%80%93-connecting
[25] https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/focus-groups

In short, the **objectives** of an EIP-AGRI Focus Group are:

- **Taking stock** of the state of the art of practice in the field of the EIP-AGRI Focus Group activity, listing problems and opportunities;
- **Taking stock** of the state of the art of research in this field, summarising possible solutions to the problems listed;
- **Identifying** needs from practice and possible directions for further research;
- **Highlighting** priorities for innovative actions by suggesting potential practical Operational Groups or other project formats to test solutions and opportunities, including ways to disseminate the practical knowledge gathered.

IV. IMPROVING the overall impact of your COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION strategy by adopting a dynamic approach

Because communicating is a **living** and **developing process**, it is essential to take into account the project timeline and the **project dynamics** when planning communication/ dissemination actions and events.

Moreover, the project communication should enable to deliver accurate snapshots of the project state of progress. Therefore, the knowledge within a project must be updated on a regular basis, as both the project and its results progress. This final section aims at illustrating the major cross-cutting tips and tricks inspired by some relevant projects examples in order to:

- feed a broader knowledge reservoir of communication best practices
- provide similar project stakeholders with inspirational tools
- shed the light on the cross-cutting methods to increase your overall communication impact
- provide other sectors than agriculture with replicable success factors

The tips and tricks developed hereafter are transversal elements, which contribute to enrich the three previous points of interest of this report: the build of trust and mutual understanding on one hand, the creation of impactful messages through smart communication channels on the other hand, and finally the question of the communication after the end of a project.

Tip: Keep updating the project information displayed on repositories and other media with a preference to those channels which end-users of the project results regularly visit, e.g. websites of farmers' organisations, advisory bodies, Ministries of Agriculture etc.

It is more than crucial to make sure that all the information available on the project communication supports is updated on a regular basis in order to maintain the communication tools highly useful by the targeted audience (s).

This means:

- update the different contact persons when changes occur,
- update the project results as soon as new results are available,
- update the coming events/meetings/ workshops,
- update the publications of the project etc…

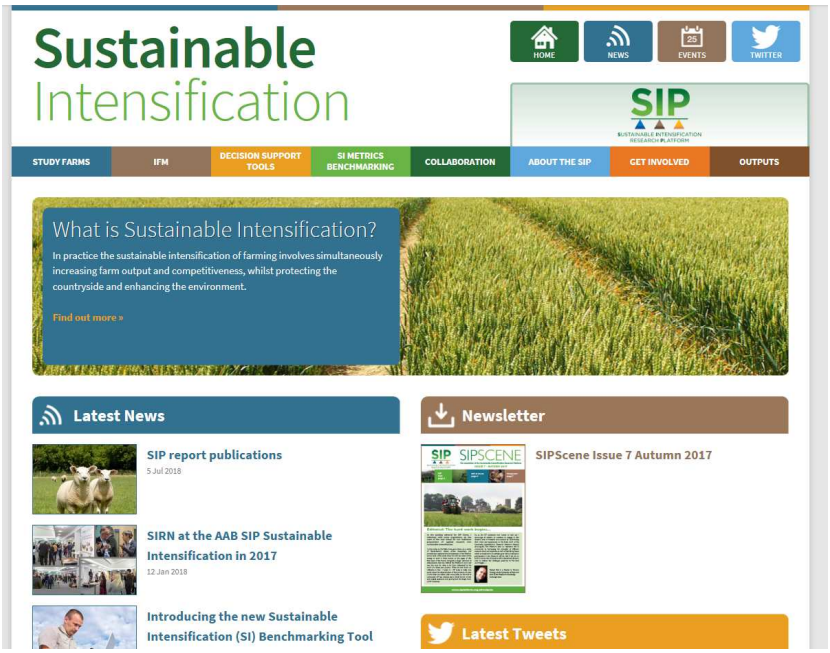
All the best practice project examples presented in the SWG SCAR-AKIS Warsaw meeting managed to update the information available on their main communication tools. In general this is not too often the case. A permanent and broad knowledge reservoir for practice information, as to be developed by the EURAKNOS project, therefore is a promising approach and could be a solution to serve a series of projects and audiences.

Tip: Promote new releases on your digital medium using all your other communication channels and vice-versa

It is essential to advertise the coming events and the principle news relating to the projects so as to ensure a sufficient visibility of what is going on, and thus to maximise the impact of communication. A very efficient way to advertise a new project release is to communicate about it through the maximum of **existing** channels. It is even more essential to advertise the digital tools because the variety and options of online information platforms or social media are huge, and the time to visit these digital tools is very limited for everybody. For example, within TRAFOON, the information shop was promoted in all dissemination/communication ways (flyers, leaflets, posters, press releases, general project presentations in congresses/conferences, meetings, etc.).

A striking example of project which managed to communicate very efficiently about its latest events and newsletters, is the project: “Sustainable Intensification Platform.”[26] The British national research platform, which aims at building a community of practice approach to assessing the possibilities and impacts of sustainable intensification in agriculture, developed a really attractive and easy-to-use tool, including updated information on the latest publications, latest significant events so as to promote the other communication channels of the project and thus reinforce the overall impact of its communication.

[26] http://www.siplatform.org.uk/



Homepage of "Sustainable Intensification Platform."

Tip: The information must be coherent and synchronous from one medium to another

The last but not least advice in order to maximise the impact of the communication and dissemination process is to make sure, on a regular basis, that the information is coherent and synchronous from one medium to another.

An excellent example of project which managed to deliver coherent and synchronous information between all its communication channels is the Irish project: Sheep 2018 – From Farm to Fork.[27]

From Farm to Fork is a National Technical Event for Sheep Industry during which a Showcase technical information around all aspects of sheep production in Ireland is organised. A Food village showcasing sheep products and European Region of Gastronomy is also planned.

In the table below are detailed the different communication instruments of Sheep 2018 – From Farm to Fork and the ad hoc communication planning through these channels. The breakdown of the communication activities shows that the information is both coherent and synchronous between all communication channels.

[27] https://www.teagasc.ie/news--events/news/2018/sheep-2018-open-day-.php

Communication Instrument	When
Media articles	Published during build up to event in local and national papers.
Organizing team meetings	Monthly and then weekly one month before event
Flyers	Distributed to farmers via partners in advance of event.
Roadside adverts	8'x4' boards located across Ireland in advance of event.
Print advertising	Advertising in local and national papers in advance of event.
Promotional videos	Posted on social media in advance of event.
Radio interviews	Two weeks before event.
Event booklet	On the day of the event.
Event display boards	On the day of the event.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the examples provided by the SCAR SWG AKIS highlighted the diversity of the communication of EIP Operational Groups and Horizon 2020 or national/regional multi-actor projects. They also showed hurdles which have been overcome but which might prove, in some cases, difficult to tackle. Moreover, these examples showed some key factors for ensuring the success of communication and to better disseminate the results.

First of all, this study has shown that trust is vital when crossing **professional cultural boundaries** as people are opening themselves to vulnerability and risk. It is even more important 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.

Trust should first be strongly set inside the project consortium in order to build up reliable relationships between partners.

The role of the project coordinator and facilitator in order to fluidize communication processes and interactions is crucial. The communication coordinator and facilitator must have very good communication skills. He or she must manage the communication plan construction, in interaction between all partners.

The dissemination management plan should be designed at early stages of the project life cycle, ideally at same time as the communication management plan, and **be supported by all actors involved in the project ("co-ownership").** The reason for that is that applied research in agriculture aims at impacting positively the society (economical, social, environmental effects). Therefore, dissemination should not be seen as an “additional task/ constraint” but as the basic tool to valorise the applied research works. Once trustful relationships are made between the major project stakeholders, it is easier to communicate on the project progress and results with the other targeted audience(s). It is also easier to obtain the policy-makers involvement and thus to make the agricultural innovative projects become a collaborative and flexible structure, able to adapt to fast changing regulatory policies, fast changing consumers behaviours and fast moving economic and environmental contexts, at local, national and supra-national scales. Regarding the message(s) transferring processes through impactful communicator (s) and the creation and/ or use of ad-hoc communication channels, all the examples demonstrated excellent initiatives. Moreover, they have developed a huge creativity in both areas, as their different materials raise this evidence.

In terms of advice, it seems important to remind that some improvements are still possible in setting up a detailed communication management plan and in preparing an ad-hoc dissemination plan as soon as the construction of the project is initiated.

Furthermore, a **knowledge reservoir serving to communicate on multiple projects** (e.g. EURAKNOS) can ensure continuity of communication also after the project ended.

The difficulties met by the different actors are often related to the lack of time, the lack of expertise in communication and sometimes, low budgets dedicated to the communication actions. Vigilance on these aspects is therefore required and a thorough planning of the communication activities and of the related resources are essential. **A dedicated communication budget must be ringfenced and solely used for communication purposes.**

Often, projects websites do not propose a very satisfactory browsing experience: The visitor can only find the relevant information if he knows what he is looking for and, most of all, if he knows where to look at or to click on.

When conceiving a project website a strong advice for better communication is to thoroughly reflect on the internet experience of the user : the web visitor should reach intuitively and quickly the relevant information.

Finally, it is important to remind that communicating on agricultural research is doing much more than performing communication actions. It refers to a global strategy, adapted to the nature of the project, its structure and the targeted objectives it has forecasted. **The communication should fit into the AKIS system of the country or region and be carried by its innovation ecosystem on the longer term** (e.g. uptake of results by advisors, farmers, enterprises should be prepared ex ante). The communication strategy implies also to define what goal (s) is (are) to be reached by communicating and disseminating the project results.

An ex ante assessment of the overall communication process by the experts assessing the proposal is important. It will enable the identification project by project of what could work well, versus what works less, with regard to the allocated resources task by task and action by action. This analysis is essential to improve the project's communication in agriculture and applied research. **A minimum budget dedicated to communication during and after the projects is useful.**

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Boosting the impact of your project through effective communication, dissemination and exploitation

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GLOSSARY

1. **Consortium**: a consortium is an association of two or more individuals, companies, organizations or governments or any combination of these entities with the objective of participating in a common activity or pooling their resources for achieving a common goal

2. **Cultures of professions** or organisations can be distinguished based on organisational forms, expectations, reward systems and organisational objectives, and less consciously applied values and social norms (Schein, 2010; Davidson et al., 2001)

3. **ESIF:** European Structural and Investment Funds

4. **H2020:** Horizon 2020 is the eighth framework programme funding research, technological development, and innovation. The framework programme is implemented by the European Commission

5. **EIP OG**: EIP (European Innovation Partnership) Operational Group

6. **SWG**: Strategic Working Group