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Regional Expert Advisory Working Group on AKIS

Second Interim Meeting

From National Roadmaps to National AKIS Action Plans and regional priorities

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The graphic presentation of AKIS



Targets of the project

After a few months in the project, I would say that the **key targets** of it have been reset:

- First target is the **setting up of a network** bringing together farmers, representatives of governments, research institutions and the private sector to establish a functional AKIS structure that would facilitate the dissemination of knowledge, innovation and technology as an in-between mechanism acting top-down and bottom-up.
- Second, the targeted preparation of two preconditions connected with the designation of **national Roadmap strategic documents** and of **national Action Plans** for the implementation of the specified strategic objectives.
- Third, the development and application of **regional and/or sectoral or thematic AKIS Plans** aiming at fostering knowledge and innovation transfer in defined topic areas.
- Fourth, the development of one **education and communication measure** for scaling up technical innovations and innovative business models with special target groups of young, dynamic farmers and agri-businesses.

Achievements and deliverables

1. An updated and prioritized **national SWOT analysis**
2. A **National AKIS map depiction** (and a joint regional AKIS mapping worked by SWG)
3. A **National Roadmap** for the development of functional and integrated national AKIS systems
4. Draft **National Action Plans**

Action Plans and regional priorities:

First, it is with satisfaction observed that AKIS Action Plans submitted include, amongst others, actions which are considered key elements of a successful AKIS strategy in various EU documents. These are:

- a. Enhancement of knowledge flows and strengthening links between research and practice
- b. Strengthening farm advisory services within AKIS
- c. Enhancement of interactive innovation
- d. Supporting digital transition in agriculture to minimize digital divide

Action Plans and regional priorities:

Common priorities 1

- Most Action Plans submitted are in correspondence with the Roadmaps, ‘translating’ the strategic objectives to specified objectives for action.
- In a broad sense, Action Plans submitted are not distanced in description from other European cases presented and discussed recently in a SCAR-AKIS meeting in the Netherlands.
- Differentiated prioritizations in the strategic objectives and their specification in the various countries/territories are well set and considered important for the feasibility of the operationalization of their Action Plans.
- The formalization of AKIS and of advisory services has been defined by most as Action Plan priority, expected to be embedded in AKIS.

Common priorities 2

- Private advisory services are considered as a necessary complementary service that needs to be formalized and integrated in the system.
- Training, accreditation and impartiality of advisors is considered *conditio sine qua non*.
- IPARD's measure of Advisory services is considered as supplementary and supportive to the system; an increase in its funding is requested.
- Capacity building of all AKIS stakeholders and enhancement of R&D and RITT, in particular, seem to attract the attention of most reports.
- However, RITT seems, at times, to take priority over AKIS in the Action Plan argumentation for enhancement.

Common priorities 3

- The introduction of new structures within AKIS crosscuts all reports. Proposed structures are differentiated on the basis of each country's needs but feasibility for their realisation needs to be further investigated.
- The Coordination body is considered most critical, but its role and functionality need further elaboration in the Plans, because in some its establishment precedes AKIS formalization.
- Awareness raising for AKIS is a common requested action, but needs to be seriously adjusted to the particular environment of each case. We must seek the 'particular example of the particular case'.
- Digitalization is acknowledged as crucial to contribute to the enhancement of advisory services and AKIS. It is also part of the cross-cutting modernisation objective of the new CAP.

Observations 1

- Identification of corresponding authorities for the implementation of requested actions needs to be concretely specified.
- Accomplishment of action plan will need assignments and allocation of roles and responsibilities.
- Expectations placed on the finalization of the Smart Specialisation Strategies for the improvement of AKIS functionalization, are considered exaggerated.
- Milestones should not be long-listed, but rather shorter and better targeted.
- In some cases either Roadmaps or Action Plans are not supported by elaboration/explanatory notes. Explanatory notes should be used as justification/argumentation notes for the requested actions.

Observations 2

- With the exception of one report, the rest lack reference to any regional/thematic AKIS possibilities. One case proposed refers to a cross-country regional integration of AKIS for climate change and the Green Agenda and the other on sectoral AKIS for dairy and wine.
- Maximalist expectations need to be lowered and take into consideration the realistic possibilities of each country/territory to achieve specific objectives in the timeline set.
- Consultation with connected public, private and other stakeholders will shape the feasibility of the Action Plan in terms of the specified objectives, their pursuance and operationalization.
- The role and responsibilities of national experts and SWG in the process of consultation need be enhanced.

Two paths to reach AKIS

1. The **formalization** path of:

- AKIS as a system
- Advisory Services as key component of AKIS and RITT

2. The **'informalization'** path of the the development of 'experimental' thematic/sectoral AKIS structures to work as laboratories for the implementation of AKIS

Beyond the National Action Plan level of intervention

Possible options:

- Development of a Draft **Regional** AKIS Action Plan with reference to possible cross-country AKIS links (existing and functioning, existing but needing strengthening, non-existing that need developing) should set the regional priorities, as requested in the Workplan.
- **Local**
 - Construction of micro AKIS/local micro system
 - Role and space for Local Action Groups (LAGS) and/or local government involvement
- **Sectoral** (wine, dairy, etc)
- **Thematic** (green-clean technology, food quality and safety, organic farming, regional educational academy cooperation etc)

Tools/structures/measures for focused AKIS interventions

- **Operational Groups** (practical, scientific, technical, organizational knowledge *built into focused solutions* in an interactive way)
 - With the formation of Operational Groups new insights and ideas are generated and existing **tacit knowledge is built into focused solutions** that are quicker put into practice.
- **Innovation brokers**/farm advisors for interactive innovation and technology transfer
- **Interactive innovation** encouraged through the funding of Operational Groups, Knowledge centres, EIP projects and networks.
- **‘One-stop shops’** for innovation and technology transfer

- **Innovation** support services
- **Agri-food Centres of Innovation and Entrepreneurship** involving University/Research Institutions, Regional authorities, Farm organizations and the private sector.
- An **AKIS centre**, for mapping and managing the existing and future needs for the Advisory Services and other RITT structures.
- **IPARD measures**
 - Cooperation for Innovation and Knowledge Transfer
 - Advisory services

The way forward

- **Team task:** identify the level of intervention and outline the AKIS Action Plan objectives for implementation (regional-local/ sectoral/or thematic)
- **Expected outcome:** to identify and decide, by the end of November 2022, the theme and the level of intervention (regional- thematic), outlining the AKIS Action Plan to be implemented