ATTRACTISS

Empowering Innovation
Support Services

Deliverable 5.8

MA Handbook: monitoring, reporting, evaluating success of ISS measures in CAP AKIS Strategic Plans

Report | PU

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Call	HORIZON-CL6-2021-GOVERNANCE-01-26
Project Acronym	ATTRACTISS
Project Title	AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to build a deeper understanding of Innovation Support Services
Grant Agreement N.	101061060
Start date of Project	01/10/2022
End date of Project	30/09/2028
Project duration	72 months
Project coordination	WAB - Wirtschaftsagentur Burgenland GmbH
Person in charge	Tina Pawlakowitsch
Website	https://attractiss.eu/
Deliverable	D 5.8. MA Handbook: monitoring, reporting, evaluating success of ISS measures in CAP AKIS Strategic Plans
Type	R (Report)
Dissemination Level	PU (Public) (Classified, as referred to Commission Decision 2001/844/EC)
Due date of deliverable	30/09/2023
Actual submission date	29/03/2024
Work Package	WP5. Embedding innovation support in national/regional AKISs
Work Package Leader	AGR
Deliverable Lead	CREA
Contributing partners	All
Author(s)	Patrizia Proietti and Simona Cristiano (CREA)
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Version	Version 2

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History of changes

Version 1	17/02/2024	Patrizia Proietti (CREA) Simona Cristiano (CREA)	First draft deliverable
Version 2	28/02/2024	Patrizia Proietti (CREA) Simona Cristiano (CREA)	Final version reviewed by the CREA after partners' feedback

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List of acronyms

AKIS	Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation System
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
EIP	European Innovation Partnership
EIP-Agri	European Innovation Partnership for Agricultural Productivity and Sustainability
EARDF	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development
EU	European Union
ISS	Innovation Support Service
MA	Managing Authority
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MS	Member State
OG	Operational Group

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Executive Summary

This deliverable is a practical handbook for managing authorities to facilitate the understanding of some basic concepts about innovation support services and support their implementation throughout the European Member States.

Its contents will be continuously discussed, refined and developed with the users during the life of the project. A final version will be delivered in 2028.

This handbook explains, first, what innovation support services are and presents an overview of the actors involved in ISS and the functions they carry out in the different steps of the innovation process. These concepts are already included in Deliverable 1.1, and here they are re-presented with simpler language and attractive graphics to facilitate their reading and understanding by the managing authorities.

Secondly, the handbook provides some insights concerning the funding of innovation support functions and possible incentives to encourage the development of innovation processes and promote the active participation of different actors in innovation processes. Indeed, policies are expected to create the enabling environment for ISSs to carry out their functions effectively, by promoting their integration, the development of their competencies, and strengthening the methods and tools for ISS.

Support for innovation requires personal attitudes and a huge variety of skills and knowledge that can hardly be held by a single person. Chapter 4 introduces this issue and provides insights to support the identification of training needs and the planning of precision training to enhance ISS competences. In this respect, an appropriate implementation of 'back-office' intervention can support ISS providers and advisors with competencies, up-to-date knowledge and linkages with actors that are relevant to help solving complex problems, thus supporting innovation.

Finally, the handbook explains the importance of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) practices for effective management of ISSs, able to facilitate the improvement of service provision and to empower advisors to enhance their capabilities, thus ensuring the delivery of high-quality services. Moreover, a M&E framework on Innovation Support Services is provided, that includes:

- Evaluative questionnaire (Annex I), that includes: (a) thematic dimensions of interest for the evaluation of the ISSs; (b) questions and relevant criteria to propose to evaluators in view to achieve significant knowledge for

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decision making and (c) a list of possible relevant indicators to associate in view to provide a certain (quantitative/qualitative) measure of observed/assessed variables.

- Template for the indicators' fiches (Annex II), to identify crucial arrangements for data and information needed to determine the indicators that will be selected by the responsible policy makers/ISSs providers.
- Brief guidelines about general arrangements and procedures for M&E activities (Annex III).

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1. Introduction

Purpose of the report

The new CAP Regulation (EU) 2021/2115 requires EU Member States (MS) to provide support for innovation, in particular for the preparation and implementation of the EIP-Agri operational groups (OGs), with the final goal of speeding up the creation of innovative solutions.

Innovation support services represent a novelty from a policy perspective and, therefore, require governance models, approaches, competences and tools that foster their effective implementation and embedding in the respective national/regional AKIS.

This deliverable is intended to provide some basic concepts on innovation support services to managing authorities along with a first description of a methodological framework to monitor and evaluate (M&E) innovation support services (ISS).

The concepts and the M&E framework are based on current literature and the first outcomes of the project. The deliverable will be updated at month 70 (July 2028). The final goal is to produce, through discussion, fine-tuning and validation by end-users (mainly managing authorities and ISS providers), a practical handbook that can guide the effective organisation and implementation of ISS in all EU Member States.

Relation with other activities in the project

This deliverable is specifically connected to several tasks, that feed it:

- Task 1.1., providing a common understanding and a conceptual framework for ISS to enable the 27 MSs to organise feasible services and embed them within their AKISs.
- Task 1.2, providing new knowledge about the variety of actors who are providing ISS in the MSs.
- Task 1.3. assessing capacity assets and needs for setting up and/or improving the functioning of innovation support and define ISS curricula.
- Task 1.4. concerning the co-design of empowerment pathways for actors providing and organising ISS.
- Task 3.1, providing inspiring innovation generation and support methods and tools.

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- Task 3.2, providing best practices need to be transferred and adapted into the agricultural sector for active use.
- Task 3.3, fostering an innovation enabling environment
- Task 4.1, enhancing the competencies of key actors involved in multi-actor and ISS processes.
- Task 5.1., identifying and compiling best fit organisational/procedural and financing models of ISSs for MAs and national and regional AKIS actors.
- Task 5.2, providing a toolbox will be created that provides MAs and AKIS actors with suitable and ready-to-use methods to structure knowledge exchange on innovation processes and innovation support amongst MAs on the one hand and national AKIS actors on the other hand.
- Task 5.4, providing Capacity building activities for MAs and all AKIS Coordination Bodies

Objectives and expected impacts

This deliverable is intended to help managing authorities and AKIS coordination bodies to take measures to support/improve an inclusive and enabling environment for innovation, by organising and implementing effective ISS, monitoring and evaluating their performances and continuously improve the services, improve through the lessons that M&E practices can generate.

Methodology

This deliverable builds on the outcomes of the ATTRACTISS project (deliverables 1.1 and 1.2), as well as of the projects “i2connect” (Sturla, Proietti, Cristiano, 2022; Proietti et al. 2021) and RAMONES PL (Cristiano et al., 2021), and on existing literature concerning ISS' M&E.

The M&E framework should be based on a multi-perspective approach to take into account expectations/needs of the wide range of AKIS actors and to reflect both in terms of user satisfaction/system transformation, and the degree of ISS embedment within the local/regional/national AKIS. However, to date, it has not been possible to work on discussing, co-developing and testing the M&E framework with MA’s and ISS, across the EU, due to several reasons:

- the novelty of the intervention, which is open to different interpretations in the different MSs regarding the functions to be performed and the actors to whom they should be assigned

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- the delayed implementation in many MSs (as a consequenceof the previous one)
- the differences between MSs in terms of organisation of services (centralised/decentralised, public/private).

Therefore, in order to be able to initiate the work of co-constructing a M&E framework taking into account knowledge needs that different stakeholders might have to satisfy, we thought it was important, first, to shed light on ISS key issues, through systematising existing knowledge.

With the aim of targeting a non-expert audience (CAP managing authorities), efforts were made to use a simple language and a graphic design that would make reading more inviting and flowing.

This deliverable, whose content was decided together with the whole project consortium (Rome meeting, 31 January-1February 2024), is intended to be a baseline to be discussed, co-developed and finalised together with MA's and ISS, both through the ATTRACTISS Focus Group and modernAKIS Communities of Practice (next meeting in Madrid, 22-23 April).

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2. Identifying Innovation Support Services

What are Innovation Support Services?

According to CAP Regulation (EU) 2021/2115, Innovation Support Services (ISS) are aimed at providing "support for preparing and implementing emerging EIP operational group projects, whilst capturing and making use of grassroot innovative ideas".

Although innovation support services (ISS) represent a novelty from a policy perspective, a large body of literature has been developed through European projects that has deepened the roles, objectives and functions of services aimed at facilitating innovation processes.

According to these studies, the diversity of services provided to support innovation processes can be summed up into **7 functions**:

ISS1. Awareness-raising and knowledge dissemination

ISS1. Includes all activities contributing to knowledge awareness, dissemination of scientific knowledge, or technical information for farmers. For instance, providing knowledge based on information dissemination forums (website, leaflets), meetings or demonstrations and exchange visits

Activities played under ISS1.

Dissemination of information (website, brochures, magazines, newsletters, bulletins, webinars, etc.), organization of exchange visits, organization of demonstrations, etc. It includes i) selection and evaluation of information ii) transformation of information into documents (targets: advisors, farmers, etc.) iii) language translation

Meetings

Communication of project results

Supply of knowledge and technical information for innovation (knowledge transfer), which includes selection and identification of know-how and transfer of knowledge /technologies

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ISS2. Advisory, consultancy and backstopping

ISS2. Includes targeted, supportive activities aimed at solving complex problems (e.g., a new farming system), based on demands of actors and the co-construction of solutions

Activities played under ISS2.

Articulation of advisory needs / specific need to provide a more targeted support (e.g., data and information gathering, design of tailored advisory packages)

"Management" of the innovation process (soft skills), including support to find specialized advice

Organization of backstopping pools (research / advisory / SME / etc.) to find a solution to a complex problem

ISS3. Demand articulation

ISS3. Includes all services targeted to help actors to express clear demands to other actors (research, service providers, etc.). This is targeted support to enhance the innovator's ability to express his/her needs to other relevant actors.

Activities played under ISS3.

Needs analysis

Strategy and vision development

Feasibility analysis

Looking for ideas and solutions

Building bridges with users and intermediary organisations to make the need concrete, defining its contents, specificities and costs

ISS4. Networking, facilitation and brokerage

ISS4. Provision of services to help organize or strengthen networks, improve the relationships between actors and to align services in order to be able to complement each other (the right service at the right time and place). It also includes all activities aimed at strengthening collaborative and collective action.

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Activities played under ISS4.

Partner identification and aggregation

Internal: facilitation, mediation and conflict management (construction of the project proposal, definition of objectives, roles, knowledge exchange, collective learning, etc.)

External facilitation: facilitation, mediation, network strengthening and conflict management (with the MAs/Granters (ISS6), with stakeholders and potential users, along the production chain (ISS7))

ISS5. Capacity building

ISS5. Includes services aimed at increasing innovation actors' capacities at the individual, collective and/or organizational level.

Activities played under ISS5.

Traditional training/Face-to-Face individual training

Peer-to-peer facilitation/Coaching

Experiential learning

ISS6. Enhancing/supporting access to resources

ISS6. Includes all services for innovators aimed at enhancing the acquisition of resources to support the process. This could be facilitating access to inputs (seeds, fertilizers etc.), facilities and equipment (technological platforms, labs etc.), and funding (credit, subsidies, grants, loans, etc.).

Activities played under ISS6.

Facilitating access to facilities and equipment (technological platforms, laboratories, etc.)

Facilitating access to inputs

Facilitating access to financial/ insurance

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Facilitating access to funding (incl. application preparation and submission to grants)

Project management

ISS7. Institutional support for niche innovation and scaling mechanisms stimulation

ISS7. Includes institutional support for niche innovation (incubators, experimental infrastructures etc.) and for scaling out and scaling up the innovation process. This refers to support for the design and enforcement of norms, rules, funding mechanisms, taxes, subsidies, etc. that facilitate the innovation process or the diffusion of innovation.

Activities played under ISS7.

Negotiation with authorities to create 'protect' space for experiments

Brokerage along the production chain (ISS4)

Negotiation with people affected by the innovation

Provision of incubators and experimental infrastructures

Exploitation strategy and action plan design and implementation

Support for the design and enforcement of norms, rules, funding mechanisms, etc. that facilitate the diffusion of innovation

Supporting intellectual property (patents) and patent authorization processes

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EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Evidence (ATTRACTISS, D1.1, D1.2; Proietti and Cristiano, 2022) shows that functions 'ISS3.Demand articulation' and 'ISS7. Institutional support for niche innovation and scaling mechanisms stimulation' are provided to a very limited extent,

If function ISS3 is not delivered, innovations are at risk of not meeting user needs. On the other hand, the lack of awareness and sensitivity concerning the importance of scaling mechanisms, that are commonly confused with dissemination, affects the impacts of innovation.

Therefore, it is important to ensure that these functions are correctly carried out, through the allocation of a dedicated budget and the use of human resources able to interact with different systems at multiple levels.

Who are the ISS providers?

ISS providers can be defined as "actors who brokerage/provide the services required to make innovation happen" (ATTRACTISS, D1.1).

SUPPORT FOR INNOVATION CAN BE PROVIDED BY A VARIETY OF ACTORS

Proietti and Cristiano, 2022; Faure et al., 2019; ATTRACTISS D1.2, D1.4)

- advisors and consultants,
- Farmer cooperatives/ associations/ chambers/ organisations,
- Government institutions,
- Agri-research institutions,
- Academic and Training centres,
- input providers,
- upstream and downstream industries,
- rural networks and Local Action Groups,
- Banks, Insurance and financing institutions,
- NGOs, consumer organisations, etc.

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ISS providers can provide services:

- due to a specific mandate
- because they are professionals
- because, even if they are not specialised in the provision of services nor have a mandate (e.g., farmers' organizations, farmers, public administration, etc.), they are interested in pushing the innovation process forward (Proietti and Cristiano, 2022; Faure et al., 2019; Cristiano and Proietti, 2014).

One service provider can be responsible for a wide range of ISS functions or largely support innovation processes by interacting with or coordinating other service providers.

Why so many different providers?

Often, there is not a single service provider responsible for driving the whole innovation process, but different actors can coordinate with each other's contributing, by performing different functions, to achieve successful outcomes (Proietti and Cristiano, 2022; Faure et al., 2019). This is because the services which are needed for driving a whole innovation process evolve along the process itself and might require different actors to be involved in a particular phase (Beers et al., 2014). Hardly a single service provider (especially if it is a single-person team) can hold all the capacities needed to move the process forward.

EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Although based on partial data, the mapping exercise (ATTRACTISS, D1.2) shows that 50% of identified ISS providers have no role in the CAP Strategic Plan.

To plan effective services and facilitate access to ISS by as many actors as possible, MSs should map alle the actors already providing some kind of innovation support service according to the 7 ISS functions, paying attention to the purpose behind the service ("provider's mission" or driven by the case), the frequency of service delivery (continuous, irregular, one-off) and the functions carried out.

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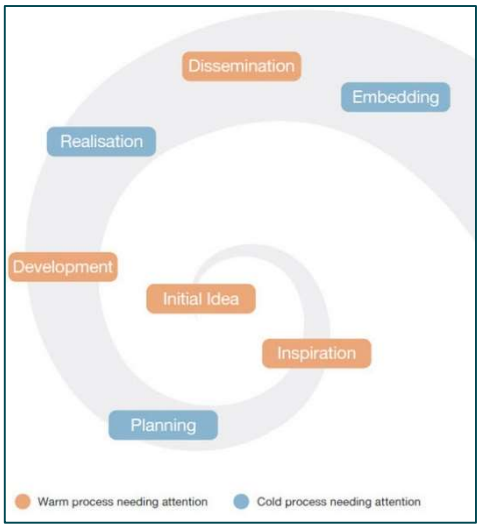
Understanding the innovation process: the "Spiral"

Interactive, multi-actor innovation process involve the use, application and transformation of knowledge in the solution of practical problems.

Interactive, multi-actor innovation process involve the use, application and transformation of knowledge in the solution of practical problems. Differently from the linear model, by which the development of innovation is assumed to start from research activities to be diffused knowledge transfer initiatives, interactive approach to innovation emphasises the central role of interactions between partners throughout the process. Through actively sharing knowledge, skills and competences among actors, Different pieces of knowledge become combined in new ways and new knowledge is created (ATTRACTISS, D1.1).

The interactive innovation process, due to its features, is unpredictable. To describe it the Spiral of innovation (or Spiral of initiatives) model was conceived and applied (Wielinga et al., 2008, 2017). The Spiral articulates the innovation process into seven non-linear phases or steps (from initial idea, to inspirations of supporters, planning, developing new ideas or practices, implementation and dissemination, to the embedding of new/novel practices into the institutional environment), which provides a picture of the interactions and communication flows within the actors involved in the innovation process, as well as of the key activities (and competences) needed to support these interaction in the different steps.



INITIAL IDEA

Generally, the **INITIAL IDEA** arises from someone who gets an idea, because of a felt problem or an opportunity. New initiatives can emerge from interaction as well, or unexpected events.

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The support must focus mainly on triggering exchange and assessing needs, thus enabling the idea to emerge. These requires, for instance, the ability to be an active listener, to promote appropriate knowledge sharing, to be skilled in conducting a needs/opportunity assessment, in overcoming barriers (reluctance or prevailing ideas) and in managing networks/relationships that can facilitate the performance of these functions.

Enabling the environment
Need for spaces/events (social infrastructures: networks, meetings, info days, demonstration days, workshops, etc.) to discuss new concepts or share problems

INSPIRATION

The **INSPIRATION** phase begins when the initiator starts sharing his/her initial idea with others. These can contribute, possibly because they hold similar ideas, or because the debate offers perspectives for a solution they may have been searching for. This phase creates an initiative group that focuses on wanting change.

Innovation support must be able to identify right people from outside the immediate circle and organise initial contacts with them, share information, arrange informal discussion, guide the definition of the project scope (most inspiring/promising solution; vision building) and bring different expectations to converge on a line of action. Different alternative solutions should be considered and support for innovation should ensure that negotiations will not affect the outcomes

Enabling the environment
It is important to have formal rules or regulations (hard institutions: rules, laws, regulations, instructions, etc) smoothing the cooperation. For the same reason, it may be necessary to act on values, cultural, educational and market issues affecting (smoothing or hampering) the cooperation in this phase

PLANNING

The **PLANNING** phase starts with creating space to start acting to realise the network own ambitions and ends with concrete agreements about the action that needs to be taken and the effort required by each of the participants. Space is necessary at two levels, namely within the network itself and in the network's environment (e.g., financiers, partners).

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Support for innovation must focus on identifying the right key actors, as well as the roles and functions needed to achieve the innovation. These lasts should be clear and correctly allocated to the partners. Moreover, the finalisation of the idea and the definition of the objectives (and the expected results) need particular attention since all the expectations should be considered (all the partners should provide input to develop ownership in the process). The support must also facilitate access to seed funds (which requires being able to write a project proposal and to communicate with the funding body or investors), and the setting up of informal and flexible networks that can facilitate the performance of these functions.

Enabling the environment
It is important to envisage incentives (financial, access to information, visibility, etc.) for networking/ partnering/interaction in place, make information about funding sources (and relational channels to be used to relate with the financing organism) easily accessible by everyone, facilitate the access to procedures for the procurement of the funding (clear and easy application, selection and evaluation), ensure equal opportunity to access funding mechanisms to everybody.

DEVELOPMENT

In the **DEVELOPMENT** phase, the network takes the initial idea a stage further by developing it into a technique or a procedure. In many cases, the participants need to follow the development path for a while before being able to bring the objective and the task division into focus. In some situations, the development path can turn out to be a dead end: in this case, network could be forced to reconsider its plans.

Innovation support must ensure that each partner has a clear task to perform, creating trust between the partners created and energize them taking care of their interests and the involvement, coordinating the group and the facilitate collaborative work, by maintaining the big picture on the results to be achieved, facilitating the decision process, encouraging partnership members to learn jointly, reflect and try out new things together, managing possible disagreements or conflicts among partners, facilitating the identification, and solution, of potential problems or difficulties. In the case, the support should also manage possible changes in the original plan. It is important that the opinion (and knowledge) of all the actors in the partnership is taken into account when innovation is developed and decisions/choices are made.

Enabling the environment
Attention should be given to rules or regulations, values, cultural, educational and market issues facilitating the cooperation

REALIZATION

In the **REALISATION** phase the priority shifts from the search process onto realising the solution (the transitional line with the Development phase is sometimes blurred). In this phase, support for

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innovation should act to stimulate cooperation of other parties in the chain, if needed, and negotiate with actors who are affected by the change (legislation and regulations may need to be amended, or complaints from other interested parties dealt with too). Stakeholders, gatekeepers, managers could open the door for change or keep it closed.

Support for innovation must manage disagreement or conflict (mainly between the key actors, but also with the stakeholders), facilitate the identification of potential problems or difficulties, and of other parties/ stakeholders that were relevant for the innovation, by involving them, negotiating and managing possible contracts/agreements. It also has to monitor the progress towards reaching the objectives.

Enabling the environment
Besides working on regulations, values, cultural, educational and market issues facilitating the cooperation, the availability of infrastructures for realising the innovation is needed. They can be physical (artefacts, instruments, machines, roads, buildings, etc.), knowledge (knowledge, expertise, know-how, information, etc.), social (networks, communities, etc.) infrastructures

DISSEMINATION

DISSEMINATION phase starts when the new practice or technique has become familiar in the immediate environment and is being replicated/expanding. If the progress that has been made in the development phase is disseminated since the beginning, it can spark a knock-on effect and also set others into motion.

Support for innovation must ensure that relevant information are shared with actors outside the partnership, supporting the identification of target groups, tailoring communication instruments/channels according to them, mobilizing multiplier actors and ensuring that all the key actors invest enough efforts in dissemination activities. The ability to manage networks/relationships that can facilitate the performance of these functions is needed.

Enabling the environment
Proper rules, regulations, values, cultural, educational and market issues, as well as the availability of physical, knowledge, social infrastructures can smooth this job

EMBEDDING

The **EMBEDDING** phase starts when the actors agree about structural changes to their mutual relationships, to ensure the absorption of new knowledge (prompted by innovative practices) into communities. This entails acting on organizational structures, processes and culture with open collaborative learning processes in

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surrounding communities, networks and stakeholder groups so as to ensure the integration of different knowledge.

Support for innovation must ensure the scaling and institutionalization of the innovation, both at farm, value chain and territory level. Besides traditional training and dissemination services, intermediation (between consumers and producers, or between multiple network partners within an overall system/value chain) and institutional dialogue (for instance, to connect with other programmes and strategies) are key to ensure adequate embedding of innovation in value chains and in local territories and to design and enforce new arrangements towards institutionalization.

Enabling the environment
Proper rules, regulations, values, cultural, educational and market issues, as well as the availability of physical, knowledge, social infrastructures can smooth the embeddedness of innovation. It is crucial to ensure opportunities to link with other groups of innovators and the availability of policy instruments giving incentives to the embeddedness of innovation

3. Promote the inclusion of ISS

What does integration of ISS into AKIS mean?

Integrating ISSs into AKIS entails:

- giving visibility to the services and their providers, recognising the functions they perform to support innovation and, consequently, to the AKIS development.
- Strengthening the competencies needed to carry out innovation support functions.
- Strengthening their interconnections with different types of actors, both upstream (connections with research, academia, education, etc.) and downstream (in particular with practitioners) in the knowledge chain.
- Strengthening interconnections between various branches of the agricultural sector and with other non-agricultural sectors that can affect the development of innovations in agriculture. The latter depends greatly on the innovation pathways of agricultural systems in the different MSs and the influence that other sectors may have on it.

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Obviously, integration will be more effective the more relationships/ interconnections are frequent and systematic, stable over the long term, and not based on one-off projects.

How can ISS be integrated?

Integration of ISS requires specific policies to fund innovation support functions, but also policies that encourage the development of innovation processes and promote active participation of different actors in innovation paths. These must create the context conditions to enable them to implement innovation support function effectively (e.g., funding for networking/partnership/ interaction, formal rules or regulations smoothing cooperation, precence of social infrastructures, such as networks, meetings, info days, demonstration days, workshops, knowledge platforms, etc., to share knowledge, ideas, problems).

These policies must promote not only integration, but also the development of competencies, by providing providing facilities for education and training to strengthen ISS methods and tools. Moreover, they must boost the correct fulfilment of innovation support functions, through mechanisms that foster the participation of ISS providers from the priority setting to the embedding of innovation (e.g. specific strategies financing the scaling of innovations).

ISSs also need to be incentivised to join operational groups, for instance through: i) setting-up funding separate from the project funding; ii) simplified costs to facilitate access of all types of ISS providers to the EARDF Funds; iii) territorial back-office funding that promotes collaborative work with ISS; iv) incentives for the follow-up of projects, with a specific focus on scaling up and exploiting the results of previous innovation projects; v) rewarding connections to European research projects; etc.

Funding policies and delivery mechanisms should ensure that innovation support functions are carried out properly to allow grassroots innovative ideas to emerge, be realised and have a broad impact.

The innovation spiral allows us to comprehend the support needed by an innovation partnership (e.g. a GO) in the different steps of the innovation process:

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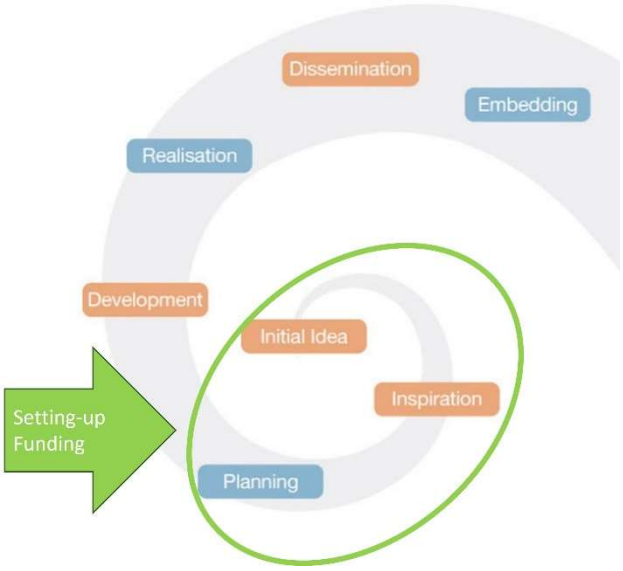
What kind of support is needed before the project is funded?

Every innovation process starts from an idea or a problem but this idea needs to be made explicit, shared with other people who have the same idea/problem and articulated in a demand/need to be introduced to actors who can help turn it into a concrete and innovative solution.

Therefore, **there is a need for someone to connect the innovator with the right people. Then, once possible solutions have been identified, there is a need for someone who is able to write a project proposal, to facilitate the convergence of different expectations on shared goals and the definition of roles, and to identify funding. All this must be done before the operational group is set up, i.e. before the project starts.**



Articulating needs, creating the right partnership, agreeing on objectives and activities, allocating responsibilities, etc., are crucial to create ownership from the very beginning, because this will facilitate the uptake of innovative solutions. This is why setting-up is important and should be funded separately, as it allows financing of costs incurred before the project is selected (the product of the setting-up is a partnership ready to participate in a funding application).

What kind of support is needed during project implementation?

During the development and realisation phases, the partnership needs to be supported mainly in terms of cooperation. It is therefore important to envisage, within the partnership, the presence of one or more actors able to facilitate relations between partners, and between them and the external environment (with those actors, for instance, who may be relevant for the realisation of the idea):

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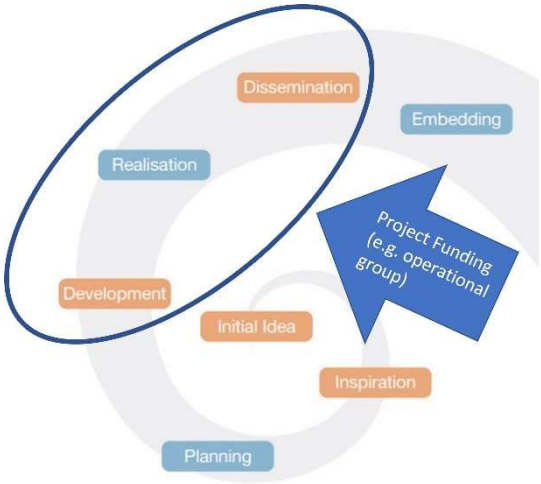
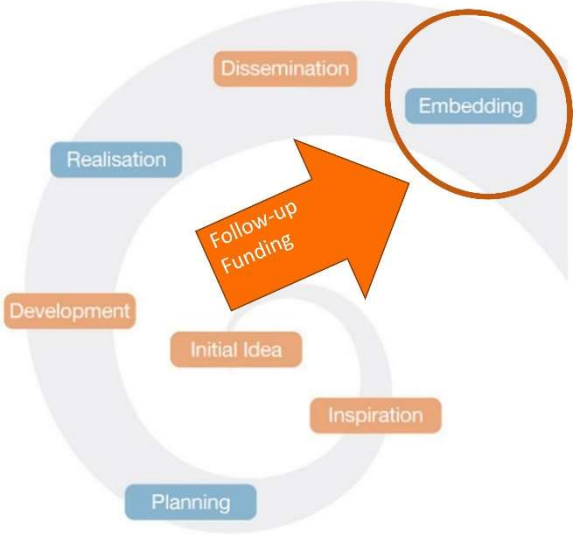
it will be a matter of **building and nurturing trust between partners, stimulating the interest and involvement of key actors, facilitating cooperation between partners and cooperative learning, coordinating the group, maintaining the focus on results to be achieved, facilitating decision-making processes, establishing links with other parties/stakeholders (e.g., in the supply chain, authorities, other stakeholders in the area) and with end-users, mediating conflicts both within and outside the partnership with all parties who may be affected by the innovation.**



In addition, people able to deal with project administration are needed, since this is still a complex issue for people such as advisors and farmers who are not used to handling projects.

What kind of support is needed at the end of the project?

In the dissemination and embedding phases, **there is a need for actors able to organise dissemination activities (website, brochures, magazines, newsletters, bulletins, webinars, conferences, etc.), including, for instance, exchange visits and demonstrations, capacity building activities (training), but also to intermediate with institutions and key actors in value chains and in local territories to enable the scaling of innovation (both enabling other groups to develop the same innovations and achieving a higher degree of diffusion).**



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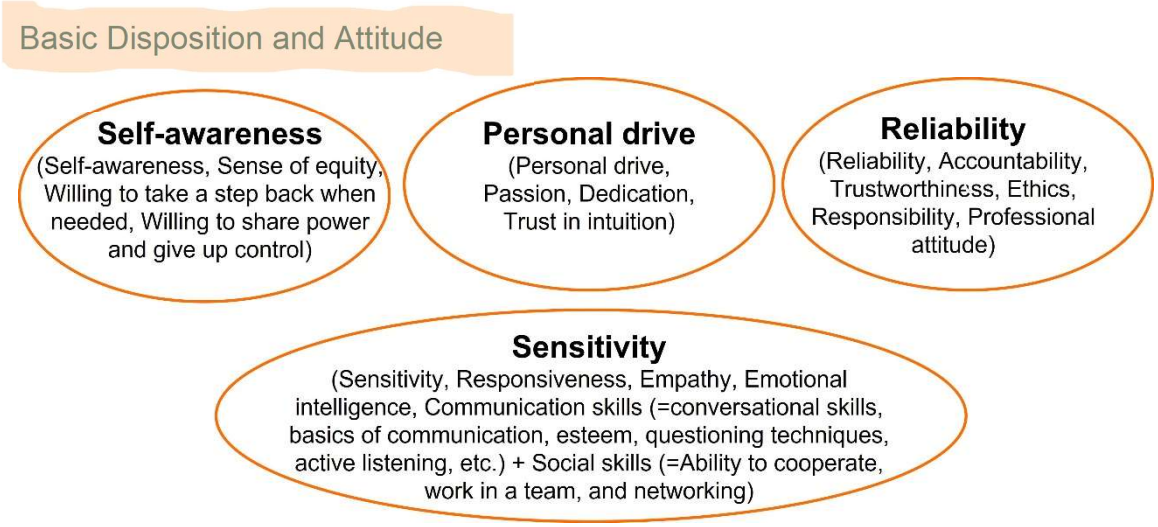
If the first are included in the project funding, the last two are hardly considered. This reduces impacts of innovation. Therefore, incentives for the follow-up of projects should be promoted, with a specific focus on scaling up and exploiting the results of previous innovation projects.

4. ISS training needs and opportunities

What skills are needed to carry out the ISS functions?

To carry out ISS functions and activities, actors need specific competencies at an individual, organisational and environmental scale (ATTRACTISS D4.1).

ATTRACTISS' framework (ATTRACTISS D1.1, D1.3, D4.1) identifies 5 initial areas of competencies which, taken to an individual and organisational level, are needed to carry out innovation support functions:



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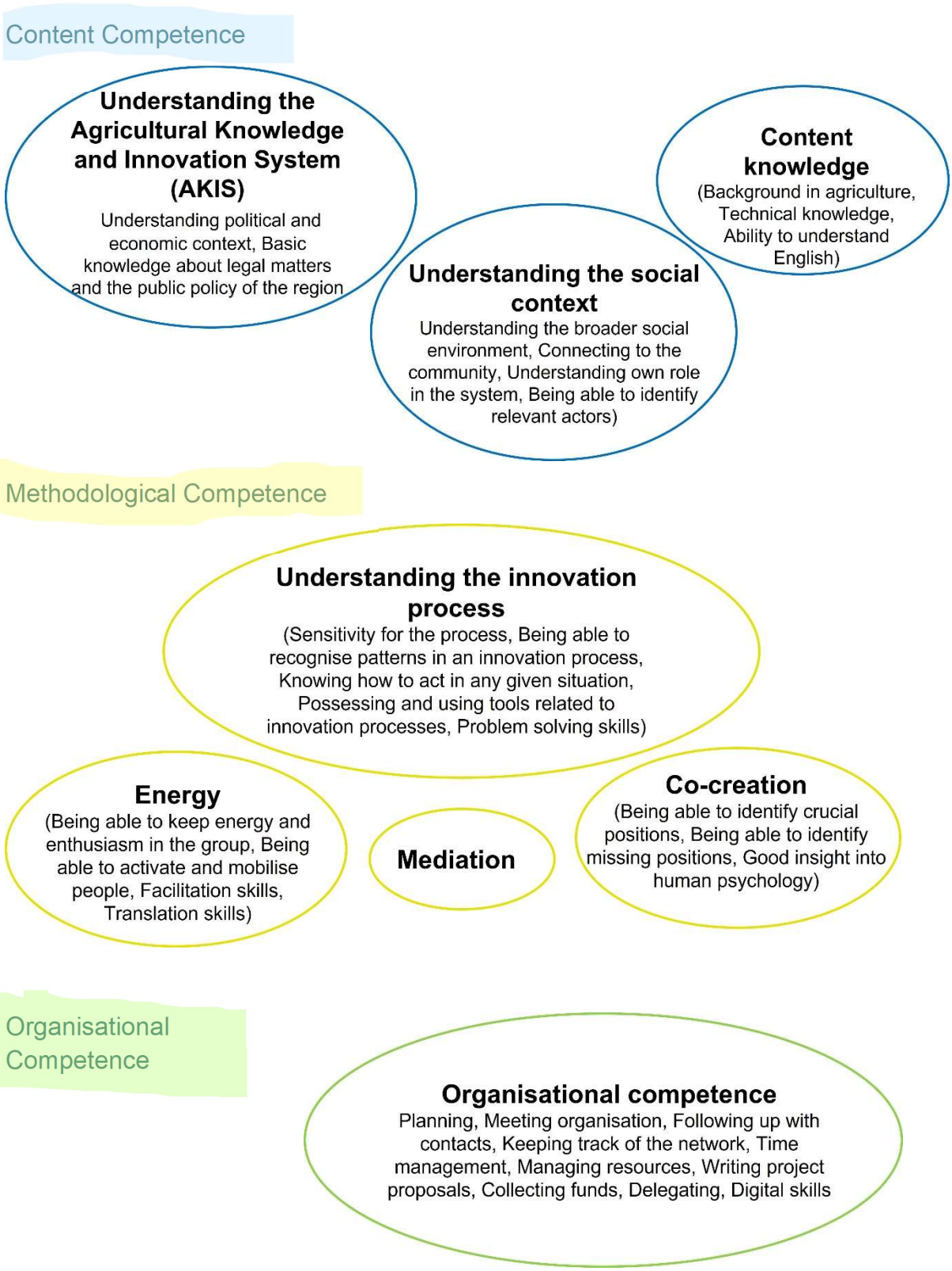

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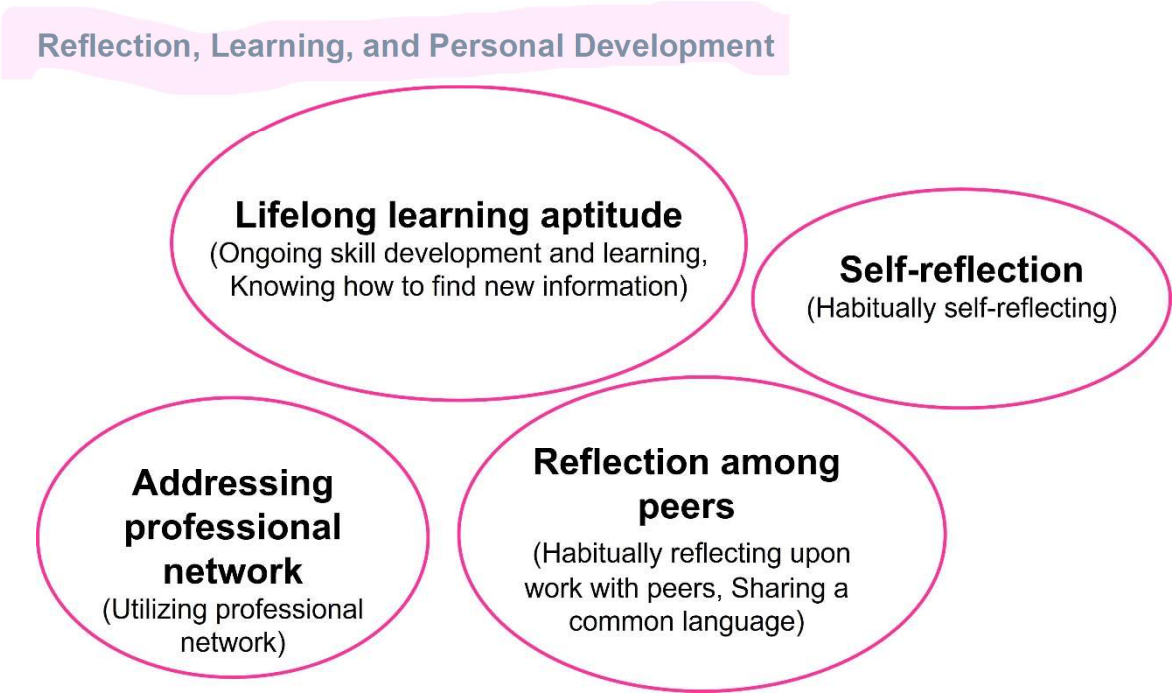

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- It is crucial that managing authorities constantly monitor the competencies of ISS providers to ensure that they have and gain appropriate skills to respond to changing needs, improve services quality, and foster grassroot innovation.

Training needs

The M&E framework proposed in the next section, includes tools aimed at tracking and monitoring step by step the activities relating to innovation support services, until the assessment of the performances and the identification of related competences that are need to duty play such functions.

The variety of ISS activities and new competences and skills required to fulfill them need ready-to-put in use metrics to assess the quality of services with the purpose of continuously improving performances and enhancing competences, if needed.

This tools, which build upon an analytical framework developed under RAMONES+ project for the purpose of assessing advisory performances and competences gaps (Cristiano et al., 2021), can support the identification of training needs. In fact, their use on regular basis enables ISS providers to monitor the outputs of the activities carried out in supporting innovation, evaluate the effects at end-user level and connect them to the competences that are needed

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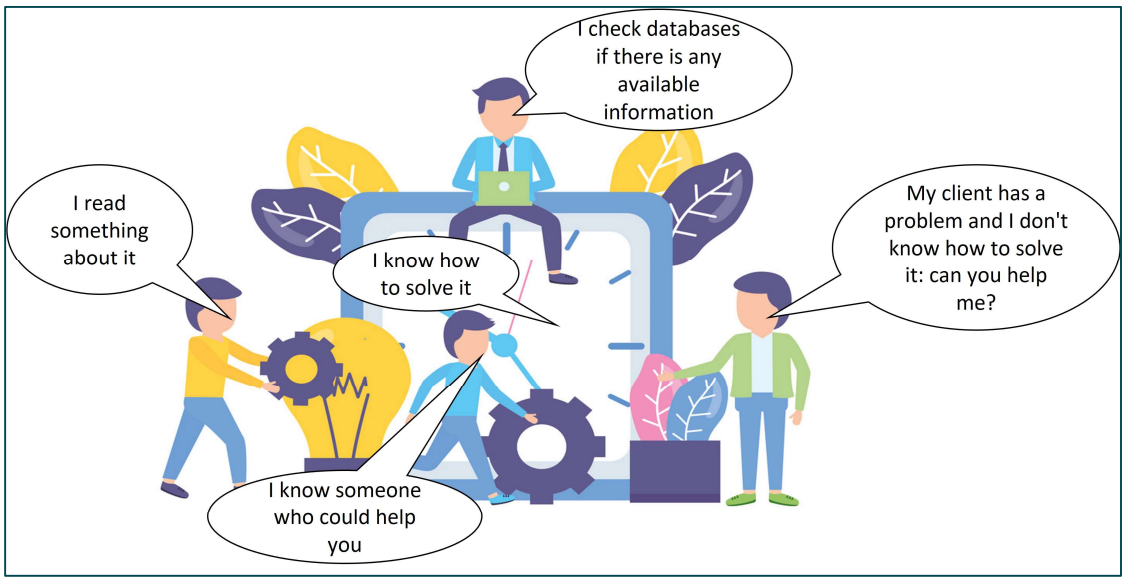
to fulfil each activity, thereby highlighting knowledge gaps in the specific area. This would allow consequent planning of precision training.

Back-office

"Back-office" is a new intervention within the CAP which offers the opportunity to strengthen advisory services and ISS.

As previously shown, support for innovation requires personal attitudes and a huge variety of skills and knowledge that can hardly be held by a single person. The functions of the "back-office", if properly structured, can supporting ISS providers and advisors with competencies, up-to-date knowledge and linkages with actors that are relevant to help solving complex problems, thus supporting innovation processes based on farmers' demands and co-construction of solutions.

To provide this support, "back-office" needs to ensure a high degree of connectivity in the AKIS system, in particular with researchers, advisors, H2020 Multi-Actor Projects and EIP Operational Groups bringing in innovative knowledge, but also with suppliers of inputs, other parts of the chain, with policy makers and with the broader society.



Through networking activities, "back-office" can help ISS/advisory providers in organising working groups (by linking research /advisory / SME / ecc.) to find a solution to a complex problem and, as a consequence, supporting the raise of EIP-AGRI operational groups.

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Moreover, “back-office” can support ISS/advisory providers in replying to specific questions coming from the grassroots by offering up-to-date knowledge, and provide them with regular training on the latest knowledge.

Finally, building on the reservoirs of practical knowledge and further input from the CAP/EIP-AGRI networks, 'back-office' can also develop digital tools to be made available to advisors and ISS providers (e.g., a Whatsapp group service for peer-to-peer exchanges; questions and answers from the field; databases for managing various aspects of production, etc.).

To perform these functions, “back-office” should be built in strong collaboration between all researchers and impartial advisors, as well as with existing farmers' groups, organisations and the national and regional CAP/EIP-AGRI networks which have a focus on spreading knowledge and innovation, in particular capturing the innovative knowledge from EIP OGs and Horizon 2020 MA projects.

5. Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for ISS

What do we mean by M&E?

Evaluation, as per Patton (1997) and Scriven (1991), is vital for scrutinizing programs or projects to gauge their worth, serving various purposes such as persuasion and assessment of impacts. Applied to ISSs, it involves gathering information to judge quality, enhancing service provision. Monitoring, alongside evaluation, gathers data systematically to detect deviations and adjust activities, crucial for effective management of ISSs, aiding ongoing refinement of quality targets. Particularly, evaluation facilitates the enhancement of service provision and empowers advisors to enhance their capabilities, thus ensuring the delivery of high-quality services. Besides, monitoring facilitates ongoing adjustments to quality targets by continuously collecting vital information regarding the content, methods, and tools utilized, as well as the types of farmers/clients served and the modalities of service provision (Table 1). So that, integrating monitoring into ISSs provision, individuals and organizations can enhance their ability to respond to changing needs, improve service quality, and ultimately achieve their objectives more effectively.

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Designing M&E frameworks on the Innovation Support Services, is particularly challenging due to the different contextual situations of AKIS, delivery and organisational model applied in the MSs, multitude of potential end-users and purposes, each with different stakes and needs, all playing a role in service provision and its effectiveness.

Who are the actors and target groups of ISS' M&E?

Knowledge needs about the ISS regard different stakeholders that have to be satisfied by the service provision and this requires the early and clear identification of who will actually use the results of M&E processes, the use they want to make of them, and the purpose.

In general, M&E designs should be tailored to meet the needs of their potential end-users, necessitating the early and clear identification of those who will effectively utilize the results of M&E processes: (1) policy makers; (2) providers of ISSs; (3) farmers and other clients that benefit form the support of the ISSs.

Are there in please specific requirements for ISS' M&E?

In general, there are no common specific M&E requirements for ISSs in EU.

In fact, some general requirements that are established by CAP regulations and tools (Reg. UE 2021/2115) for the purpose of the design of the AKIS strategies and their implementation, under the CAP strategic plans, imply the assessment about the ISSs, within the context analysis, SWOT analysis and need assessment.

Moreover, the indicators foreseen for the M&E of CAP Strategic plans that are applicable to ISSs operating under the AKIS strategies are the following:

Output indicators:

- O.2 Number of advisors setting up or participating in EIP Operational Groups.
- O.29 Number of farmers trained/given advice

Result indicators

- R.1 - Enhancing performance through knowledge and innovation: Number of persons benefitting from advice, training, knowledge exchange or participating in European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational groups supported by the CAP in order to enhance sustainable economic, social, environmental, climate and resource efficiency performance.

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- R.2 - Linking advice and knowledge systems: Number of advisors receiving support to be integrated within Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS).
- R.28 - Environmental/climate performance through knowledge and innovation: Number of persons benefitting from advice, training, knowledge exchange, or participating in European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational groups supported by the CAP related to environmental-climate.

However, it must be noted that, the abovementioned requirements are far from being precise enough to enable the concerning target groups to achieve meaningful knowledge on ISSs.

The M&E framework proposed in this document aims at coping this gap.

What are the theoretical/analytical background frameworks currently in place?

Currently, there is a lack of literature focusing on monitoring and evaluating innovation services within the agricultural sector; while some literature is available concerning other sectors such as health, marketing, education, and e-administration.

However, since, a bulk of existing literature focuses on analytical frameworks and criteria for assessing agricultural/rural advisory services (Birner et al., 2009; Davis & Spielman, 2017; Faure et al., 2016; Dhiab et al., 2020; Landini, 2020; Sulaiman V et al., 2022; Blockeel et al., 2022), we assume that this can be mostly applied to the case of ISSs, because of the analogies with the context and potential end-users.

In particular, Birner et al. (2009) developed a framework that explains an impact chain for a comprehensive assessment of advisory services. This framework encompasses an analysis of the broader environment (framing conditions leading to the enabling environment for ISSs), the attributes of advisory services influenced by these conditions, the performance of these services, the primary outcomes concerning farmer behavior, and ultimately, the impacts. Birner's Best Fit approach offers a perspective that permits exploration both within and beyond the delivery of advisory services. Its components could be adjusted to suit the evaluation expectations of key stakeholders involved, ranging from policymakers and individual advisors to organizations and farmers.

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Moreover, some, more recent, literature is also particularly helpful to define the evaluative criteria for the assessment of the ISS competencies and performances (Cristiano et al., 2021; Sulaiman et al., 2022; Audouin et al., 2023).

Finally, commonly used assessment indicators typically revolve around effectiveness, economic efficiency, accuracy, or profitability, thus lacking adequate coverage of the multidimensional nature of service provision (Coombs and Miles, 2000).

What to take into consideration in M&E the ISS?

Based on the theoretical and analytical background, when designing a M&E framework on ISSs, three crucial aspects must be taken into consideration: (1) the level of the perspective that allows zooming-in and out the ISSs; (2) the different perspectives, that regard who is looking at the ISSs; (3) the quality of the intended/provided services.

Firstly, M&E activities should cover three interconnected levels of perspectives: a) system-wide; b) organizational; c) individual (Table 2).

The system-wide perspective helps achieve meaningful knowledge about: a) the extent to which the overall contextual situation frames, and maybe, enables, the ISSs playing roles and functions within a certain rural area/Country/AKIS; b) the extent to which ISSs competencies and skills are well-suited to provide high-quality and consistent services, for example in terms of topics coverage, soft-skills and ISSs' functions; c) the extent to which ISSs are performing within a certain AKIS context (Cristiano et.al, 2022). All of them help policy makers and other AKIS actors in collecting relevant data/knowledge for policy making and deeper understanding of IISSs' trends and needs for their wider integration within the AKIS.

The organizational perspective helps (self)assessing at the level of the single ISSs organization, in view of resources management, quality check and professional development of the staff: a) availability and adequateness of current competencies and skills to provide high-quality and consistent services, for example in terms of topics coverage, soft-skills and ISSs' functions; b) the overall and individual performance of the staff; c) position, roles and functions played within a certain rural area/Country/AKIS.

The individual perspective helps (self)assessing: a) competencies and skills' gaps in view of identifying precision learning paths for professional development;

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b) actual performance, position, roles and functions played within a certain rural area/Country/AKIS.

Secondly, M&E of ISS must rely on a multidimensional perspective that implies a systemic approach to allow gathering relevant information about their interplays, functioning, and performing within a certain innovation system. This implies that there's not a "gold standard" in evaluating the ISSs, since the 'good' in terms of their functioning is strictly interrelated to the contextual situation and needs/expectations of the respective actors. So, an adequate evaluation of the ISSs should rely on three viewpoints: policy maker, services providers and clients (Cristiano et. al., 2022).

Thirdly, and as a consequence, the evaluation of the performance of the ISS within an AKIS means going beyond than just measuring the degree to which certain support is contributing to developing and/or disseminating some innovations across farming and rural systems but unfolding the quality of the services.

The latter is a multi-faceted concept that includes the ways the service is provided and its outcomes. (Landini, 2020), and relies on three less predictable variables: i) the ISS provider's knowledge availability in terms of competencies, skills, and abilities; ii) the ISS provider's capacity to provide high-quality service (performance); iii) the clients' capacity to access and use ISS services.

All in all, quality includes the merit and value of service provided in interplaying with policy makers, research and farmers and smoothing the adoption and diffusion of innovation.

Moreover, the term performance is generally conceived as the accomplishment of the tasks required for achieving a desired goal which implies unfolding the "complex system of activities employed" (Jacobs et al.; 2013). In the case of the ISSs we can, then, assume that performances are strongly related to their functions (see chapter 2) to support innovation development within the AKIS.

While, in general, the term competence refers to "the sufficiency of knowledge and skills that enables a person to act in a wide variety of situations" (Oxford Dictionary), for the case of the M&E of ISSs we refer to the list competences already defined by i2connect and further developed in D4.1 of ATTRACTIISS.

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Given these considerations, and based on the literature (Landini, 2020; Cristiano et al., 2021; Audouin et al., 2023), the proposed M&E framework on ISS incorporates 6 quality domains of ISSs services to evaluate: 2 structural ones: characteristics of the service, the accessibility of the service; and 4 process ones: the provider's attitude and behaviour, the providers' competences, the comprehensiveness of the supply of service, the relevance of the service.

6. The ISS M&E Framework

How is structured this ISS M&E framework?

This M&E framework includes:

- Evaluative questionnaire (Annex I), that includes: (a) thematic dimensions of interest for the evaluation of the ISSs; (b) questions and relevant criteria to propose to evaluators in view to achieve significant knowledge for decision making and (c) a list of possible relevant indicators to associate in view to provide a certain (quantitative/qualitative) measure of observed/assessed variables.
- Template for the indicators' fiches (Annex II), to identify crucial arrangements for data and information needed to determine the indicators that will be selected by the responsible policy makers/ISSs providers.
- Brief guidelines about general arrangements and procedures for M&E activities (Annex III).

Since, this framework is completely new and outbreaking in actual literature and practice, it's foreseen a step-wise approach to its development, based on an iterative finetuning and a broader dialogue among them and by the outcomes of its initial practical application. At this stage, this M&E framework encompasses the fundamental insights and components for evaluating the ISSs, and it will undergo further adjustments to ensure readiness for implementation by policymakers and ISS' providers following collective deliberation.

The main components of the M&E framework of ISS are described in Table 1 (Betterevaluation.org) and in Annex 1:

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Table 1: Components of the &E framework of ISS

Evaluative dimensions*
An evaluative dimension refers to a specific aspect or criteria used to assess or judge something. It represents a measurable or discernible quality or characteristic by which an object, idea, or action can be evaluated. Evaluative dimensions are often used in various fields such as psychology, sociology, education, and research to make judgments or assessments based on predefined criteria.
Evaluative questions
A question that need to be answered by evaluators. These are usually posed by those commissioning an evaluation. Evaluation questions normally feature in the terms of reference of evaluation projects.
Evaluative criterion
Characteristic and or values on which the judgement of an intervention can be based.
Indicator
An indicator is a quantitative or qualitative factor or variable that provides a simple and reliable means to measure achievement, to reflect changes connected to an intervention, or to help assess the performance of a development actor.

Source: Evaluation Expert Network 2015; *Authors' definition.

Which knowledge will be achieved by applying this framework?

Based on the above-mentioned theoretical and analytical frameworks, this framework is structured around the following the three paramount evaluative dimensions: (i) the contextual political, economic and social situation that enables the environment for the availability and action of the ISSs in within a certain rural area/Country/AKIS; (ii) the competences and skills that are typical of ISSs (ref.

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chapter 4 and D4.1); (iii) the performance of the ISSs against the expected functions to play in view to support the AKIS functioning and the development of innovation across the primary sector and in rural areas (ref. chapter 2).

How and why to use this framework?

The utility and uses of M&E activities and results are vary depending on the different potential-users (ISSs providers, policy makers, other practitioners), type and level of action within the AKIS (Table 1).

In general, appropriate M&E activities can bring to valuable and on-time knowledge about the state of art of ISSs and their performing in AKIS.

In this regard, M&E are normally put in place as instrumental to decision making by ISSs and policy makers (e.g., AKIS coordination bodies).

Table 2: Different utilization of M&E processes and results

Utility/use of M&E by level of application	System	Organizational	Individual
Which Knowledge will you achieve?	State of art and play of enabling conditions, competencies and performances of ISSs within the AKIS	Overall capacities and skills in your organization to act for change within the AKIS, identify knowledge/capacity gaps	Your capacities and skills to act for change within the AKIS identify knowledge/capacity gaps
Possible use by ISSs providers	Acquiring a better understanding/knowledge about the AKIS components and functioning	Decision making about further professional development, organizational restructuring and performance improvement	Decision making about further professional development and performance improvement
Possible use by the Policy makers	SWOT analysis Framing and practical conditions for ISSs organization and provision	AKIS diagnosis and assessment ISS mapping Evaluation of ISS provision under the CAP	Evaluation of ISS provision under the CAP ISS mapping

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Annexes

Annex 1. M&E toolkit: questions, indicators, evaluative criteria

Assessment tool of ISS at system (AKIS) level

Evaluative dimensions	Evaluative questions	Evaluative Criteria	Indicators
Infrastructures & Structures that enable the ISSs applying the different functions to support the innovations across the sector	Are there (sufficient) available/accessible knowledge infrastructures and structures?	Availability of knowledge infrastructures Good availability of Knowledge (Digital) repositories and other mechanisms that enable knowledge creation, circulation, dissemination of and brokering functions	n. of Knowledge (Digital) repositories freely available Share/Rate of relevant knowledge fields covered by the Knowledge (Digital) available repositories
			CAP Network manage the database of the OGs/innovations
		Presence of relevant R&I structures Satisfactory coverage of relevant knowledge fields (Agricultural and interconnected sectors) by the R&I bodies and infrastructures?	n. of R&I bodies and infrastructures by knowledge fields Share/Rate of relevant knowledge fields covered by the R&I bodies and infrastructures Territorial presence/coverage of Backoffice units/platforms
Organizational and infrastructural	Is the **plurality of ISSs** in the Country satisfactory? In the view to ensure a wide coverage of potential clients, type of	By funding sector Good balance between Public/private/NGO sector based ISSs?	Share/Rate of private/public/semi-public//NGO ISSs providers

capacity of the ISSs	innovations, rural area (reaching the marginals), typology of providers.	Knowledge fields of ISSs Good range of knowledge fields (within and outside the agricultural sector) with regard to the trends of development and innovations of the agricultural sector	Rate of ISSs that belong to agriculture Rate of ISSs that belong to machinery/seed/fodder industry Rate of ISSs that belong to food industry Rate of agricultural advisors/technicians/vets Rate of ISS that belong to research/academia/education/professional training Rate of ISS that belong to general services, commercial business, management, legal/fund raising/communication Rate of ISSs which belong to other (interconnected) sectors than agriculture: pharmaceutics, digital, …
		Typology of ISSs providers Variety of the typologies of ISSs providers:	Rate of individual ISS provider Rate of ISSs organizations Rate of professional organizations/farmers' unions playing ISS functions
	Do the ISSs provide a good coverage of territorial level	Territorial coverage by ISSs Good coverage of rural areas until marginal ones/mountains Accessibility by the potential end-users	Territorial/Local Offices/Operational units of ISSs Presence in marginal/mountain areas
Enabling environment		Presence of policy frames/schemes and delivery mechanisms	ISSs apply ToTs for advisors under public/private/NGO funding

	Are there strategies/policies and funding schemes to specifically promote the integration of the ISS into the AKIS?	Policy and funding schemes are in place through a bulk of relevant types of interventions that enable the ISS interconnecting and collaborating with other AKIS actors	ISS apply ToTs for OGs to increase their capacities for interactive innovation under public/private/NGO funding
	Does public funding guarantee **stable availability of finances** for innovation in the long-term?	Presence Appropriate combination of CAP and other than CAP policies, strategies and fundings related to agricultural innovation, fostering, promoting, and facilitating systemic innovations (e.g. CAP interventions of the AKIS strategies)	n. of CAP AKIS interventions n. of other than CAP AKIS strategies/policies/interventions Share of expenditure by types of intervention
		Specific strategy and funding schemes for scaling out of innovations is in place	n. of strategies/schemes/interventions funded for scale out of innovations Rate of engagement of ISSs providers in priority setting of funded strategies/schemes/interventions Rate of engagement of ISSs providers in funded strategies/schemes/interventions
	Are there mechanisms of recognition/mapping/registering/monitoring	Appropriate Methods and tools are applied on systematic basis to map/register/monitor ISSs	Yes/No Frequency of application

	of ISS' roles and activities played in AKIS?		
	Are there financial incentives for networking/partnering/interaction of ISS?	Appropriate financial incentives (recognition of expenses, of fees) are in place	Yes/No
	Are there policy frames/mechanisms/funding that enable the setting up and implementation of K&I networks, platforms, events, fairs, ….?	Appropriate policy frames/mechanisms/funding are in place for a variety of purposes (networking, platforms, events, …)	N./Frequency of Demodays/ Open days Brokering/Open days/… N. demofarms networks N. Knowledge hubs, N. living labs, N. community of practice,
	Are there policy arrangements that promote and enable ISSs interconnecting with EU R&I projects and CAP Network with the purpose of collaboration?	Appropriateness of policy arrangements/incentive schemes Effective engagement of ISS	Satisfactory availability of policy arrangements/incentive schemes that support ISSs in interconnecting with EU R&I projects and CAP Network Rate of engagement of ISSs providers in relevant R&I projects Rate of engagement of ISSs providers in CAP Networks' events Rate of collaboration of ISSs providers with the EU/National CAP networks
		Appropriateness of M&E systems/arrangements: comprehensiveness of evaluative dimensions, availability of sources, proper responsibilities and procedural arrangements Effective use and follow-up for policy making, managing, ISSs assessment & organization and professional development	An appropriate M&E system and relevant arrangements are in place A systematic data and information collection is in place Appropriate arrangements are in place to follow-up the results of M&E activities at proper levels/actors

Competencies	Are there satisfactory linkages among vocational training/educations/ researchers/academia and ISS providers?	Satisfactory interconnections between trainers & ISS	Rate of long-term/short-term collaborations based on projects/framework contracts/ n. of networks/communities of practices between vocational training/educations/ researchers/academia & ISS providers n. OGs/other than EIIP-Agri innovation project in which vocational training/educations/ researchers/academia and ISS providers are partners
		Presence of structured/formal training courses for ISSs/engaging ISSs in vocational training	Rate of engagement of ISSs providers in training courses as trainees Rate of engagement of ISSs providers in training courses as trainers
	Is there in place an education/training/certification system for ISSs providers?	Presence of structured/formal education & vocational training courses for students/(young) ISSs providers	Yes/No Rate of students/(young) ISSs providers attending education & vocational training courses by year
		Presence of a certification (quality) system for ISSs providers	Yes/No Share of certified ISSs providers
Performances	**Roles and functions of ISSs** To what extent ISSs are performing the following roles and activities in AKIS and innovation processes?	Support aimed at solving complex problems at the farm level	Score of function played by ISS providers
		Provision of services to support the access to resource	Score of function played by ISS providers
		Identification and articulation of farmers' needs and innovative solutions	Score of function played by ISS providers
		Support to partners for the project development and implementation	Score of function played by ISS providers
		Technical advice/assistance to farm during the co-construction of innovations	Score of function played by ISS providers

		Coordination/Facilitation/Guidance/Learning during the co-innovation	Score of function played by ISS providers
		Dissemination with the purpose of scaling-out the innovations	Score of function played by ISS providers
		Dissemination with the purpose of scaling-up the innovations across the supply chains	Score of function played by ISS providers
	Participation to the CAP	Satisfactory participation to EIP-Agri projects	Score of ISS providers among the OGs partners
		Satisfactory participation to innovation projects other than EIP-Agri	Score of ISS providers among the partners of innovation projects (based on) Number of advice actions or units to provide innovation support for preparing or implementing European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational group projects*
		Satisfactory participation to the CAP SP by CAP Objectives	Rate of participation to the CAP SP by CAP Objectives

- *Output indicator (O2) already established for the CAP SP.

Assessment tool for individual ISS

Evaluative dimensions	Evaluative question	Criterion	Indicator
Basic Disposition and Attitude	Self-awareness How do you rate your self-awareness?	Sense of equity	Rate of (likert scale)
		Willing to take a step back when needed	Rate of (likert scale)
		Willing to share power and give up control	Rate of (likert scale)
	Personal drive How do you rate your personal drive?	Passion	Rate of (likert scale)
		Dedication	Rate of (likert scale)
		Trust in intuition	Rate of (likert scale)
	Sensitivity How do you rate your sensitivity?	Responsiveness/Capacity to provide satisfactory, prompt and timing advisory services	Rate of (likert scale)
		Empathy and emotional intelligence	Rate of (likert scale)
		Communication skills (=conversational skills, basics of communication, esteem, questioning techniques, active listening, etc	Rate of (likert scale)
		Ability to interact in English	Rate of (likert scale)
		Social skills (=Ability to cooperate, work in a team, and networking	Rate of (likert scale)
		Facilitation, Moderation and meeting management	Rate of (likert scale)
Reliability	How do you rate your Reliability	The ability to perform the promised service dependably, technically accurate and up-to-date in scientific terms	Rate of (likert scale)
		Trustworthiness & Ethics, Ability to convey trust and confidence, to provide caring, individualized attention to client and to perform other soft skills	Rate of (likert scale)
		Accountability, ability to meet expectation of account-giving	Rate of (likert scale)

		Capacity to deal with difficult consulting situations/change management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Self and time management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Flexibility in service planning and provision	Rate of (likert scale)
		Creativity, ability to think about new ideas and put them in use to find innovative solutions and address problems	Rate of (likert scale)
		Responsibility and Professional attitude	Rate of (likert scale)
Playing ISSs functions	How do you rate your capacity to perform the following roles and activities in AKIS and innovation processes? ?	Support aimed at solving complex problems at the farm level	Rate of (likert scale)
		Provision of services to support the access to resource	Rate of (likert scale)
		Identification and articulation of farmers' needs and innovative solutions	Rate of (likert scale)
		Support to partners for the project development and implementation	Rate of (likert scale)
		Technical advice/assistance to farm during the co-construction of innovations	Rate of (likert scale)
		Coordination/Facilitation/Guidance/Learning during the co-innovation	Rate of (likert scale)
		Dissemination with the purpose of scaling-out the innovations	Rate of (likert scale)
		Dissemination with the purpose of scaling-up the innovations across the supply chains	Rate of (likert scale)
System perspective	Understanding the social context of the AKIS How do you rate your understanding about the broader social environment in your	Satisfactory understanding and identification of main actors/structures, infrastructures, interactions and main trend in AKIS	Rate of (likert scale)

	Country/region (actors, infrastructures, interactions)?		
	How do you rate your understanding about your role in the system?	Satisfactory understanding about own role in AKIS and degree of interconnections with other actors and infrastructures	Rate of (likert scale)
	Use of tools for system analysis Do you systematically apply stakeholders analyses to identify relevant actors for Innovation processes that you support?	Systematic use of system analysis, including stakeholders mapping and analysis and stakeholders' analysis	Rate of (likert scale)
	Understanding the political and economic context of the AKIS	Satisfactory understanding and use of the main strategies/policies and mechanisms of implementation of AKIS strengthening	Rate of (likert scale)
		Satisfactory understanding of the main political and economic features & trend of AKIS and wider agriculture sector	Rate of (likert scale)
Content knowledge	How do you rate your knowledge in agriculture and technical knowledge	Satisfactory knowledge of features and trends in agriculture and farming systems	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate your capacity to identify transectoral opportunities for farmers?	Good understanding of other sectors and possible intersections with agriculture	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate your competence on CAP and other sources of public funding for innovation in agriculture	Satisfactory knowledge of policy and funding schemes	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate your capacity for problem assessment and demand articulation?	Capacity to enable the farmer/client highlighting issues which were previously unaware and articulating demand for service	Rate of (likert scale)
	Understanding the CAP	CAP cross-cutting objective	Rate of (likert scale)

	How do you rate your knowledge about the CAP CCO/SOs?	CAP specific objective 1	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 2	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 3	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 4	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 5	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 6	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 7	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 8	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 9	Rate of (likert scale)
	Have you got adequate knowledge to support digitalization processes among your client?	Good knowledge about digital solutions and digitalization processes for farmers	Rate of (likert scale)
Methodological Competence	Understanding the innovation process	Sensitivity for the process	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate your capacity to empower silent actors in innovation processes?	Knowledge of main aspects of marginalized/silent actors, methods and tools for identification and empowerment	Rate of (likert scale)
	To what extent do you have interplays with academia and research and advisors for the acquisition of back-office capacities and skills??	Ability to recognise patterns in an innovation process	Rate of (likert scale)
		Knowing how to act in any given situation	Rate of (likert scale)
		Possessing and using tools related to innovation processes	Rate of (likert scale)
		Problem solving skills	Rate of (likert scale)
Energy		Being able to activate and mobilise people	Rate of (likert scale)
		Facilitation & mediation skills	Rate of (likert scale)

	How do you rate your ability to keep energy and enthusiasm in the group?	Satisfactory knowledge of methods and tools for keep and boost energy and enthusiasm n the group	Rate of (likert scale)
Co-creation	How do you rate your ability to mediate co-creation processes?	Ability to identify crucial positions, to identify missing positions	Rate of (likert scale)
		Ability to systematize and valorize multidisciplinary knowledge in a creative way	Rate of (likert scale)
Organisational capacity	How do you rate your ability to Organisational capacity	Keeping track of the network, including following up with contacts	Rate of (likert scale)
		Time management,	Rate of (likert scale)
		Resource searching and management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Writing project proposals & business planning	Rate of (likert scale)
		Managerial attitude and Delegating	Rate of (likert scale)
		Digital skills	Rate of (likert scale)
Addressing professional network (Utilizing professional network)	How do you rate your embeddedness, interaction, level of collaboration with other providers of expert knowledge for farmers (e.g. researchers, academia, other advisors, digital consultants, innovation brokers, …)?	Satisfactory degree of embeddedness	Rate of (likert scale)
	Are you member of a professional networks?	Ability to embed into professional networks	Yes/No
Lifelong learning aptitude	How do you frequently apply to lifelong learning?	Periodic application of skill development and learning Good knowledge of how to find new information and from a variety of sources	Rate of (likert scale)

	Have you in place tools for systematic competency gap assessment?	Systematic application of competency gap assessment	Rate of (likert scale)
Knowing and using communication techniques	Visibility How do you rate the use of communication techniques	Knowledge of communication techniques Frequency in use of communication techniques	Rate of (likert scale)
Reflection, Learning, and Personal Development	Reflection among peers How do you rate your capacity for Reflection among peers?	Habitually reflecting upon work with peers, Sharing a common language	Rate of (likert scale)
	Self-reflection How do you rate your capacity for habitually self-reflection?	Habitual self-reflecting	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate your capacity self-assessment on own performances and towards professional development?	Systematic application of (self)assessment tools	Rate of (likert scale)
Monitoring of processes of change	How do you rate your capacity to use/Knowledge of Monitoring of processes of change	Application of methods and tools for monitoring of processes of change	Rate of (likert scale)
Know and use educational methods and learning approaches	How do you rate your capacity to use/Knowledge of educational methods and learning approaches for service provision?	Good range of methods/tools	Rate of (likert scale)

Assessment tool for ISS' organizations

Evaluative dimensions	Evaluative question	Criterion	Indicator
Organizational and resource capacity	How do you rate the overall capacity of your organization with respect to the variety and contents of services provided	Adequateness of number of staff/experts	Rate of (likert scale)
		Good coverage of transdisciplinarity of staff	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the overall skills of the staff in your organization?	Good level of (technical) education & functional skills	Rate of (likert scale)
		Systematic implementation of M&E tools towards competency gap assessment, precision learning and professional development of staff	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the adequateness of salaries and performance-based incentives for staff engaging in MA approaches?	Adequateness	Rate of (likert scale)
Basic Disposition and Attitude	To what extend staff in your organization have the following abilities?	Self-awareness	Rate of (likert scale)
		Personal drive	Rate of (likert scale)
		Facilitation, Moderation and meeting management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Social skills (=Ability to cooperate, work in a team, and networking	
		Responsiveness/Capacity to provide satisfactory, prompt and timing advisory services	
		Empathy and emotional intelligence	
		Communication skills (=conversational skills, basics of communication, esteem, questioning techniques, active listening, etc	

		Ability to interact in English	
		Reliability, ability to perform the promised service dependably, technically accurate and up-to-date in scientific terms	Rate of (likert scale)
		Trustworthiness & Ethics, Ability to convey trust and confidence, to provide caring, individualized attention to client and to perform other soft skills	Rate of (likert scale)
		Accountability, ability to meet expectation of account-giving	Rate of (likert scale)
		Capacity to deal with difficult consulting situations/change management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Self and time management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Flexibility in service planning and provision	Rate of (likert scale)
		Creativity, ability to think about new ideas and put them in use to find innovative solutions and address problems	Rate of (likert scale)
		Responsibility and Professional attitude	Rate of (likert scale)
System perspective	How do you rate the position and role of your organization in the system?	Satisfactory understanding and identification of main actors/structures, infrastructures, interactions and main trend in AKIS	Rate of (likert scale)
		Satisfactory understanding about own role in AKIS and degree of interconnections with other actors and infrastructures	Rate of (likert scale)
	Use of tools for system analysis Do you systematically apply stakeholders analyses to identify relevant actors for Innovation processes that you support?	Systematic use of system analysis, including stakeholders mapping and analysis and stakeholders' analysis	Rate of (likert scale)

	Understanding the political and economic context of the AKIS To what extent (staff in) your organization understand the political and economic context of the AKIS?	Satisfactory understanding and application of the main strategies/policies and mechanisms of implementation of AKIS strengthening	Rate of (likert scale)
		Satisfactory understanding of the main political and economic features & trend of AKIS and wider agriculture sector	Rate of (likert scale)
Content knowledge	How do you rate the knowledge in agriculture and technical expertise in your organization?	Satisfactory knowledge of features and trends in agriculture and farming systems	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the capacity to identify transectoral opportunities for farmers in your organization?	Good understanding of other sectors and possible intersections with agriculture	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the competence on CAP and other sources of public funding for innovation in agriculture in your organization?	Satisfactory knowledge of policy and funding schemes	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the capacity for problem assessment and demand articulation in your organization?	Capacity to enable the farmer/client highlighting issues which were previously unaware and articulating demand for service	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the capacity of your organization to support clients the CAP CCO/SOs?	CAP cross-cutting objective	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 1	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 2	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 3	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 4	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 5	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 6	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 7	Rate of (likert scale)

		CAP specific objective 8	Rate of (likert scale)
		CAP specific objective 9	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate the capacity of your organization to support digitalization processes among your client?	Satisfactory knowledge/Coverage about digital solutions and digitalization processes for farmers	Rate of (likert scale)
Methodological Competence	Understanding the innovation process	Sensitivity for the process	Rate of (likert scale)
	How do you rate your capacity to empower silent actors in innovation processes?	Knowledge of main aspects of marginalized/silent actors, methods and tools for identification and empowerment	Rate of (likert scale)
	To what extent do you have interplays with academia and research and advisors for the acquisition of back-office capacities and skills??	Ability to recognise patterns in an innovation process	Rate of (likert scale)
		Knowing how to act in any given situation	Rate of (likert scale)
		Possessing and using tools related to innovation processes	Rate of (likert scale)
		Problem solving skills	Rate of (likert scale)
Energy	How do you rate the ability of your staff to keep energy and enthusiasm in the group?	Being able to activate and mobilise people	Rate of (likert scale)
		Facilitation & mediation skills	Rate of (likert scale)
		Satisfactory knowledge of methods and tools for keep and boost energy and enthusiasm n the group	Rate of (likert scale)
Co-creation	How do you rate the ability of your staff to mediate co-creation processes?	Ability to identify crucial positions, to identify missing positions	Rate of (likert scale)
		Ability to systematize and valorize multidisciplinary knowledge in a creative way	Rate of (likert scale)
Organisational capacity	How do you rate the ability of your staff to perform the following activities?	Keeping track of the network, including following up with contacts	Rate of (likert scale)
		Time management,	Rate of (likert scale)

		Resource searching and management	Rate of (likert scale)
		Writing project proposals & business planning	Rate of (likert scale)
		Managerial attitude and Delegating	Rate of (likert scale)
		Digital skills	Rate of (likert scale)
Knowing and using communication techniques	Visibility How do you rate the use of communication techniques in your organization?	Knowledge of communication techniques Frequency in use of communication techniques	Rate of (likert scale)
Reflection, Learning, and Personal Development	Reflection among peers Are Reflection exercises among peers applied in your organization?	Systematic application of reflecting upon work with peers	Rate of (likert scale)
	Are the in place in your organization methods and tools for self-assessment on own performances and towards professional development?	Systematic application of (self)assessment tools by the staff and by the management	Rate of (likert scale)
Monitoring of processes of change	How do you rate the capacity of your organization to use/Knowledge of Monitoring of processes of change	Application of methods and tools for monitoring of processes of change	Rate of (likert scale)
Know and use educational methods and learning approaches	How do you rate the capacity of your organization to use/Knowledge of educational methods and learning approaches for service provision?	Good range of methods/tools	Rate of (likert scale)
Playing ISSs functions	To what extent your organization has the capacities to perform the	Support aimed at solving complex problems at the farm level	Rate of (likert scale)

	following roles and activities in AKIS and innovation processes?	Provision of services to support the access to resource	Rate of (likert scale)
		Identification and articulation of farmers' needs and innovative solutions	Rate of (likert scale)
		Support to partners for the project development and implementation	Rate of (likert scale)
		Technical advice/assistance to farm during the co-construction of innovations	Rate of (likert scale)
		Coordination/Facilitation/Guidance/Learning during the co-innovation	Rate of (likert scale)
		Dissemination with the purpose of scaling-out the innovations	Rate of (likert scale)
		Dissemination with the purpose of scaling-up the innovations across the supply chains	Rate of (likert scale)

Annex 2. Template for the indicators' fiches

Template	Example from EC, 2024*
Indicator name and code	O.2 Number of advice actions or units to provide innovation support for preparing or implementing European Innovation Partnership (EIP) operational group projects
Definition *Clear definition of the unit of measure on which basis the indicator will be quantified*	Number of advice actions or other units (e.g. number of advisors) to help for preparing and/or implementing EIP Operational Group (OG) projects paid in the Financial Year concerned (excluding other type of advice actions reported under O.33).
Types of (CAP) intervention concerned *It regards the intervention/operation/project which realization lead to the quantification of this specific indicator.* *Reference can be made to other policies/strategies under which the indicator is possibly established*	Only the following type of intervention is concerned: • Knowledge exchange and dissemination of information (Article 78) This indicator concerns support for advice for innovation purposes incentivising emergence and running of the EIP OG project. This support refers either to the project preparation period or to the facilitation during the project implementation of the EIP OG project (or both), and **only if the advisor is not paid by the OG project budget (Article 77),** but by an intervention under Article 78.
Level of assessment *AKIS level, organization level, individual level*	Not foreseen
Possible Splitting *Possible breakdowns of the indicator (e.g. by year; by type of farm)*	(included into the methodology)
Methodology *Explain the methodology to use for the calculation (survey, likert scale, formula, …)*	The advice actions or other units, paid in the Financial Year concerned, in the frame of innovation support under Article 78, shall be reported **per unit amount**. If only a part of the committed amount for an operation was paid in the Financial Year concerned only a partial output is to be reported (see cover note).
Methodology for the aggregated values *To explain in case of quantification at AKIS or organization levels*	Following aggregates should be provided: - The total number of actions or units paid by intervention (if relevant, i.e. when within one intervention several unit amounts are defined) - The total number of advice actions paid to provide innovation support - The total number for each supported unit (other than advice actions and advisors)

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	- The total number of advisors (this aggregate covers all actions, included those paid in advice actions or other units) **Remark**: For the first three aggregates, there should be no double counting. For advisors double counting is allowed, to avoid high administrative burden.
Unit of measurement *Indicate the basic unit of calculation of the indicator*	Number of operations, advisors or other units
Source of the data *Identification of the source of data needed to quantify the unit: provider, farmer/client, national statistics, managing authority of the CAP SP…*	Not foreseen
Point of data collection & Frequency *Point(s) in time at which data is collected (e.g. service provision completed; Periodic Assessment).* *Frequency: Annual (A); Quarterly (Q); On Service (OS); semester (S)*	Not foreseen
Comments/caveats *Rationale & clarifications if needed*	The rationale for this indicator is to measure specific advisory efforts under Article 78 to incentivise innovation, e.g. those in accordance with Article 15(4)(e), i.e. an advisor delivering "*innovation support in particular for preparing and for implementing OG projects*". Examples could be providing specific advisory services for innovation support, such as coaching farmers towards innovation on their farm, managing an innovation hub, which helps setting up of facilitating OG innovative projects, training advisors for innovation support. Support to advisors under Article 77 as part of the funding for the OG project is not included here. This is covered under O.1, because the advisor in that case is paid from the OG project budget.
Evaluative criterion	Not foreseen

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Indicate the evaluation criterion that this indicator will contribute to address.	
Evaluative question(s) *Indicate the evaluation question(s) that this indicator will contribute to address.*	Not foreseen

* Cover note on output and result indicators

https://agriculture.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-10/pmef-cover-note-indicators_en.pdf

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Annex 3. Brief guidelines about general arrangements and procedures for M&E activities

The conduction of M&E activities must be well-defined around sounding and feasible methodologies and tools and well-organized, by procedures and documentation to apply on systematic bass.

Person/Department in charge for the M&E activities needs to be preliminary defined. This includes deciding who is the person/unit in charge of coordination of M&E activities and setting up a proper system of procedure, scheduling and documentation to implement.

In this brief guidance the person in charge is indicated as the ones who has stake in conducting the specific M&E activities about the ISSs.

M&E activities at AKIS level

Person in change	**Managing authority; AKS coordination body; research body, university**
Setting up a M&E system	
Who	Identify unit and internal/external staff and professionalities to engage in M&E activities
How	Determine financial resources to commit Identify methodologies and relevant questions, criteria and indicators Identify relevant sources of data and information and define protocols for data/information collection Define procedures and tools (e.g. questionnaires for ISS, farmers, other AKIS actors)
When	Define a schedule for collection and assessment activities (e.g. annual, semester)
M&E implementation	Conduct the data/information collection

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	Data/information mining and analysis, including quality check Address questions and criteria Draw conclusions and recommendations for improvements
M&E follow-ups	Share results, conclusions and recommendations with relevant AKIS actors (e.g. ISS) Identify relevant areas (=evaluative dimensions) and actions (=evaluative criteria) for melioration & responsibilities for follow-ups Finalize conclusions and recommendations for improvements Check effective follow-ups Compare results over time to check possible meliorations

M&E activities at individual ISS provider

Person in change	**Individual ISS provider**
Setting up a M&E system	
Who	Individual ISS provider
How	Determine financial resources to commit Identify methodologies and relevant questions, criteria and indicators Identify relevant sources of data and information and define protocols for data/information collection Define procedures and tools (e.g. questionnaires for clients) Share and discuss M&E system with your staff (ISS providers)

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When	Define a schedule for collection and assessment activities (e.g. annual, semester)
M&E implementation	Conduct the data/information collection Data/information mining and analysis, including quality check Address questions and criteria Discuss results with staff Discuss results with a sample of clients (e.g. farmers and policy makers) Draw conclusions and recommendations for improvements at individual and organizational level
M&E follow-ups	Identify relevant competencies and performances (=evaluative dimensions) and actions (=evaluative criteria) for melioration & responsibilities for follow-ups Check effective follow-ups Compare results over time to check possible meliorations

M&E activities at ISS' organizations

Person in change	**Manager/Management office of the ISS organization**
Setting up a M&E system	
Who	Identify unit and internal/external staff and professionalities to engage in M&E activities
How	Determine financial resources to commit Identify methodologies and relevant questions, criteria and indicators Identify relevant sources of data and information Define procedures and tools (e.g. questionnaires for clients)

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