i2connect

INTERACTIVE INNOVATION

Task 1.4
Identify topical knowledge in innovation networks, services and activities across Europe

Deliverable 1.5a
First overview of topical insights from innovation activities, services and networks

Dissemination Level

PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
RE	Restricted to a group specified by the consortium (including the Commission Services)	
CO	Confidential, only for members of the consortium (including the Commission Services)	

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Summary

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Executive summary

This document provides a summary of the topical insights selected for the first reporting period of Task 1.4 in the i2connect project. Ten insights were selected from 37 topical insights submitted by nine of the 13 partners involved in Task 1.4 These insights reflect the issues, topics, learnings and thoughts of people from the project consortium which are identified as being useful insights. These insights may be theoretical or practice based, they should indicate a connection between the ongoing science which supports interactive innovation theory and the day to day experience of actors who support innovation. The process of gathering, selecting and reporting topical insights will be repeated every 4 months up to the end of the project. All of the insights collected are visible to all consortium partners and may be added to by designated partners throughout the project. The process for the identification and collation of topical insights for Task 1.4 in the i2connect project will evolve throughout the project and this will be reflected in the deliverables 1.5a to 1.5n.

1.0 Background and Context of topical insights for interactive innovation

1.1 Introduction

Task 1.4 in the i2connect project aims to track and report the topical insights coming from the project partners' activities and interactions with other projects, outputs, events and networks relevant to effective support of interactive innovation. These reports will be produced in month 8, June 2020 and every four months thereafter up to and including month 60.

These topical insights are issues, observations, problems or solutions relevant to the support of interactive innovation by advisors who perform facilitation, knowledge brokering or other forms of support. These may be practical, theoretical or conceptual insights which have a currency which relates to the i2connect project and its ambition. These include new learnings from project activities and partners active in supporting innovation through their own organisations, activities, services, networks and other projects.

These insights are written in short summary narratives with links to audio, audio-visual or infographic details if needed. The insights were collected and stored in

digital format using a shared template on the collaborative platform Meteodocs. Each partner in Task 1.4 added their own contributions regularly to the shared spreadsheet template and a summary of the main insight topics from all the partners' contributions and 10 selected insights will be included in these reports (D1.5a to D1.5n). These outputs may be elaborated subsequently in i2connect newsletters, practice abstracts and in social media channels. This selection of insights will be by agreement among the T1.4 partners.

1.2 Context of task 1.4

The aim of the i2connect project is to build the capacity and motivation of agricultural and forestry advisors in interactive innovation methods and improve their support roles in innovation networks. Advisors will be better enabled to effectively support interactive innovation processes and thus contribute to faster and more successful innovations in rural areas.

1.3 Objective of task 1.4

The objective is to record and report on cutting-edge knowledge and topical insights of functions, activities and the enabling environment of advisors working in innovation groups and networks as evidenced from H2020 projects and EIP-AGRI Operational Groups. The Task 1.4 challenge is to identify topical knowledge in innovative networks, services and activities across Europe (M5 – 60).

Task 1.4 actors are individuals from the partner teams of Teagasc, APCA, AUA, ILVO, EUFRAS, IALB, SEASN, UHOH, NAK, CREA, MAPA, ZLTO and WR.

2.0 Identifying topical insights

2.1 Topics and issues

The **first step** is to identify topical issues where there may be insights – these are topics that capture the attention of advisors, farmers and others including the public media. They are also topics which the provider feels are urgent and important with useful and interesting insights. These may be the consequence of an observation, discussion, reflection, report, interview or analysis of an interactive innovation project, process, activity, service or network. Topics may arise from academic literature, project deliverables and reports, EIP-AGRI reports, support literature and other interactive innovation public sources, but relevant to ongoing work in the providers projects, regions and countries.

This was done by listing 4 to 5 topics by each of the 13 partners involved. These were from each partners' involvement in innovation practices, projects, activities and networks. Ideas for topics can be sourced from day to day interaction and conversations, EIP AGRI publications and other local publications and events.

2.2 What are insights?

The **second step** is to ask the question- what are they saying to each other or to us that is relevant and interesting to interactive innovation, advisors, the AKIS and the activities in i2connect?

Topical insight narratives summarise the details of current stories, observation, rumours, opinions, facts and counter facts that key actors are talking about. These insights must be relevant to the broad objectives of i2connect and attract the attention of the advisors and other interactive innovation actors.

2.3 Categorisation

The **third step** is to categorise the topical insights under headings so that they can be searched and grouped easily. This should be done by the contributor, of course some insights can be categorised under more than one heading.

The proposed headings are:
- Funding, business models
- Network management, facilitation, moderation
- Back office support, training, capacity building
- Competency assessment
- Other advisory roles and activities
- Impact assessment, evaluating success
- Other

Funding and Business models

Regardless of the funding source (public or private) the value proposition of the interactive innovation project or network for all involved is important. Can it be justified in order to ensure the long-term value added of the initiative? These issues have been elaborated in D1.1. They contribute to the enabling environment which will be elaborated through the review of the country AKIS in T1.2.

Network management, facilitation, moderation

What are the issues and experiences around innovation networks? Are there insights around the multi actor networks that can be shared and help to guide the i2connect project? Some of these will be apparent from partners own experiences

and will be added to by WP2 and other i2connect activities and experiences as the project proceeds.

Back office support, training, capacity building

How is this being done to good effect? Can we learn from the current Covid19 restrictions and be more efficient in how we support advisors and improve their capacity to support the different needs of interactive innovation activities, projects and networks? The ongoing work in WP3 and WP4 in addition to insights from other projects should provide a number of relevant experiences and insights.

Competency Assessment

These competency frameworks are interesting and they are used more and more in staff recruitment and service procurement. Do these exist for high end advisory services such as interactive innovation support? Task 1.3 will provide some useful insights. Are these considered at undergraduate level? Are there metrics and benchmarks for advisors in innovation support roles? Insights in this regard would be useful particularly in WP3 and WP4.

Other Advisory roles and activities

To what extent are advisory support services and interactive innovation activities, projects and network stand alone or added on to other roles which advisors perform across a range of one to one technical/financial support, group events, publications or education with a wider base of farmers clients? How does this help or hinder the interactive innovation support role? What do we see in the inventory of advisors in Task 1.2, D1.3 or in the selected practical cases Task 2.3, D2.2 or the harvested common best practices from field reviews in Task 2.6/D2.4?

Impact Assessment

As advisors, how are the impacts of these interactive innovation activities, projects and networks recorded and evaluated? Are their lessons, qualitative and quantitative tools from the EU funded project LIAISON which can help in the impact assessment? WP2 is expected to learn from successful practical cases. Are there insights which can help to get better impact assessments to support the promotion of interactive innovation activities, projects and networks?

Other

Everyone in the project should feel free to express their own issues, concerns, successes and failures in the form of insights. From these insights we all learn and understand better the complexity of the interactive innovation process. It is therefore particularly important that other insights coming from the day to day

experience, thoughts and feelings of individuals are documented and shared with others.
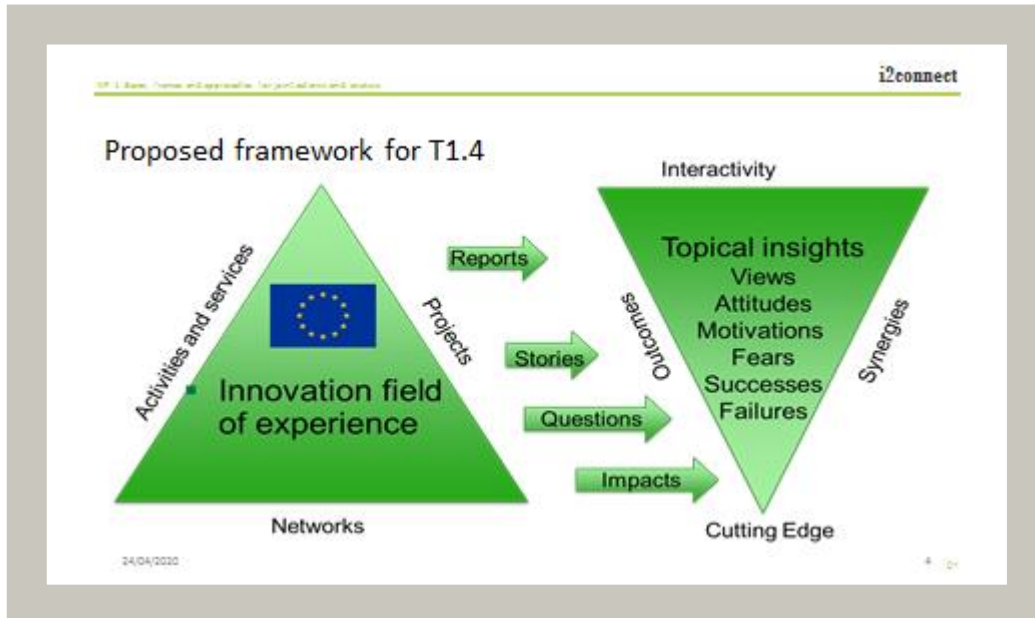

Figure 1. An infographic representation of Task 1.4

3.0 Collecting the topical insights

The following partners Teagasc, APCA, AUA, ILVO, EUFRAS, IALB, SEASN, UHOH, NAK, CREA, MAPA, ZLTO and WR will nominate an individual or individuals to gather topics and to articulate the insights within the framework provided. The framework will be maintained on MeteoDocs as a living document. These informed sources within the project partners and their networks will interact as necessary and will finalise their contributions 2 weeks before the deliverable is due.

From a logistical perspective these partners are mixed, some with advisory services while other have more academic and support expertise. The expectation is that each partner will identify a list of 5-6 topics each quarter and will provide their insights on at least 3 of these.

Topics - each topic should be defined in its title with 2-3 words.

Topical Insights -there should be a short narrative to describe the topical insight; this narrative should explain the context, source and specific knowledge, theory or practice. It may contain links to other print, video or audio materials.

What will these Topical insights be used for?

It is expected that these topical insights will contribute to the reflective capitalisation in task 1.5. They will also be relevant to WP2, 3 and 4 in terms of the continuous development and ongoing learning in the project. In addition there will be regular reporting of these topical insights through Task 5.4.

3.1 Identifying the topics

The topics identified by each partner are collated and stored in the worksheet on Meteodocs. Partners will add and remove topics to this master worksheet on an ongoing basis throughout the lifetime of the i2connect project. For each topic identified, the partner organisation will provide more details on the insight in the worksheet for their organisation. A descriptive narrative, of approx. 100 words, and links to background information, stories, brochures and websites may be provided for each topic. In addition, the topic may be assigned to one more of the categories described in section 2 above. Each topic must have an insight which tells its story in narrative format.

3.2 Selecting and reporting on topical insights

The insight narratives provided by each partner are extracted from the shared spreadsheet and presented in this deliverable (D1.5a to D1.5n) as a table of the topical insight titles, with ten selected topical insights elaborated. Where insights are duplicated these may be combined, each of the 10 insights will be credited to the relevant partner(s). There will be no ranking of the 10 topics or insights in the deliverable.

Partners may classify the origin of the topical insights by referencing the background source. Some examples are listed below:

- Advisory activity
- Forestry activity
- Service provider
- Innovation Network/platform
- H2020 project
- Operational group
- Research activity
- Training/Education
- Community of practice

For the narrative we suggest the following parts in no particular order:

1. What is the insight
2. Why is it important
3. From what activity or where specifically did it come from (list above)
4. How is it relevant to i2connect (also in the categorisation tick box can be used to express this point)

The 13 partners should list new or rearranged topics and insights every 4 months, based on their own priorities. This will add new choices to selection system. For some topics there may be multiple insights, all of these should be reported in the deliverable. Some topics might remain priority topics for a number of reports, only new insights should be reported every 4 months. This will ensure that new topics and new insights will be featured in these reports.

4.0 Topical Insights D1.5a -June 2020

Ten insights were selected based on the belief that the perspectives of the actor contributors are valued and important. However, the following criteria were used to help to select insights for publication:

1. Relevance to Interactive innovation
2. Relevance to i2connect
3. Relevance to Advisory services in Agriculture and Forestry
4. Clarity
5. Novelty
6. Other criteria as amended throughout the project?

4.1 Topical insights identified in the Task 1.4

Table 1. Summary Table of Topical insights (Meteodocs insights spreadsheet)

Partner	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6
Teagasc	Covid 19 net-working	Business models	Impact Assessment	Trusted Peers	Trusted Peers	
APCA						
AUA	AKIS structure	HEIs	Brokerage/ Facilitation	Facilitation		
ILVO	Training young advisors	Time as a crucial factor for group/network creation	Advisory services aiming at actors other than farmers			
EUFRAS	EU-Regulation Draft Cap-Strategy Plans Art. 13e	4th SCAR-AKIS Report				
IALB	Learning co-creation	resistance to change innovation support	methods to support interactivity			
SEASN						
UHOH	Online Interactive training	Tool for reflective practice	Role of advisors in micro AKIS			
NAK						
CREA	Recognition of the Pluralism of advisors and their active and earlier involvement in defining policies and programmes	Public extension advisory services	Role of the CAP networks	Digital competencies of advisory services		
MAPA						
ZLTO	Peer to Peer Exchange	Peer to Peer Exchange	Energy of farmer groups	Relationships in networks		
WR	Knowledge hubs	Project procedures	Knowledge sharing	Inclusive advice	Lack of practical field experience	Holistic advice

There were 37 topical insights from nine partners involved in this task. It was agreed that all were relevant to interactive innovation and to the i2connect project. The selection was based on the priority of the participating partners. Table 2 shows the 10 selected insights for deliverable 1.5a in June 2020.

4.2 The 10 selected Insights for D1.5a - June 2020

Covid 19 Networking
Tom Kelly, Teagasc, Ireland

Advisors supporting discussion groups and OG's in Ireland, like many others, have been forced to work from home. Digital solutions provided good ways to maintain regular contact with the actors in these networks. Advisors were proactive and experimented with virtual meetings using various digital platforms; some of these tools are featured in the H2020 FAIRshare inventory platform *. The insight here is that while these digital tools have been available in the past the crisis has prompted the interest of advisors in finding and using these tools to support their groups. There was strong evidence of learning selection (akin to natural selection) by advisors supported by their own informal and formal networks EUFRAS, IALB and SEASN in the process of adapting these tools.*

AKIS structure
Alexandros Koutsouris, AUA, Greece

Beyond the extension/advisory services' business models, the structure and functioning of AKIS/AIS as well as other extern conditions (which are beyond the control of extension/advisory organizations' managers) influences whether interactive innovation is practiced. In the PRO-AKIS project Greece was shown to have the most fragmented and weak AKIS in Europe and since then a few changes have taken place. In this respect, it is difficult to see how interactive innovation may become a feature of extension/advisory work in Greece. In fact OGs are currently in their first steps (submission of full proposals/ application procedure step 2).

Training young advisors
Lies Debruyne & Charlotte Lybaert, ILVO, Belgium

In Belgium, there is no official training program or university degree for advisors. Therefore it is hard for young people to enter the profession. Some efforts should be made to allow for an easier influx of young professionals in order to reduce ageing in the advisory community.
EU-Regulation Draft CAP Strategic Plans Art. 13e
Pablo Asensio, EUFRAS

"My manager said no..." when I asked to engage in an innovation support activity. A lot of advisors will know this situation and managers often have good reasons as they are responsible for effective resource allocation. What helped me a lot to convince my managers was something I heard from Inge van Oost (EC-DG AGRI) at the EUFRAS annual meeting in February 2020 in Athens. Van Oost referred to Art. 13e of the draft for the future EU Regulation on the CAP[1] Strategic Plans in her presentation. A good reason to invest for example working time in innovation support competences: Every EU country will be obliged to install innovation support services for rural innovation projects anyway in the 2021-27 EU financial period.

"What kinds of competences are needed for successful innovation support?"
Pablo Asensio, IALB, Germany

When i2connect started in November 2019, we discussed with trainer colleagues at the Bavarian State Academy how the Co-creation approach fits into existing competence and learning models. We tried to integrate Co-creation into the systematics of learning levels, assuming that that an innovation process is also a learning process. We also allocated knowledge transfer and consulting in this learning systematics model. It would be nice to hear what others in the project think about these ideas. English Version of the article in Meteodocs T3.6 Folder model.

Online Interactive training
Fanos Birke, UHOH, Germany

The COVID-19 situation has brought with it the rapid development and maturation of several digital platforms for organizing and conducting lectures, meetings and trainings both in development and academia. Institutions and organizations are changing their usual format and shifting to online platforms that come in various forms and shapes. Digital platforms for collaboration and interaction are flourishing with surprising speed and ease of use. Functions such as a forum for discussions (e.g. chat, video, audio), space for collaboration via whiteboards, file storage (including collaboration on files) and other application integration have become the new 'norm' to get work done. Also, in i2connect, we have come to learn and appreciate the promises of virtual platforms. These experiences bring insights for conducting future interactive trainings in i2connect.

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[1] COM(2018) 392 final: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/resource.html?uri=cellar:aa85fa9a-65a0-11e8-ab9c-01aa75ed71a1.0003.02/DOC_1&format=PDF

Recognition of the Pluralism of advisors and their active and earlier involvement in defining policies and programmes
Simona Cristiano, CREA, Italy

The privatization of services brought, among others, a disconnection of advisors from the policy and programmes. This disconnection from policy is one of the reasons for their lack of competencies on new policy topics/goals, which influence the farmers' decisions and farming systems' transitions, and for their hardly playing functions in innovation processes. Besides, the pluralism of service providers, on different topics and with different specific competencies, should be mapped and recognized as part of the AKIS. Advisors should regain a dialogue with the policy (during the CAP design at MS level) and get involved more actively. They should do this from the very beginning during the policy designing and programming to gain ownership and to understand the expectations of the roles and functions to play and the competencies to acquire. (Ref.: European code of conduct on partnership in the framework of the European Structural and Investment Funds (Commission delegated Regulation (EU) of 7.1.2014); EU SCAR AKIS (2019), Preparing for Future AKIS in Europe. Brussels, European Commission SCAR AKIS Policy brief on the Future of Advisory Services (2017).

Peer to Peer Exchange
Peter Paree, ZLTO, Netherlands

Advisors support farmers that face major problems to ensure a future for their families and farms. They combine insight in the effect of long term decisions with a general overview of operational choices in farm management. Challenge is to combine farmers' views, so that peer to peer exchange of thoughts is facilitated. Insight is that personal profile (insights) is decisive in the input of a farmer, different profiles give fruitful synergy.

Knowledge hubs
Floor Geerling-Eiff, WR, Netherlands

In the Netherlands calls for operational groups are being managed by the regional authorities (Provinces). Although in practice this has not lead to much overlap in projects, this approach could lead to fragmentation. For a number of broad innovation themes a national scheme would be recommendable on topics such as precision farming, stable systems and manure processing. Bundling of different expertise and competences on these specific topics ought to optimise breakthroughs of innovations. This could also improve collaboration between more parties, exchanging knowledge and increasing efficiency. On the other hand it is important to stimulate diversity and that possibilities remain for projects at regional level, including low thresholds for calls and participation. Regional

knowledge hubs have emerged in the last years such as the Voedselfamilies in Zuid-Holland, which contribute to wider knowledge exchange, collaboration and optimising innovation. One challenge is to cherish and possibly expand these knowledge hubs. Source: Ecorys, 2019: https://regiebureau-pop.eu/sites/default/files/u111/19%2006%2024%20Eindrapport%20Evaluatie%20innovatie%20POP3.pdf

Role of advisors in micro AKIS
Fanos Birke, UHOH, Germany

The AgriLink project has recently published 14 case study reports from 13 European countries. These reports provide insights on the micro-AKIS (Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems at the farmer micro scale) supporting farmer's decision-making related to innovation uptake, with a focus on the role played by advisors. Each case study addresses a specific innovation area from a pre-defined innovation cluster. The reports aim at understanding why, how and with whom European farmers and farm managers gather and exchange information to underpin their decision-making on development and /or implementation of different types of innovation. Secondly, the reports analyse the role played by advisors in these processes and provide an overview of the range of advisory services available in the selected case study. The case studies on the micro AKIS bring insights for i2connect in capturing the complexities and diversities of advisory services and the role of AKIS actors in place to support farmers in innovative practices.
https://www.agrilink2020.eu/our-work/countries-reports/

3.4 Categorisation of insights

As the database of i2connect insights expands it will be important to have a categorisation scheme in place so that insights can be found and clustered under relevant sub categories. While there is not a precise categorisation it will be reviewed as the task 1.4 evolves throughout the project. Please see the initial categorisation of the first 10 selected insights in D1.5a Table 2.

Table 2. Categorisation of selected Insights D1.5a

Topics	Business models	Network Facilitation	Support	Quality Control	Other advisory roles	Impact	Other issues
Covid 19 net-working		X	X		X		
AKIS structure	X	X	X	X			X
Training young advisors			X	X	X		
EU-Regulation	X		X		X		X
Learning co-creation			X	X			
Online Interactive training		X	X				X
Pluralism of advisors, policies and programmes	X		X		X		X
Peer to Peer Exchange		X		X			
Knowledge hubs		X	X				
Role in the Micro AKIS			X		X		