i2CONNECT INTERACTIVE INNOVATION





Deliverable Number 4.7

Guidelines and actions for networking, enabling environment and education support

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Dissemination Level

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



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2. Technical details

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3. Reading guide

This report describes the guidelines and actions for networking, enabling the environment and education support. The work is closely related to the total activities of WP4: "Carry out Cross-Visits, training and network".

The other tasks of WP4 are described in Deliverable 4.1: "Integrated Training, Cross-Visit and Pilot Plan" which is produced in M5.

The term network(ing) can be used with different meanings. In this writing we refer to a 'network' as the social network of advisors, their clients, colleagues, linked organizations, etc. We use the term 'virtual network' for the (social) network of advisors which meets with the help of virtual communication tools. A specific set of communication tools will be chosen and explained as project related virtual communication tools; we use the term 'platform' for this set.

4. Summary

In i2connect a virtual network facility will be created, which supports the virtual and physical exchange of advisors and their trainers in Interactive Innovation. This virtual network facility will be called the **i2connect platform**. Activities are organized, which give incentives to the managers and authorities to encourage acquisition of skills for Interactive Innovation by advisors: AKIS actors and organizations in their context. Educational institutes are made aware that these skills provide new opportunities for their students and for the trainings within their own organization.

The target groups, i.e., advisors, managers, authorities and teachers, have strong interactions: experienced advisors who were trained on technical advice, will request facilities and training from their managers, managers will provide for those opportunities if authorities reward the quality of advisors' facilitation, and they will enable facilities to teachers in post-secondary education, to educate future advisors.

If the players in the virtual and physical networks are rewarded in accordance with the efforts made, they will keep the system alive. We will organize incentives to motivate the advisors, managers, authorities, and teachers to use the information and contribute to the networks.



The i2connect project will make the effort to align its offer with incentives and background facilities from other projects working with the same target groups. For instance, advisors involved in an i2connect community, mostly starting after the training, will use Digital Advisory Tools and Systems (DATS) to coach, meet and update. Such DATS also used for the Interactive Innovation work of advisors, are described in FAIRshare. More collaboration between the projects is possible, such as similar application of description formats and rewards for contributing, reviewing and using the i2connect platform.

At the end the main incentive for all target groups is the same: speeding up innovations at farm level, in close collaboration with the farmers. What matters most to advisors is that their farmer clients benefit from this network of interactive innovation. Advisors get real opportunity to support the creation of solutions and develop themselves and their organizations. The offer to be better able to help their farmer clients to work together is main prize that these advisors, their managers and owners can achieve. The incentives are the support activities which will help to build the capacity and motivation of the advisors and managers.

This report provides the guidelines and actions to influence key networks and management of advisory organizations who support advisors in their work.

5. Introduction:

A. Contribution to the i2connect project

i2connect aims to stimulate a culture for innovation support within the EU advisory organizations and networks and to establish a broad platform of trained innovation supporters, working in all types of innovations in the green sector and rural areas. Particular focus is on innovation support for the agricultural European Innovation Partnership's (EIP AGRI) Operational Groups (OGs), and any other farmer / practice-led innovation projects under the member states' (MSs) rural development programmes (RDPs) of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP).

The European Commission's EIP-AGRI aims to bridge the gap between science and practice in agriculture, by supporting initiatives from practice and linking these to knowledge workers



such as researchers in multi-actor groups, working on specific innovations. By the end of next year, about 4,000 of such 'Operational Groups' (OG) are expected to have received funding from EIP AGRI, channelled through the national and regional authorities.

EIP addresses the concern that the common linear approach of disseminating innovation from research to end-users is insufficient for speeding up innovations at farm level. Thus, EIP promotes multi-actor approaches that assume innovation to emerge from interactions between the diverse actors in Agricultural and Knowledge and Innovation Systems (AKIS).

In the past years, it gradually became clear that the dynamics in such Operational Groups differ fundamentally from ordinary projects. Normally projects are supposed to have SMART (Specific – Measurable – Assignable – Realistic – Time-related) formulated targets, a clearly defined path to achieve them and a hierarchy to ensure that team members do what they should do. Operational groups, however, are driven by voluntary members who embark on a discovery journey. They share an ambition, which was the reason for starting the journey. But if the target was strictly defined, interesting pathways on the discovery journey would not be explored. Therefore, such innovation groups require a different kind of facilitation than what is usual in project management. The i2connect project aims to fuel the competences of advisors in multi-actor innovation processes.

B. Contribution of the work packages

The core idea is to organize, within the i2connect consortium, training courses and coaching for advisors in all relevant language groups. Through these activities the project will build a network of competent and skilled professionals in sharing stories, knowledge, and a language for reflecting on what matters most in multi-actor innovation processes. We will also open the dialogue with those responsible for creating favourable conditions for such processes to become successful. A range of activities will support this structure.

WP1: Science. Provides conceptual ground and mutual understanding. What do we know
about innovation processes in AKIS and competences required? What different mind sets
are present, how can we learn from each other, what is topical and captures the interest
and where does this lead us? (WP leader: University of Hohenheim).



- WP2: Good practices. Collect and document good practices in Europe and analyse why
 they work out well. What elements can we use? (WP leader: Teagasc).
- WP3: Methodology. Develop good training course content, methods and tools for trainers.
 A pool of trainers will be built up, adding up to 50 trainers at the end of the project. They are prepared to conduct the trainings and provide the coaching of advisors in their own language. (WP leader: Agridea).
- WP4: Network. Build, organize and provide the training and coaching activities, as well as a professional network. (WP leader: ZLTO).
- WP5: Communication. Build and maintain a structure for communication, both internally and externally (WP leader: EUFRAS).
- WP6: Management. Coordination of the project. (WP leader: APCA).
- WP7: Ethics requirements (WP leader: APCA).

6. Overview, interaction of activities in WP4

WP4 activities aim at strengthening networks of professionals in supporting innovation at farm level for continuous learning and improving skills, methods, as well as creating conditions that favour interactive innovation processes.

A great effort is required to ensure that in five years' time advisors from many EU language areas will have the opportunity to improve their skills and to gain experience in their new role as advisor in interactive innovation settings. Although i2connect is a large project, involving 24 partner organizations and 18 linked third parties, the budget is limited for this great ambition. The main project challenges will be to demonstrate the effects of i2connect's trainings in the short period of time, and to create multiplier effects. If all our dreams come true, advisors and their participants will communicate enthusiastically about the effects of the trainings and coaching, and thus increase the demand for this type of guidance. Trainers who have gained experience through i2connect will continue to provide these trainings with regional or national funds and adapt the approach to fit into existing regional and national structures.



WP4 activities aim at strengthening networks of professionals in supporting innovation at farm level for continuous learning and improving skills, methods, as well as creating conditions that favour interactive innovation processes.

The project will make use of professional associations and other networks that already exist in Europe, of which many consortium partners are active members (EUFRAS, FIBL Europe, IALB, SEASN, etc.). The project will start quickly by offering training in the first year, based on existing methodology and experience, such as the CECRA module on innovation support and the availability of trainers familiar with this material.

7. Description of the tasks

A. Task 4.4: Animating the Network (M6 - 60)

Leader: ZLTO; Involved partners: all partners, except CIRCA

This is a wide task, aiming at building a professional network of advisors, managers and policy makers, for sharing experiences and mutual assistance.

This task aims at improving the problem-solving capacity of the professional community in innovation support.

The project provides facilities for actively supporting networks at

various levels, from peer groups of advisors to actors in different positions in the AKIS. At every stage in the training process, animation is offered in an adapted format:

- Courses are offered as impulses providing insights, tools and language on one hand and a
 network of 15 colleagues on the other hand, which become valuable when agents are back
 on the job and encounter challenges.
- After the training, a period of six months coaching starts, the advisors are stimulated to consult each other and their trainers. During this period of moderated collegial coaching, a new work mode is being created.

The dream is to create a network, generating enthusiasm and capable of solving problems, a learning network, that exchanges stories and stimulates peer coaching at various levels.



- In cross-visits and pilots, some of the trainees explore new networks and approaches and the trainers animate these advisors to share their experience with their colleagues.
- After the training & coaching period, the project creates peer groups to continue this way
 of continuous learning. The project offers support through the i2connect platform (WP5)
 where stories can be shared, and moderation is available for specific questions and
 thematic discussions. Webinars will be offered on issues that arise.
- In addition, the network, supported by dissemination in WP5, will offer the possibility to
 join to advisors who are not yet connected and wish to know more about the value of
 interactive multi-actor innovation support.

We will make use of existing channels such as EUFRAS, IALB and SEASN by offering contributions and side events in conferences.

The network is attractive to join and to maintain, even after the project period. The challenge is to develop pathways through which professionals in our field keep on inspiring each other.

B. Task 4.5: Creating an enabling environment for innovation support (M 12-54)

Leader: WR; Involved partners: AUA, IALB, SEASN, UHOH, Teagasc, LLKC, WR, SZE.

It is not enough to fuel the competences of advisors alone. More is needed to stimulate multiactor approaches. For example, the work and support of advisors in Interactive Innovation groups should not be treated as a separate work unit, but their approach should be integrated in the toolbox of regular advisory services. This requires a dialogue with managers of advisory services, research communities, policy makers, regional and national managing authorities, national contact points and rural networks; and EU networks, responsible for enabling the environment for multi-actor interactive innovation and the supportive role of advisors. This enabling environment enhances the capacity of advisors for assisting multi-actor innovation processes (Wielinga et al., 2008).

Therefore, the project supports these managers, policy makers and other actors responsible for enabling the environment, in creating these favourable conditions, in which we distinguish the following three pillars:



- learning conditions: providing the competences and the skills required for advisors to support interactive innovation.
- organisational conditions: required for advisors to be involved in interactive innovation at operational level;
- financial conditions: the budgetary means required for advisors to be able to be involved in interactive innovation;

Enabling the support for multi-actor, interactive innovation will increase the strategic space of advisors (Hubeek et al., 2006) empowering their capacity and abilities to act on 'whatever it takes' to co-create innovation with multiple AKIS actors (Wielinga & Geerling-Eiff, 2009).

Learning conditions

In i2connect, several activities are organized that give incentives to the managers and authorities to encourage the training of advisors in Interactive Innovation. More specifically, four excellence classes will be organised in Task 4.5, preferably in conjunction with events where actors with responsibilities for the AKIS structure, including the organisation of the advisory services, meet. 'Excellence' refers to the notion that their excellence is needed to find proper answers. Therefore, the excellence classes will be co-organized back-to-back with meetings from advisory umbrella networks such as EUFRAS, IALB, SEASN and EU entities such as the Strategic Working Group on Agricultural Knowledge and Innovation Systems of the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research (SWG SCAR AKIS) and the subgroup on Innovation of the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD). Both these entities are engaged with measures and instruments related to EIP AGRI, the CAP and the Framework Programme Horizon 2020/Horizon Europe.

In concrete terms, with 20 participants in four excellence classes, 80 managers will be reached directly. However, the audience of the conferences of advisory managers, regional policy makers and researchers in rural innovation is much larger. Organizing the excellence classes back to back with the meetings and networks/organizations mentioned above, will increase this reach while serving cross-fertilisation. Also, many i2connect project partners are active participants in these conferences and will be encouraged to share different experiences and insights from the project.



Hence, the excellence classes will be organized preferably in conjunction with regular meetings of networks where the targeted audience meets, around the three pillars of: 1) financial, 2) organisational and 3) learning conditions.

Organizational conditions

As required by the EC, the work in task 4.5 will also be aligned with the developments and revisions of the CAP AKIS Strategic Plans, on which the Member States are working towards the post-CAP 2020 period. In these AKIS Plans much attention goes out to the role of Advisory Services (AS) and advisors as linking pins enhancing knowledge flows and co-creation between different AKIS actors, to stimulate innovation. It is of utter importance that managers of advisory services, the national contact points, national rural networks, regional and national authorities, integrate support of multi-actor, interactive innovation in the further development of their Advisory Services (AS).

Financial conditions

There will be specific focus on the enabling role of (operational) managers responsible for the continuity of their advisory services by focusing on business models and evaluating the impact of introducing novel interactive innovation approaches. The implementation can have a big impact on this which may lead to multiple questions on all building blocks of the business model, e.g.:

- 1. **Value proposition**: What exactly is it the product or service that the farm advisors are offering? Is it sufficiently tangible to the customers (see 2.)?
- 2. Customers segments: Will the customers (farmers) recognize the value of facilitating the multi-actor process, or do they get the feeling that they have to come up with the solutions and still have to pay the advisor? Obviously, there are multiple parties having big interests in approaches that foster a smooth transition towards more sustainable European agriculture, e.g. European, national and regional authorities. To what extent will they contribute (as customers) to the business model of advisory services. Will there be public funding, just like with EIP AGRI who has funded 3,000 Operational Groups through regional authorities? Or will the public support be more indirect, e.g. in a sense that public



- authorities recognise the value of the advisors' facilitation and reward it with a quality label that advisory services can give a distinctive market position?
- 3. **Channels**: In what ways will the service be brought to the customers? Through organizing multi-actor settings? Through moderating discussions? Through supporting the setup of field trials? Through contributions to the virtual network / platform?
- 4. **Customer relationships**: How will customers (farmers) react when (some) advisors should no longer be considered as the authority / expert telling them what the solution to their problem is? Will a conflict of interest arise when farm advisors also "work for" public customers who would like to see a rapid change towards sustainable agriculture?
- 5. **Key resources**: what kind of human resources do I have in my advisory service? Can they be trained to become facilitators in multi-actor processes? How many of them do we need? Do we maintain enough weel-described knowledge and tools to be accepted in the role as facilitator (and not be substituted by a general process manager)?
- 6. Key partners: when the product of the advisory service becomes facilitating interactive innovation in a multi-actor setting, it automatically means that multiple key partners are needed to be able to deliver this product. Interestingly, the farmer may get a double role in this, as customer as well as key partner. Also, thematic experts and agribusiness representatives (feed or farm machinery representatives) may become key partners. How to also take their business models into account? With the recurring questions: who pays, and who benefits? Can we define a platform or network business model for all partners?
- 7. **Cost structure**: what will be the costs for the training of my advisors for this new role? How to maintain a lively network infrastructure, both physical in the field as virtual in the cloud?
- 8. **Revenue streams**: How to differentiate between billing diagnosis-recipe-based advice and multi-actor facilitation? Do we need a kind of subscription-based model for this kind of approach?

Furthermore, feedback from the trainings, the cross-visits and the pilot projects will be used to feed the dialogue on enabling the environment to experiment with different types of project requirements and different ways to assess those activities such as e.g. reflexive monitoring and evaluation principles (Van Mierlo et al., 2010). A yearly report will reflect the learnings in



events in which experts for the project consortium took part, and relevant themes that were discussed during those events.

Since different traditions and practices exist in the farm advisory services across Europe, it is important to reflect on the issues mentioned above in our excellence classes. There is no need to get to an agreement on all questions, but managers should become aware of the issues that may arise in order to anticipate optimally, find answers for their own context ('couleur locale'), thereby paving the way for a smooth implementation of interactive innovation approaches.

C. Task 4.6: Developing Education for future advisors (M 18 –54)

Leader: AUA; Involved partners: UHOH, SZE

Fuelling competences of advisors starts at school. We want to stimulate that the essential principles and skills become part of the curricula of educational institutions, where students are prepared for a job as rural advisor. The aim is to create opportunities for teachers and future advisors to connect with the network of professionals in innovation support, and to stimulate active involvement in multi-actor innovation processes, for example in Operational Groups.

In three international summer classes, teachers and students get the chance to share and contribute to the project achievements. A programme will be developed in the 2nd year of the project and adapted after each class. Participants will be exposed to training methods and tools for interactive innovation support as being developed and applied in the project. At the same time they will contribute to these methods and multi-actor innovation processes in the training's setting. At the end they will be stimulated to continue the learning process.

Each summer school will have a duration of three days and will serve 20 participants. Three partner organizations will organize the summer schools: AUA (Greece), UHOH (Germany) and SZE (Hungary). To get international participants from across Europe, the summer schools are planned in Greece, Germany and Ireland.



8. Aligning between the tasks in WP4

In this chapter joint actions and general guidelines concerning the tasks "networking", "enabling environment" and "education support" are described.

A. Leadership and balanced work distribution on joint actions

Networking activities are distributed over all partners. We expect input from all countries and from all organizational perspectives covered in the consortium, coordinated by ZLTO (also WP lead). To prepare the actions for the enabling environment, eight partners are involved, and coordination is done by WR. For education activities three specialized partners are involved: UHOH, SZE and AUA (task lead). The WP leader and the task leaders have wide experience and strong networks in this field. They take decisions in cooperation with the i2connect lead partner.

B. Actions to start and maintain involvement in the network

For every structural change, we must overcome some thresholds before a new routine is established. In i2connect we use the project activities to create new networking routines among participants.

- Within 1st step to get in contact with advisors and their organizations is to know their addresses. Within WP 1, an advisory service database will be created that allows and supports the identification of, the access to and the networking among the various actors (individual and corporate) in green sector's and rural areas' advisory services. Through the i2connect consortium, a first basis for the network is available and can be consecutively enlarged across Europe.
- In the training of trainers (WP3), the platform will be used in communication, so trainers get acquainted with it and the platform can be adapted to the trainers' needs.
- The platform will be used for the 3-days training, the homework made before and the
 exercises during the training. In this way, the advisors get used to working with the
 platform under guidance. During the training the (social) network will start/be geared up,
 so there will be a need to keep in touch.



- In the half-year coaching period the platform supports the everyday communication. Incentives/rewards in the network will stimulate a more frequent use. In this way, the (social) virtual network will gradually become part of the routine of the trainee advisors.
- After the half-year coaching, the platform will be updated with new information from next trainings and events. In this way, the virtual network and the platform will become dynamic, lively entities.
- People who meet in the virtual network, also meet in physical meetings of other projects or networks for e.g. EIP-AGRI, EUFRAS, ESEE, and IFSA. There the ties will be strengthened, and new inputs can be generated. The platform can also be used to publish the proceedings of these events.

Of course, the platform is open to users other than the i2connect trainees: other advisors, farmers/ OG leaders, managers, authorities, teachers, etc. can benefit as well. In events where i2connect presents itself, it will promote the network and disseminate information about how to cocreate the enabling environment and how to include the essential principles and skills for interactive innovation in educational trajectories.

More interaction between the (social) network, virtual network and the platform will be developed during the project, to maximise skills, learning and experiences of the persons connected to i2connect.

The network, formed step by step on the pathway in this paragraph, is created by facilitators, whose enthusiasm attracts colleagues and stakeholders. They will find useful material like links and essential tools to download, descriptions of good practices, interactive access to learning histories, etc. to make their work more effective.

They will also find contact information to find colleagues with the same focus so that they can share their challenges and ideas.

Guidelines for getting advisors on board and consolidation C.

Assisting multi-actor interactive innovation processes is a new activity for many. To get our target groups involved, i2connect involves different levels in and around the advisory organizations: we recruit advisors to join in the trainings and network directly and we address the message also to their managers. We also motivate the managers to create space for new working modes of their advisors. We raise awareness among policy makers and managing



authorities and we suggest them to create funding options so managers can agree to step in interactive innovation. In education we intend to create an upward spiral: inform teachers through alumni/ these teachers will show the advantages of Interactive Innovation to students/ As alumni the students will raise awareness of other teachers/ etc.

i2connect involves partners and non-partners. We will decide to which extent consortium partners have a priority or an exclusive access and how external advisors / managers could get access. This will be adapted on the experience in trainings; for instance: offering initial trainings to 4 times 20 people in year x (for each of the groups, and with internal partners). Decisions about WP4 trainings and related network activities should be done in a systematic and transparent manner.

These guidelines were brought into practice in the first action of the project, in which i2connect provided a half-day training to raise awareness amongst Young EUFRAS. This was succeeded through an introduction of those young advisors to their managers, present in the EUFRAS general meeting in Athens, on 24 and 25 February 2020.



Guidelines for developing incentives and rewards

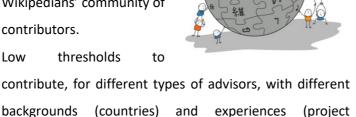
In the platform we will introduce incentives and rewards for users who are active with inputs, reviews, raising interests of others, etc. During the project we can renew information and connect to activities using project budget. After finishing the project, the users must support and maintain the platform themselves. Already during the project, the network will start with non-monetary incentives, like accreditation of different roles (e.g. the contributors in Wikipedia). We could not only assign roles to people who contribute to the writing and reviewing, but also to the promotion and network building. Prerequisites for the choice and development of such incentives are:

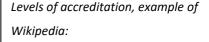
- Affordability, when the network does not rely on project investments, it should be low cost and depend as little as possible on paid coordination. Hence, we will discuss options to introduce a clever system of reward based added value of the network.
- Fairness: a bigger effort and impact should obtain more recognition.
- Recognisability: e.g. making use of existing practices such as Wikipedians' community of contributors.

thresholds

Low

involvement).





Anyone can suggest new edits to most of the articles.

Autoconfirmed accounts are registered for 4 days or longer and have made at least ten edits. They gain the technical ability to: Create pages; Move pages; Edit semi-protected pages; Upload files; *Vote in certain elections; Provide access* to certain tools.

Administrators have been approved by the community and have access to some significant administrative tools. They can delete articles, block accounts or IP addresses, and edit fully protected articles.

Bureaucrats (although not many) are chosen as well. They have the technical ability to add or remove administrative rights and approve or revoke "bot" privileges.

The Arbitration Committee deals with disputes that remain unresolved after other resolution attempts have failed. Members are elected by the community from among the pool of experienced admins.

(very few) **Stewards** can manage some technical necessities. They usually act when a local admin or bureaucrat is not available. They are supported with a wide range of tools.



We will develop collaboration with other projects to roll out these community incentives (chapter 10).

In particular in the excellence classes in task 4.5, part of the discussion will be on the maintenance and sustainability of the platform and how to integrate the platform within the AKIS and AS systems of the different EU member states.

E. Experience of e-learning

One of the examples of e-learning incentives are the "Open Badges". These are verifiable, portable digital badges with embedded metadata about skills and achievements. They comply with the Open Badges Specification and are shareable across the web (https://openbadges.org/, see annex).

Each Open Badge is associated with an image and information about the badge, its recipient, the issuer, and any supporting evidence. All this information may be packaged within a badge image file that can be displayed via online CVs and social networks. Thousands of organizations across the world issue badges in accordance with the Open Badges Specification, from nonprofits major employers to educational institutions at all levels. to An i2connect process lasts several months. Participants can subscribe and earn badges/study points depending on their level of participation. Together the participants form a virtual network/ online community. This way we enhance knowledge sharing and knowledge creation between participants (and between participants and their customers in different groups).

We can introduce this approach step by step. Considerations are:

- Chose and design a social learning platform;
- Chose and design online standards to recognise and verify learning;
- Define open badge levels (knowledge, skills, inventor, certified, excellence, etc.);
- Arrange an overview of courses, trainers and moderators;
- Create course content (title, description, duration, teacher(s), participant(s), etc.).



9. Interdependencies and timing with other WPs

- In WP1, the AKISs are mapped at country level, and advisory service actors interested in the i2connect network are registered; these activities will serve as bases to recognise key actors in the enabling institutional environment and education and knowledge infrastructures.
- In WP2, best practices are being selected which are important to convince managers and
 policy makers of the success of multi-actor interactive innovation. Furthermore, they form
 inspirational input for the users of the platform.
- In WP3, trainings are being developed, which will be incorporated in curricula of educational institutes at a later stage.
- In WP5, an on-line platform is being developed where stories can be shared and moderation is available for specific questions and thematic discussions. Webinars will be offered on issues that arise. Furthermore, WP5 provides for communication in general related to the WP4 output.

A. Networking

Interdependencies of T4.4 with i2connect tasks in other WPs:

- Task 1.2 will fill the database of organizations and persons in the AKIS network, with a description how they can link to interactive innovation information.
- Tasks 2.3-2.6 provide inspiring innovation cases and descriptions of best practices.
- Task 3.2-3.5 will provide resources for specific target groups in the Platform.
- Task 3.6, 4.1-4.3, and 4.5 and 4.6 will use the Platform for their communication, so that the partners start to get used to the Virtual Network, and start moderating on-line peer coaching and platforms. Creating an on-line tool is one thing, moderating it, is something else. Especially the trainers from the pool will be supported to moderate peer coaching at a distance. We will have to learn jointly how to do this effectively.
- Tasks 5.2-5.6 will organize the technical realisation of the Platform and provide content.
- Task 5.7 will boost the creation of the Virtual Network through the organization of a competition.



B. Developing awareness and support of the management (4.5)

Interdependencies to T4.5 with i2connect tasks in other WPs:

- Task 3.3: Developing methods and tools for an "innovation friendly" management of advisory services (M6 24), including creating a set of management tools and methods to provide an enabling environment for advisors (D3.3). This will serve as discussion material for the managers' Excellence Classes, and will consider staff competency and the enabling environment, including cultural changes. A program will be designed for the Excellence Classes to raise awareness of advisory service managers and their Human Resources (HR) staff about the role of advisors in interactive innovation processes, management options to develop innovation support and the need of capacity building for their collaborators (D3.3). This programme will be implemented in WP4 in the Excellence Classes by facilitators trained in T3.6.
- Task 3.4: Developing guidelines and tools for decision makers and managing authorities to
 provide an enabling environment for interactive innovation support (M4 58). A tool kit
 will be designed for managing authorities and policy makers, especially for the teams in
 charge of coordinating the measures planned in EIP-AGRI.
- Task 3.6: Capacity building for trainers and facilitators (M4 60). The trained trainers and facilitators will be part of the i2connect trainers' pool. They will train advisors and facilitate Excellence Classes in WP4.
- Task 5.4: Developing practical oriented dissemination material for different audiences (M4 60), including technical printed dissemination materials for advisories, the scientific community, teachers, researchers and policy makers. Disseminated materials with specific technical content is to be used in the EUFRAS annual conferences, in the think tank events (T3.1), Excellence classes, summer schools (WP4) and in the final conference (T5.9).
- Task 5.6: Interaction with EIP-AGRI and development of EIP AGRI practice abstracts (M6 60). A wide variety of materials from the Excellence Classes and trainings developed in WP3 and delivered in WP4, will be provided.



C. Guidelines for competence development (4.6)

To reach clear targets and starting levels of competence development of the enabling environment, Task 4.7 will work in close interaction with tasks in WP1, 2 and 3 and use the results of these tasks, especially: 1) D1.4 (Repository of required competencies of an innovation advisor), 2) D1.5 (Identification of innovation activities, services and networks), 3) D2.3 (40 individual reports from the field reviews of case), 4) D2.4 (Report of best practice in advisory services support of interactive innovation) and D.3.2 (Didactical concept and toolkit for advisor's trainings) and of course D3.5 (Summer School Program and training material).

CECRA and the advisor's trainings (T4.1) form a good basis but the target group is slightly different, so the program will be adapted. University teachers and especially students will not have any practical experience with interactive innovation. They may even not have it in the curricula of their institutes. Therefore, we keep it open. The training could also include more "theoretical" elements about extension models (including top-down, facilitation and brokerage for interactive innovation). We will select specific cases from practice that are suitable for training the skills in this context.

10. Collaboration with other networks & projects

A. Projects with overlapping target groups and objectives

For all projects counts that sustaining the use and renewal of results, are a challenge. When the funding for the work stops, the updating of information often stops as well. Only a network that has a reason to continue to exchange experiences and provide new input, will stay alive.

The starting point for a successful virtual network are the strong existing networks and knowledge of the i2connect partners.

However, the chances of realising a successful network are even bigger if we collaborate with other projects. Together we will develop an approach for a living virtual network, inspired by examples from other projects and initiatives.



In the following text box we describe a pathway that we have in mind to align the energy

within European advisory networks. This may sound ambitious, but many representatives collaborate in different projects already, who know each other well and they are open and willing to establish this network together.

Below we describe an overview of <u>ongoing</u> H2020 projects which are linked to the aims of WP4:

FarmDemo provides an overview of farmers' demonstration networks, which was built upon the H2020 projects **Agridemo-F2F, PLAID and NEFERTITI**. https://farmdemo.eu/hub Results are:

- Principles for cooperation between partner organizations and between projects, bridging the differences in culture.
- An easy and convincing way to get and register consent for GDPR of the farmers.
- An approach where advisors or third parties can enter the data for the farmers in ICT and procedures.
- The discovery of arrangements where advisors and third parties manage changes in farm data.

Also, in other projects inventories of farmer networks are published, e.g. in:

SmartAgriHubs.eu/portal/network, which resulted a.o. in:

- The registration in the hub; the 168 partners in SAH +
 116 partners in IoF2020 provide a strong start.
- Beautiful look and feel of the presented content
- A control system for quality of data about Digital Innovation Hubs, Competence Centres and Innovation experiments (in progress).
- The labelling/ a rewarding system for active users of the hub (at the start) in the SAH Observatory.

Collaboration with other projects could be developed step by step by first making a start with the *Innovation Portal of the biggest* consortia in the 2 projects: IoF2020 + **SmartAgriHubs** (including respectively 116+168+ other partners). Second, link the partners and stakeholders of the **FAIRshare** project to this portal so most EU advisory organizations are linked to **EUFRAS** or other networks) with their ICT oriented advisors. In **i2connect** we link to process oriented advisors in the same organizations. Furthermore, we will use the experience from the **Farmdemo/ NEFERTITI** collaboration and the knowledge of re-using information of the Euraknos and Eureka projects, and the learnings of AgriLink, Liaison and AgriSpin. We will also use as much



The aim of **Eureka** is to organize the sustained use and renewal of Multi Actor EU. This aim needs social media approaches. Eureka can use the results from other projects and – as core of its work – unlock and standardize such results.

Other projects have ideas that are not yet put to practice, but they have developed interesting ideas and they are very interested to realise these ideas together (e.g. the

FAIRshare project, which focuses on a concept for rewarding active input in the community of advisors on Digital Advisory Tools¹). There is also a strong overlap with the SmartAgriHubs: 20% of the target group of SAH are advisors in digital competence.

AGRILINK aims at enhancing the role of agricultural advice and associated advisory services / providers in farmer decision-making and enhancing their contribution to learning and innovation for the transition towards more sustainable European agriculture. The project focuses on understanding the roles played by farm advice in farmer decision making. One of the project milestones for the enabling environment which is interesting to link with WP4, is to come up with governance models and public policy mechanisms, contractual arrangements and appropriate funding instruments providing effective support for improved interactivity of advisors, enhancing innovation-driven research and advisory services.

EURAKNOS aims at strengthening the EU agricultural knowledge base by co-creating 'the network to connect all thematic networks', to explore the feasibility of creating a modular database of useful findings from various thematic networks. This project is particularly interesting for WP4 since it is developing an open source knowledge reservoir for AKIS, to discuss how the project results can be integrated and sustained (after the duration of the project).

LIAISON aims to help unlock the potential of 'working in partnership for innovation' in agriculture, forestry and rural business, focusing on optimising interactive innovation

¹ xd.adobe.com/view/0216984b-0929-422b-6be9-cb4d6f9748f5-7427/.



approaches. This project is particularly interesting for WP4 to discuss good practices and innovation approaches which allow for collective learning.

These projects are directed to agriculture and forestry in general. In order to keep a balance between sectors we will also connect to specific projects in forestry, like **FOREXT**, **which** is the network of forest extension organizations in Europe, with a goal of establishing international cooperation in the field. The aim of this network is to ensure the organisations to build their capacities in training and education of private forest owners, supporting the development of their associations, inventorying and marking of private forests, preparation of forest management plans for private forests, enforcement of forest legislation in private forests, providing subsidies for more sustainable forest management, organizing sale of wood from private forests, capacity building for private forestry, etc. Especially in the first three tasks there is a clear connection to i2connect.

i2connect also will make connections to specific projects on (agro)forestry, like AF4EU, led by University of Santiago de Compostella (USC).

B. Initiatives related to i2connect networks

The **i2connect** project is developing the same kind of principles for colleague advisors with focus on Interactive Innovation in the same Advisory Services. Cooperation with others has high value to realise living communities which refresh tools.

An important EU initiative in this line is the **EIP-Agri Service Point** which has registered 1,271 AKIS actors in 'find people'. Members are: 246 farmers/land owners/foresters, 138 SME, 422 advisors (256)/ innovation support agents (262), 135 industry/retail/wholesale, 614 researchers, 40 students, 102 NGO representatives, 66 civil servants and 140 other (many persons filled more than one item). This database is directly connected to the objectives of the EURAKNOS and EUREKA projects, so it should be possible to make a link via those projects. The

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² https://ec.europa.eu/eip/agriculture/en/find-connect/people?page=63



advantage of such a link is that the users of the EIP website get valuable access and connections to relevant information and people.

The **EU Funding and Tenders Portal - Expert Area**³ contains a large number of experts, who have close connections with the European R&I programs. It is interesting to see if a connection can be made with this pool. Such a connection could contribute to a solution for the limited number of non-researchers in the list of the i2connect partners.

At national level, there are many organizations that support advisors in their profession. E.g. in the Netherlands there is Agrivaknet (agrivaknet.nl, for animal husbandry) which distributes a magazine to 3,000 actors. Furthermore, the VAB (vabnet.nl) is originally a network of financial advisors but it has grown into a broader network of 400 advisory members. The advantage of connecting with those organizations is two-fold: 1) to add information to their offer and 2) to have a partner network which manages the advisor's information in the database.

C. Use inspirational environments and conferences

Below a list is described of inspirational environments and conferences where discussions can take place with multiple actors, to coordinate project activities and to share results to reach the aims of the i2connect project. We will actively stimulate and monitor the involvement and project actions of i2connect partners in the diverse networks and meetings, together with WP5, responsible for communication and dissemination.

1. SWG SCAR AKIS meetings: the strategic working group of the Standing Committee for Agricultural Research (SCAR) on AKIS focuses on improvements of the functioning of knowledge and innovation systems in the bio-economy. The objectives of the SWG pursue the indication that interaction is crucial for innovation and for addressing the right challenges, in order to stimulate appropriate research and innovation activities, knowledge generation and knowledge exchange. This covers all agri-food and biomass chains, from producer to consumer, in a systems approach.

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³ https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/myarea/expertarea



- 2. ENRD meetings: the European Network for Rural Development (ENRD) serves as a hub for exchange of information on how Rural Development policy, programmes, projects and other initiatives are working in practice and how they can be improved to achieve more. The ENRD is not a membership organization. Its work aims to engage and reach anyone with an interest in and commitment to rural development in Europe. The ENRD supports the effective implementation of EU Member States' Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) by generating and sharing knowledge, as well as through facilitating information exchange and cooperation across rural Europe. The ENRD activities are facilitated by two support units: the ENRD Contact Point and the European Evaluation Helpdesk for Rural Development.
- 3. **EIP AGRI** Events: EIP AGRI organizes and intermediates between many interesting events that deal with innovation in agriculture and forestry throughout Europe. There are two types of events: 1) EIP-AGRI events (seminars, workshops, Focus Groups), organized by the EIP-AGRI Network and 2) other European events that brings people together to boost innovation in European agriculture and forestry. A list of all past and upcoming events can be found on the website.
- 4. ESEE: the European Seminar on Extension and Education (ESEE) is a bi-annual conference for scientists, educators and practitioners in the field of rural advisory services (since 1973) which provides the opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences among researchers, technicians and others who are involved in Extension and Education. Thoughts are exchanged about the development of this field and to look forward towards the future, to discuss new roles and functions in EE within interactive innovation frameworks. ESEE conferences focus on issues pertaining the new roles, capacities and methods for extension/advisory services in emergent innovation models with the last conferences paying specific attention to interactive innovation and networks' facilitation. This includes policy and governance frameworks and supporting the enabling environments.
- 5. **IFSA**: The International Farming Systems Association holds bi-annual European symposia which are a platform for dialogue between scientists studying farming systems in their context and practitioners, from a wide range of theoretical background and methodological focus. The interface between science and practice has always been a major topic (since 1994). Within the European IFSA community, issues relevant to



i2connect (such as facilitation; systemic - participatory - multi-stakeholder — multi-actor — interactive approaches; inter- and trans-disciplinarity) have been given attention particularly since 2000, both implicitly in various papers and more explicitly in papers within Workshops devoted to learning. A workshop specifically devoted to 'Innovation and change facilitation' appeared in the 2010 Symposium. In the 2014 and 2016 Symposia specific Themes addressed the topic 'Innovation, knowledge exchange and learning'. In 2018 Theme 1 called for papers on 'Learning and knowledge systems, education, extension and advisory services' while the IFSA2020 Symposium devotes a specific Theme to 'Innovation support services', both with emphasis on interactive innovation and advisors' training vis-à-vis the acquirement of relevant, new skills.

- 6. Agri Innovation Summit: brings together farmers, rural businesses, researchers, NGOs and other innovation actors to promote cross-fertilization between multi-actor innovation initiatives, both under Rural Development Programmes and Horizon 2020, to raise awareness about innovation and digitisation opportunities for agriculture and rural economies and how these may be supported under on-going Rural Development Programmes and provide input for EU innovation policies for agriculture and rural areas after 2020.
- 7. The European Rural Development Network (ERDN): was established to integrate the efforts and competences of various European research institutions in their joint works on the state and paths of transformation of rural areas, in particular farming, with the view to extension of the EU and its future policies. The main objectives of the ERDN are parallel to the Community's idea of building the European Research Area for agriculture and rural development. The Network is meant to encompass the leading research centres studying rural development in Europe, and in particular in its central, eastern and south-eastern countries. The Institute of Agricultural and Food Economics National Research Institute (IAFE-NRI), Warsaw, Poland, is responsible for coordination of its activity.
- 8. **ESRS**: founded in 1957, the European Society for Rural Sociology is the leading European association for researchers, policy makers and scientists interested in the study of rural issues. They organize regular conferences.
- 9. **EAAE**: the European Association of Agricultural Economists (EAAE) organizes every three years a congress with a general theme in the broad field of agricultural economics. The



congress brings together academics, scholars, practitioners, stakeholders and policy makers from all over the world to discuss the latest and most pressing issues in the agri and food domain. The XVI EAAE Congress will be held on 20 -23 July 2021 in Prague, Czech Republic under the title: "Raising the Impact of Agricultural Economics: Multi-disciplinarity, Stakeholder Engagement and Novel Approaches."

- 10. SISA: the system innovation towards sustainable agriculture (SISA) workshops bring together research insights and practical experiences in making agriculture more sustainable and seeking to contribute to more robust knowledge on how to stimulate transitions towards sustainable agro-food systems. The three main objectives are: 1) to compare and contrast the issues and analysis of multi-actor innovation processes, R&D practices, governance and transformative policies in various European countries, 2) to provide input to rethinking government policies, socio-professional strategies and civic concerns to contribute to sustainability transitions in the agro-food systems on the basis of existing research and experiences and 3) to define the content and the agenda of the ongoing SISA open consortium for further research and mission-oriented policy.
- 11. **ISFSD**: The International Symposium for Farming Systems Design: the focus of the Farming Systems Design (FSD) community is the farm system level, the interactions and feedbacks at lower and higher levels of integration and the tools and methods required for understanding and implementing multi-functional farming systems, expressing good trade-offs between agricultural production and ecosystem services.
- 12. **BIOEAST** events: The Central-Eastern European Initiative for Knowledge-based Agriculture, Aquaculture and Forestry in the Bioeconomy BIOEAST offers a shared strategic research and innovation platform for working towards sustainable bio-economies in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. Joint efforts are required to address present and future challenges successfully. A macro-regional perspective, along with a more vigorous EU wide cooperation, is necessary for implementing tailored actions that are conducive to safe, secure and sustainable development for all. The sustainability criteria for a circular economy add an additional challenging feature.



11. Risks and opportunities by COVID-19

The COVID crisis makes us aware that our Health and AgriFood Systems are key in our society. Advisors play a key role in the AgriFood systems, especially in innovations. Many innovators and their linked advisors have to swim against the stream. For them innovation feels like a process where they can only rely on themselves. i2connect will connect them, with our inventory (so that they are findable), in our Good Practices (so they can find connections on content) and in our Effective Methods (so they find solutions for process questions). In our Trainings and Network, all this comes together.

The restrictions in the COVID-19 crisis make it painfully clear that innovation can be a lonely process for many. We will address the need to cooperate, to co-create. Hence, **we will i2connect** the innovation heroes in our AgriFood systems!

12. Conclusion and guidelines

Innovation groups require a different kind of facilitation than what is usual in project management. The i2connect project aims to fuel the competences of advisors in such multi-actor innovation processes and to create the conditions for using this capacity as much as possible. This integrated approach makes the planned impact tangible: "to improve networking and peer-to-peer learning of advisors, stimulating the interactive role of advisors to boost innovation and providing them with a set of best practices". In this way, the i2connect project builds dedicated training systems for advisors "enhancing the impact of advisors on the strengthening of knowledge flows between scientific research and practical implementation for more productive and sustainable agricultural practices and rural development⁴⁵

The project brings guidance to advisors, managers, teachers and students that play a role in support of innovation groups.

For many actions, decisions should still be taken, based on information from other WPs, so this report is not an action plan, but contains guidelines to come later to tailored action.

⁵ Impacts, described in the i2connect project Proposal, p17 in annex to Consortium Agreement 863039



We describe guidelines in general, for advisors, for the enabling environment, for education, for advisory services and for the development of the network.

General guidelines:

- Innovation Groups require a different kind of facilitation than what is usual in project management (see: chapter 5A)
- To develop competences for this facilitation, i2connect guides advisors to follow the path
 of learning with and from each other, with an open mind to skills/intuition that colleagues
 have developed and keep on developing. Sharpening these skills and intuition takes time
 for reflection on experiences, and better, time for joint reflection (5B).
- Care should be taken to respond to the activities and outcomes of the other i2connect WPs (5B and 9A-C).
- All existing advisors networks and associations should be engaged with throughout the
 tasks in WP4 to increase the long-term impact of the actions on the networks and the
 enabling environment. (6)

Guidelines for Advisors, joining in the network (7A)

- allocate time to reflect on their role in innovation processes in the safe environment of i2connect and reflect on what matters most as well as options to act effectively in specific situations. (7A)
- i2connect supports this reflection, and suggest the advisors to take the following actions:
 - 1. **step in the network:** join in an environment where advisors are stimulated to exchange and coach each other, started during training & coaching, cross-visits and pilots.
 - get used to work in the platform, learn the basics of the platform and use the tools to
 exchange experiences and learn from others and step into the virtual network,
 including peer-to-peer consultation, training, mutual coaching on multi-actor
 innovation processes.
 - 3. **join in meetings with i2connect,** linked to your existing networks.
 - 4. Keep in touch via the **website**, **social media and newsletters**, with colleagues, managers and policy makers about lessons learned and new opportunities. (7A)



These Networks of trained advisors should be established and maintained throughout the
project, these networks need to nurtured and developed by trainers. All partners should
contribute to take chances to establish link and consolidate the network.

Guidelines for managers and the enabling environment (7B)

- Be flexible in terms of the facilitation roles and skills of advisors to support interactive innovation, the norms of project management need to be adapted.
- Integrate Interactive innovation support into the toolbox of all advisors but start with a few key people.
- i2connect provides support and tools to the managers and owners of advisory services to reflect on sustainable business models, provided e.g. in the 'Excellence Classes'
- Visit i2connect 'excellence classes' that are targeted at the specific needs of people who
 have influence in the management of advisors and will be adjusted to their specific context
 and informed by the ongoing work of EU, National, regional and organizational initiatives
 relevant to advisors contribution to interactive innovation.
- Time of managers is limited, so i2connect will organize excellence classes and other meetings preferably back-to-back with professional meetings which they frequent.

Guidelines for teachers and students (7C)

- Step in i2connect opportunities to connect with the network of professionals in innovation support, and to stimulate active involvement in multi-actor innovation processes.
- Get to know the tools and experienced advisors via the virtual network & platform.
- **Visit international summer classes**, where teachers and students get the chance to share and contribute to the project achievements.
- Get familiar with training methods and tools for interactive innovation support as being developed and applied in the project.

Guidelines for partners and other advisory services in i2connect (8A, 8B and 8C)

 All partners contribute to take opportunities to establish, link and consolidate the network, and involve advisors in the activities of the project



- All advisory services are very welcome to use the portal, join in the virtual network and
 participate in physical meetings of the network. They can apply for trainings & coaching of
 their advisors in and after the project. The project management board will decide at least
 yearly on the balance of partner and non-partner organizations in the training courses.
- In order to **involve the different players** in the advisory services, we address ourselves to advisors and managers, policy makers and managing authorities, teachers and students.

Guidelines for development and consolidation of the network and platform

- The platform and network should have a sustainable business model, should be rewarding for who is active, should be based on reliable (existing) practice and easily accessible (8D)
- For systems of incentives/rewards and distributed responsibility, i2connect should study re-use existing systems, like in Wikipedia or Open badges; (8D, 8E)
- To develop the network, virtual network and platform, i2connect should build on existing relations with projects that developed such facilities or are created to sustain results from those projects (10A).
- To connect to future EU projects and developments, i2connect shall build close connections to existing initiatives that connect multi actor projects and national/local innovation groups (10B)
- To organize network activities, i2connect should offer activities in meetings of European organizations of AKIS related organizations (10C)



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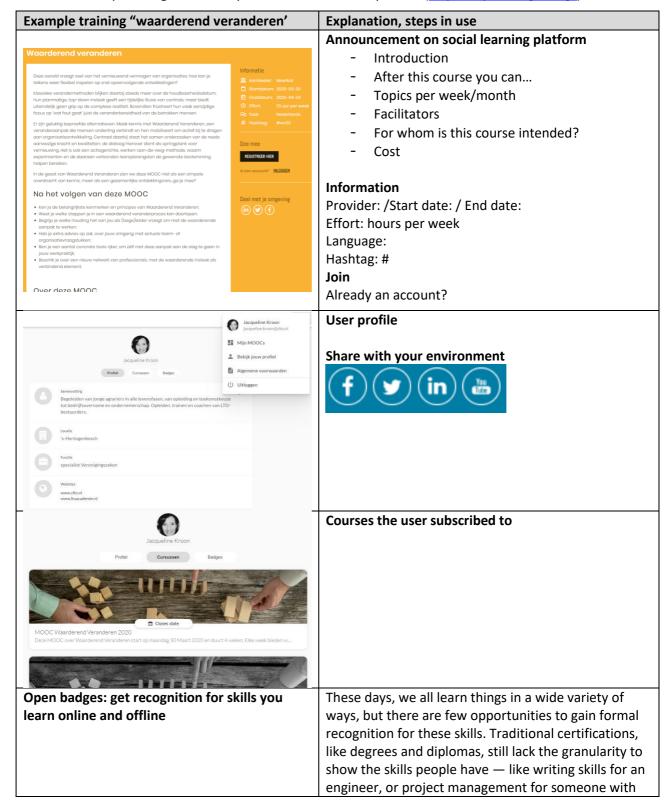
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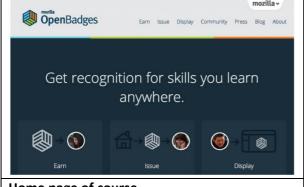


Annex: use of OpenBadges in training

You can earn open badges for skills you learn online and in person. (https://openbadges.org/)





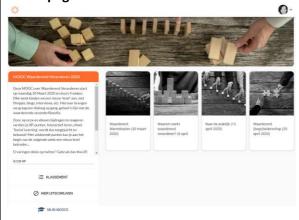


an arts degree.

Not only that, but there's no way to take all those skills and show them off in one place, regardless of where you've earned them. Open Badges changes that.

Open Badges issues badges that count toward education, careers and lifelong learning.

Home page of course



Home page

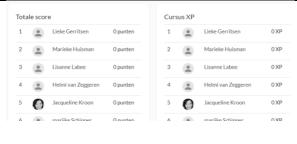
- Introduction
- Ranking
- Unsubscribe
- My courses

Introduction text

This course on <topic> will start on <date> and lasts <number of> weeks/months. Every week/month we add offer a new level with movies, blogs, interviews, etc. On this we would like to start a dialogue in line with the course philosophy.

By responding to our own and each other's contributions you earn XP points. Interactive learning, or 'Social Learning' as such, is being welcomed and rewarded! When you have earned enough points you can enter a new course level at the beginning of the next week. With enough points you can enter a new level at the beginning of the next week.

Please share your experiences on twitter using <#hashtag Twitter>.



Ranking

- Total score
- Course XP
- Most learning topics added
- Most responses given
- Most learning objects viewed
- Most interesting discussions started



Meeting room / cafe

In the cafe you can drop in for a chat. A statement, an annoyance on the platform or a new idea that you cannot leave anywhere else.