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

Deliverable 1.5c
Third overview of topical insights from innovation activities, services and networks

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Dissemination Level

PU	Public	X
PP	Restricted to other programme participants (including the Commission Services)	
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Summary

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Executive summary

This document provides a selection of 10 additional topical insights of those partners in Task 1.4 in the i2connect project. Ten insights were selected from 37 topical insights submitted in D1.5a in June 2020. A further 9 were selected and included in report D1.5b from 56 collected at Oct 2020. 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.
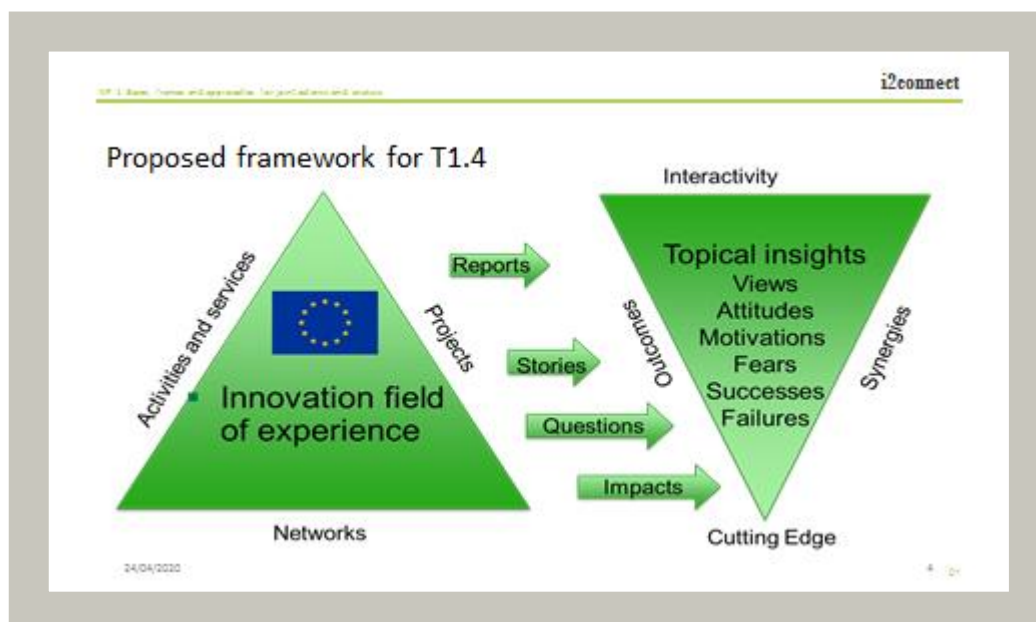

Figure 1. An infographic representation of Task 1.4

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 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 shared worksheet. 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 D1.5c -Feb 2021

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

There were 14 new insights submitted in this round, bringing the total to 75 topical insights from ten partners involved in this task(Table 1). It was agreed that all were relevant to interactive innovation and to the i2connect project. The selection was based on relevance and clarity of the insight taking into account the priority of the participating partners. Fanos Birke, UHOH assisted in the selection of the 10 new insights for this deliverable.

In Table 1. the highlighted cells show insights already selected in D1.5a and 1.5b and the additional 14 insights are shown in blue text. For reviewing and selecting new insights for this deliverable in the next round, and from these 14 or previously recorded insights not selected may be considered for selection.

It was notable that there was a strong influence of digitalisation among the insights submitted and some duplication of topics, this probably reflects the ongoing reliance on digital communications during the current Covid 19 situation and it is as such a topical issue for everyone.

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Table 1 Summary table of all topical insights

Partner	Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6	Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10
Teagasc	Covid 19 networking	Buiness models	Impact Assesment	Trusted Peers	Face to face review meetings	Risk of snapshot reviews of cases	Participatory approaches	Digital enabling	Trust and adoption	
APCA										
AUA	AKIS structure	HEIs	Brokerage/Facilitation	Facilitation	Advisory companies mgt	AKIS	Advisors' training	Digitization	ICT tools	
ILVO	Training young advisors	Time as a crucial factor for group/network creation	Advisory services aiming at actors other than farmers	The importance of digitalisation in advisory services	Defining an innovation advisor	EIP & co-innovation	Overcoming the digital divide			
EUFRAS	EU-Regulation Draft Cap-Strategy Plans Art. 13e	4th SCAR-AKIS Report	New project idea triggered thanks to i2connect	Conditions for innovation in network	Smooth knowledge transfer from research to practice					
IALB	Learning co-creation	resistance to change innovation support	methods to support interactivity							
SEASN	AKIS structure	Peer to peer	EIP projects	Knowledge transfer						
UHOH	Online Interactive training	Tool for reflective practice	Role of advisors in micro AKIS	Advice on farm succession	Facilitating rural innovations by interaction	Advisory focus shifts from farm to family advice	FISA- Information System for Agriculture and Food Research (fisaonline.de)	Talking to each other instead of about each other-	The power of vocational education and training in the AKIS	
NAK	Hungarian e-learning training for agricultural advisors-NAK	NAK AKIS WS: knowledge flow	Skill development and skill measurement training of agricultural advisors in Hungary	Forestry consultancy center of Hungary: Application of forest management methods to create mixed, selection forests	Expert advice for innovative technological developments					
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	Monitoring and Evaluation for advisory servies					
MAPA	AKIS Strategic approach	Knowledge hubs	Digital tools for advisors	Living Labs	On farm Demos					
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	Knowledge circulation	Networking of advisory services	Advisory involvement in defining policies and programmes	Intermediary role

i2Connect Task 1.4 Topical insights

4.2 The 10 selected Insights for D1.5c - Feb 2021

Titles , source and narrative of the Deliverable 1.5c February 2021 Topical Insights .

Digital Enabling
Tom Kelly, Teagasc, Ireland

H2020 DESIRA supports the belief that digitalisation should be viewed and promoted as a means to an end and not an end in itself. Could there be lessons for I2connect? Guiding principles for digitalisation looked at in rural development domains strongly support education & training for basic digital skills, encouraging peer to peer networking, public support to infrastructures, monitoring Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) indicators. Anchoring digitalisation to sustainable development by raising awareness; Education & training for above basic-level skills; Training of AKIS agents. Digitalise ARKIS and aligning it with Responsible Research Innovation (RRI),. Linking investments & projects to sustainability goals. The role of the brokers/advisors/connectors becomes essential to link up the needs of the local actors with innovation and digital centres, so as to acquire the knowledge and skills needed to identify, design and implement the digital and technological solutions. Peer learning among digitalisation brokers (within ARKIS) and align them to RRI. Develop fast and flexible supporting mechanism or policy instruments to support local/regional multi-actor cooperation processes for digitalisation. Support should be provided for all preparatory work around digitalisation such as animating stakeholders, facilitating engagement processes, feasibility assessments, prototype and project development, etc. link https://desira2020.eu/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/DESIRA_LTVRA_General_fv.pdf

Trust and Adoption
Tom Kelly, Teagasc

In the H2020 IPM Decisions project the factors which supports the adoption and use of new digital decision support tools is the level of trust by farmers and advisors in the system. In looking the factors influencing adoption it found that there was a need for training, mobile access, combined text and graphics. The use of demonstrations of new DSS tools had a highly positive influence on trust and likelihood to adopt, while commercial advertising efforts had a negative influence on trust and adoption. In i2connect have we the correct approach to gain the trust of advisors, managers and farmers?
[Survey responses workshops | IPM Decisions](#)

Defining an innovation advisor
Lies Debruyne, ILVO

Ongoing discussions in Task 1.3 clearly highlight existing issues around a clear definition for this role. What does it mean exactly to be an innovation advisor, what competencies are needed, and more importantly, how can these be developed (trained) and evaluated. Literature offers some insights, but overall feeling so far is that a lot is too generalistic. Further development of this profile and needed trainings should and will be further developed along this project, and will need to be continuously evaluated, improved and refined. Connection with the work in LIAISON could also be relevant in this respect.

EIP & co-innovation
Lies Debruyne, ILVO

A recent paper published by partners of the LIAISON project, showed that the EIP-AGRI is just one part of a complex matrix of multi-actor co-innovation activities involving farmers and foresters in Europe. They state that it is important to recognise the existence of a multiplicity (projects, non-project activities, formal and informal) of multi-actor approaches. Their data suggests that many of these are effective methods of supporting co-innovation and are, therefore, 'sharing the space' within the AKIS. (https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1389224X.2021.1873156)

Overcoming the digital divide
Lies Debruyne, ILVO

This is linked to the importance of digitalisation in advisory services. As mentioned, the current situation has led to a surge in digital approaches, also in farming and advisory contexts. It is however crucial to consider the existing digital divide, where the lack of infrastructure (e.g. broadband) is a real issue in many rural areas. As a result, Living Labs and other co-creation approaches, which also switch to online, may completely fail to include the more vulnerable end users, while their needs may in fact be the most pressing to consider in the current situation. This became clear during discussions about DESIRA Living Labs

New project idea triggered thanks to i2connect
Aleksander Bomberski, EUFRAS

The participation in i2connect project has brought an idea in the form of a project or activity to be carried out: The aim of the action would be to create a search engine supporting consulting and brokerage activities in the field of innovation in agriculture. The client enters the "inventorum web" - search engine, submits a demand and fills in a short form for quick and effective transfer of technological needs in the field of agriculture, then he select the agricultural sector and sent application. Specialists and experts from a huge database with a solution in a given field are responsible for the notification and request. The portal should have a transnational- European level. We should develop this.

Smooth knowledge transfer from research to practice
Liga Cimermane, EUFRAS

In the H2020 Best4Soil project a network of practitioners united for sharing knowledge on prevention and reduction of soil borne diseases. With the project they are building a community of practice network across Europe by inter-connecting growers, advisers, educators and researchers - a precondition of success for an innovative project. The insight here is that the project provides open-access databases with information on the range of pathogens and nematodes that affect vegetable, arable and cover crops that helps practitioners themselves to build appropriate crop rotations and innovative control strategies. Thus, they are provided through easily understandable tutorial videos and factsheets which give more in-depth information and are highly comprehensible to guarantee a smooth knowledge transfer from research to practice.

FISA- Information System for Agriculture and Food Research (fisaonline.de)
Fanos Birke, UHOH, Germany

"Fisaonline.de is a web portal in Germany that gives an overview of research projects and programs in agricultural and food science topics financed by public funds at the national and regional levels. Information on the portal includes the research aim, research subjects, implementation area (geographic area), funding program managing and collaborating institution and funding period. The platform is open to the public and interested individuals can search for information based on the relevant categories. Web portals such as FISA have an important contribution for understanding the AKIS at the national level as they provide a broader overview of programs, structures and organisations engaged in the subsystem. The AS-database in i2connect has the potential to serve a similar purpose in providing an overview of the advisory service subsystem More about FISA https://fisaonline.de/ueber-fisa/forschungsprojekt-eintragen-lassen/ "

Talking to each other instead of about each other
Fanos Birke, UHOH, Germany

"Recently, a public dialogue that engaged trainees from an agriculture college and students in the local high school took place in Holzkirchen, Bavaria. In this event, together with their supervisors at the agriculture college and the responsible person in the high school, the college trainees who are soon to be fulltime professional farmers, prepared and delivered presentations on selected agriculture topics for the high school students. The presentations were followed by rounds of discussion that allowed open exchange and dialogue between the trainees and the students. This initiative's ultimate goal is to create more opportunities to improve communication among farmers and consumers and reduce conflicts that are caused by misunderstandings and reservations from both sides. Through this approach, the trainees realised the importance of presenting complex issues in a simple and understandable way to reach young consumers. Also, for high school students, the approach proved to help them understand complicated topics and interact with those directly from practice.

The methodological approach is relevant and interesting to i2connect. It introduces a unique approach to collaborate and engage in dialogue and exchange with project partners and beneficiaries on interactive innovation and other project activities.

https://www.stmelf.bayern.de/mam/cms01/allgemein/publikationen/sub_heft_11_12_20.pdf pp 22

The power of vocational education and training in the AKIS
Fanos Birke, UHOH, Germany

When we were compiling the AKIS report, we invited experts from various institutional affiliations to share their views on German AKIS. The experts discussed at length the diverse actors and complex linkages. One of the many fascinating insights from the discussion was the important role vocational schools and training institutions play in ensuring knowledge flows through their structures and strong linkage with diverse actors at multiple levels. Additionally, the continued need for enhancing advisory service quality, particularly by qualifying advisors with methodological skills was evident. This insight is relevant and interesting to i2connect in the sense that the project has much to offer to meet the demand of qualifying advisors by collaborating with existing structures.

4.3 Categorisation of the 10 selected insights for Deliverable 1.5c Feb 2021

Table 2 shows the 10 selected insights for deliverable 1.5c in Feb 2021. Again there is a wide variety of characteristics relevant to the interactive innovation landscape, both academic and practical experience.

Table 2. Categorisation of selected Insights D1.5c

Topics	Business models	Network Facilitation	Support	Quality Control	Other advisory roles	Impact	Other issues
Digital enabling	1	1	1	0	1	0	1
Trust and Adoption	0	0	1	1	1	1	0
Defining an innovation advisor	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
EIP & co-innovation	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Overcoming the digital divide	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
New project idea	0	0	0	0	0	1	0

triggered thanks to i2connect							
Smooth knowledge transfer from research to practice	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
FISA-Information System for Agriculture and Food Research (fisaonline.de)	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Talking to each other instead of about each other-	0	1	0	1	1	0	0
The power of vocational education and training in the AKIS	0	0	0	1	1	0	0