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Systems' Innovation



3.2 Train-the-trainers for innovation support

Rationale

Member States in their CAP Strategic Plans have to ensure that advisory services will provide innovation support, in particular for preparing and for implementing the projects of the EIP operational groups (art. 15 Reg. EU 2021/2115). This requires advisory services to enlarge their services from the process of transmitting technological innovation to a process of active listening and applying knowledge and know-how to solve complex problems.

The competence needed to comply with new roles and functions is not limited to cognitive elements (involving the use of theory, concepts or tacit knowledge); it also encompasses functional aspects (involving technical skills) as well as interpersonal attributes (e.g., social or organizational skills) and ethical values.

To date, there is a low level of awareness among advisors, advisory managers and the authorities managing CAP interventions, about the skills and competencies necessary to improve innovation support service providing. Moreover, there is a lack of expertise on how to develop these skills and competencies.

Solution

Some European projects (AgriSpin, i2connect, ATTRACTISS) have explored what skills and competencies are needed to support interactive innovation processes.



Keywords

Advisor's training, interactive innovation, Operational Groups



Potential users

Advisors and advisory organizations, Coordinators of Ogs, Managing authorities of the CAP strategic Plans



Country

Croatia, Veneto region (Italy)



Particularly, within the [i2connect](#) project a training-the-trainers course has been provided with the aim of developing a thorough understanding for innovation processes and the advisors role in networks, and to increase their ability to reflect on what they do for assisting participants in such processes to become successful and how to spread innovation in agricultural systems.

Building further on CECRA module 16 on innovation support (<https://www.cecra.net/en/home/>), the i2connect offer consists of trainings with a duration of 3 days face-to-face (f2f) and half a year of coaching on the job.

The course is grounded on a set of analysis tools (a toolkit) designed to help advisors, or whoever is involved in innovation processes, to recognize patterns that are behind these complex systems, to understand their logic, and to see options to act effectively in the situation.

The main aim was to provide easy to use method for keeping a network vital so that co-creation could happen. The topics addressed by the tools are:

- a. Three modes of collaboration: transfer, exchange (negotiations), and cocreation.
- b. Warm and cold processes: how to distinguish basic elements of both processes?
- c. The Innovation Spiral: seven stages from early idea to embedding, each with their distinctive actions, actors to relate to and pitfalls to avoid.
- d. The Network Analysis: visualising actors in different positions regarding an initiative. What connections need to be strengthened and in what order for creating space for the initiative?
- e. The Circle of Coherence: visualising interaction patterns between actors in a process. How to recognise what interventions could help in a certain situation to reinforce motivation and nourish 'vital space'.
- f. The Triangle of Co-Creation: visualising positions of key actors in a process of change. Which positions contribute to co-creation, and which positions do not? What can be done to increase the chance that co-creation will take place?
- g. The Energy Timeline Method: a quick and effective method for assessment of the process with the participants involved. It strengthens co-ownership of participants of their joint endeavours.
- h. The Learning History: a method to report about the process, analysing the moments that appeared to matter most.
- i. Peer-to-peer consultation: a method to structure consultations among peers, in order to ask relevant questions, to analyse different assumptions and options, to respect the choices of storyteller for what (s)he does with the advice, and to avoid debates that do not contribute.

Didactical approach is the value added of the training and it is led by a few guiding principles:

- a. training courses are organised in such a way that participants are actors in their learning process. It is therefore excluded to give them pre-thought information that they should passively listen to and retain. This avoids the existing deviation of the trainers-experts, bringing a theoretical knowledge that is unquestionable and far from practical application.
- b. training courses start from the real problems expressed by the course participants. This supports learning transfers, because the more the training venue will have elements in common with the action venues, the easier it will be for the participant to transfer the knowledge into his or her practice.
- c. The trainer is careful to work on the training space and moderate the participants so that the training environment is stimulating and conducive to learning.

d. Mutual coaching: after the training, participants are able of assisting each other in reflecting on situations they encounter. Joint reflection among peers is essential for integrating the contents of the course with everyday practice of the participants. Skills and methods for peer-to-peer coaching are part of the courses.

At the moment, 42 courses of training-the-trainers have been carried out under the i2connect project in 18 European countries (up to date in October 2023). Under Horizon Europe project [ATTRACTISS](#) (AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to deepen the function of Innovation Support Services, 2022-2028), the i2connect training module will be enlarged to include new competencies and more advisors will be trained in all the 27 MSs.

In practice...

The Managing Authority of Veneto Region RDP (IT) organized a training-the-training course under the Measure 2 (advisory training) of 2014-20 RDP as a part of the AKIS Academy course (see 4.1 AKIS-in-practice!). To realize the course, Veneto Region, through its operating agency Veneto Agricoltura, invited experts from i2connect project.

The two-days course was mainly focus on the following topics:

DAY 1	DAY 2
Introductory Training: Course Objectives and Rules	The Circle of Coherence
Icebreaker and Name Game	Theory of motivation
Interactive innovation theory: the innovation spiral	Learning styles/personality
Network analysis	Decision-making methods
Co-creation triangle	Peer consultation / Active listening
Hot and cold processes	
Review of first day's learning	

The training-the-trainers has already planned to be implemented in the Croatia AKIS Strategy in the CAP SPs 2023-2027.

Practical implications for replicability

The implementation of the training-the-trainers vocational course need to take into account some practical implication:

- availability of trained trainers to provide the training, also benefiting from the advisors already trained under the i2connect project;
- selection of participants to be trained in a maximum of 20 participants per course;
- definition of at list two days program to allow effective knowledge gain;
- provision of a coaching activity after training to follow up the results and use of the competences acquired.

Benefits

A possible implementation of the training-the-trainers within the CAP strategic plans would bring numerous benefits, such as:

- promote competence and skills development in innovation support;
- enhanced comprehension of innovation processes;
- provide an approach to investigate innovation practices and the involvement of support service providers;
- create a professional network of innovation support agents from all Europe.

Further information

- *CAP Strategic Plan – Croatia (HR)*
- *I2connect toolbox – (ENG)*
- *Wielinga E., Obrist R., Fontaine G., Duhamel S., 2020. "Didactical concept and toolkit for advisors' trainings" Deliverable 3.2 i2connect project*

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