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3.4 Cross visits: increasing capacities of advisors through peer-to-peer learning on interactive innovations

Rationale

All advisors must be integrated within AKIS in an inclusive way, to be able to cover the economic, environmental and social dimensions and provide up-to-date technological and scientific information developed by R&I (art. 15 Reg. EU 2021/2115). To reach this goal, Managing Authorities had to define appropriate methods and approaches to better support advisors and innovation support services providers in their AKIS Strategies. Especially for innovation support services providers, in fact, there is a need for acquiring a set of capacities and skills that can be more effective if accompanied by experiential learning and exchanges. This kind of interaction seems to be much more productive in terms of learning than attending a seminar or a training course where lecturers try to transfer their wisdom.



Keywords

Peer-to-peer learning, advisor's training, Operational Groups, interactive innovation



Potential users

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



Country

Europe

Training and knowledge exchange



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Solution

Within the [i2connect](#) project a collaborative way of training for innovation support services providers has been realized through the organization of Cross Visits (CVs).

The CVs consists of 2-3 days visit in which a group of advisors from different parts of Europe and with different backgrounds visit an interesting interactive innovation case with the aim to learn from how this has been developed and to assess each other contexts, practices and motivations. Visiting group consists of advisors, trained by i2connect training of trainers' courses (see 4.5 AKIS-in-practice!). The training course was focused on providing a set of analytical tools (e.g. the spiral of innovation; the triangle of co-creation; the circle of coherence; the network analysis) 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 CVs approach promotes the exchange of experiences through peer-to-peer learning among trainees from diverse backgrounds. The primary objective is to comprehend the background of the innovation process and the role advisors play in it, with the overarching aim of transferring this knowledge to their professional settings and beyond. Essentially, CVs serve as a wellspring of inspiration, offering valuable insights, tools, and a shared language that prove beneficial when advisors resume their duties and confront challenges in the workplace.

At the moment, 42 courses of training of trainers have been carried on under the i2connect project, in 18 European countries (up-to-date at October 2023). Under [ATTRACTISS](#) (AcTivate and TRigger ACTors to deepen the function of Innovation Support Services) Horizon Europe project, more advisors will be trained and more European countries will be covered. This will allow to have a sufficient number of advisors trained to be involved in CVs.

From a practical perspective, each i2connect CVs is based on the following 8 steps, which can be adapted to the context of the hosting country and innovation cases:



<p>Step 1: Kick-off (Day 1)</p> <p>The introduction session aims at knowing each other and create a space for team members to share experiences and discuss preconceptions.</p>	<p>Step 2: Field Visit - Demonstration of Innovation (Day 2)</p> <p>During the field visit the visiting team (10-12 advisors) studies a particular innovation case and analyze it using i2connect tools, learnt during the training of trainers. The main focus of the interviews are the following topics: Innovation, innovation process, innovation support, actors and networks, environment, critical incidents, dissemination and future perspectives.</p>
<p>Step 3: Workshop - Applying Tools (Day 2)</p> <p>The aim of the workshop is to give each participant the opportunity to ask questions about the innovation process to each of the key actors. During the in-depth participants analyze the case studies choosing one or more tools.</p>	<p>Step 4: Reflection on the Case (Day 2)</p> <p>After the visit, the team takes time to share observations, reflect on them and formulate pearls, puzzles and proposals, based on what has been observed.</p>
<p>Step 5: Social Activity (Day 1 and/or 2)</p> <p>During the CV there it is recommended to meet create a socializing setting for informal connections and exchanges.</p>	<p>Step 6: Feedback Session (Day 2)</p> <p>Visiting team presents results, observations, and engages in discussion with host team and key actors.</p>
<p>Step 7: Sharing Experiences between Participants (Day 3)</p> <p>During this step, participants spend time on short case analyses of practical cases from their home countries, to allow them to successfully transfer the knowledge they received.</p>	<p>Step 8: Wrap-up (Day 3)</p> <p>The final stage is the wrap-up and feedback from the host and the participants.</p>

In practice...

The cross visits can be funded under the CAP SPs 2023-2027, particularly, as part the vocational training aiming at enhancing competencies and create chance for knowledge exchanges between advisors and innovation support services providers (art. 78 Reg. EU 2021/2115).

To support this type of intervention it is necessary to carry out the following actions:

- Define a budget for the cross visits' implementation under article 78 Reg. EU 2021/2115 interventions.
- Provide a specific training about tools and methods to facilitate interactive innovation processes to a pool of advisors at a national/regional level. Alternatively, it is possible to benefit from i2connect trained advisors to be involved in the Cross Visit.
- Select a number of 10/12 trained advisors to attend the cross visit from different regions/countries to guarantee an exchange. It is not recommended a larger number of participants in order to allow a high level of interaction within the group and to be able to manage the administrative procedure related to organize the visit. It is appropriate trying to balance participants provenience in terms of country, gender and background.

- Identify at list two Operational Group to be visited.
- Foreseen a budget dedicated for the expenses (travel costs, transfer, accommodation, boards).
- In case of foreign participants be sure to have a translation (especially for farmers) or involve in the interviews people with a good level of English.

Benefits

- Inspire for enhancing the services provided and reflecting about solutions to similar problems.
- Promote competence and skills development through a peer-to-peer learning approach.
- 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

- [Wielinga E. and Parea P. \(2016\): The Cross Visit Method, Deliverable 2.4: An Improved Methodologic Approach, AgriSpin project \(EN\)](#)
- [Kroon J., Wielinga E. and Parea P. \(2020\): Deliverable Number 4.1: Integrated Training, CV and Pilot Plan, i2connect project \(EN\)](#)
- [Triste L., Kuegler M., Cordeiro M. and Guichaoua A. \(2019\): Cross visit guidelines to on-farm demonstrations, NEFERTITI project \(EN\)](#)
- [FAIRshare cross visits \(EN\)](#)

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